

May 23, 2011

To: Smitty

From: Monty Aldrich

THOUGHTS FROM THE UNIT OFFICE...

Hot topics in state educational issues right now include transportation, consolidation and pension reform. I'm sure that by accident you've either heard or read something about all of this. Last year, the state cut our transportation reimbursement by 42%. That reimbursement is what our school district receives in partial payment for certain reimbursable miles that we travel in school buses transporting kids to and from school. That pays for purchases of school buses, fuel, maintenance, and bus drivers' salaries and benefits. The state mandates that we transport students to and from school. Therefore, a mandate would seem to indicate that "the state" would pay for this. On the table right now is the possibility that all transportation costs would eventually be paid locally by the end of 2012. If that is the case, your property taxes would raise again to pay for all of this. In the northern part of the state, many school districts are about 1-3 square miles in territory so that won't affect them. This is another attempt to cut something that they implemented many years ago to help balance a budget. Yet some new programs keep getting funding. Don't be surprised when you hear that your tax bill is increasing due to the movement of this mandate to local funding.

Consolidation is on the table again, and although the first proposal was knocked down quickly, it still lingers. The first proposal was somewhat ridiculous as government wanted population areas of around 35,000 people per school district. That would have meant that a school district would look something like Clay, Richland and Jasper counties combined. Speaking of needing multiple buses and more funding, that would be another tax burden locally. Most school districts south of I-80 aggressively opposed this and it was stopped. Now, there is a committee forming to study another plan of action regarding consolidation. They seem to be targeting districts such as K-8 or smaller that could be combined into one district that all eventually go to high school in. There may be the need for some of this and at least they are taking a more sensible approach.

Pension reform will be a huge battle and we'll wait to see if what they do is "constitutional". The state has robbed from the pension fund to try to cover their mistakes and now it's haunting them. There are several people who have worked for years and years and now those are in jeopardy of being robbed again. Whether anyone agrees with the amount of pension a particular occupation receives or not, it's difficult to take it away from them "after the fact". But that may happen.

While I feel like this world is in a "world of hurt", it is evident that we can continue to shelter our children somewhat. Yes, technology scares me to death with what can happen, but we are there and will continue to be. I worry about our country constantly using our children to compete with other countries in the educational scheme because the mandates and all requirements continue to take away some opportunities kids could have.

NOTICE: Due to renovation, the grade school office will be located in the Band Room most of the summer. That is on the north end of the jr. high building. If you need to enter the school grounds, please use the entrance between the two school buildings off of Route 45. We will be totally renovating the entrance of the grade school for security purposes and will be doing asbestos abatement there as well. We will also be excavating and doing new concrete parking lots at both buildings. Please follow any detours posted or call the main office for info before coming. There will be a great amount of construction going on so we would advise you to not allow children on school grounds without adult supervision this summer.

This summer, Clay County Hospital is sponsoring **athletic physicals** for all North Clay students participating in sports. The dates are: Thursday, June 2 from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the Louisville Medical Clinic and Tuesday, June 7 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the Clay County Hospital Clinic. The cost is \$25 and the Clay County Hospital graciously donates this back to the North Clay Academic Foundation.

We have appreciated your support and working relationship during the 2010-11 school year. Stay tuned to this local newspaper for important information regarding changes for the upcoming school year.