

August 14, 2013

To: Smitty

From: Monty Aldrich

**THOUGHTS FROM THE UNIT OFFICE...**

Welcome back to school! I think this has been one of the most smooth transitions and starting of school that we've had since working here. We have a great deal of staff working throughout the summer to organize and coordinate everything, and it makes it much easier to open school. The kids seem to be happy and ready for the most part. The staff are smiling and ready to go!

It's always a tough transition for some of our students to go back to school. There is a fear and a detachment from the summer routine. I commend our teachers and staff for being fully ready to teach that first day, and for taking those students and putting them on task with daily routines. I am well pleased with the work ethic and the willingness of the kids to encounter change.

We have lots of new faces in each building this year. We have many new teachers and paraprofessionals on staff, and new faces all around the offices and buildings. Those people have come in early to make sure they were prepared for the new school year. Again, I am really pleased with the "team". We've thrown away the "It's not my job to do that" approach and are going with the best and most personable customer service we can provide.

We have a new VIP Program that you may have read or heard about. This is a volunteer program that was initiated by Jenny McKinney. We have several volunteers who actually complete paperwork, training, and an orientation for what their interests are in working with children in the buildings. All are assigned a specific area of duty and given training on how to perform. Volunteers can choose their time period to work before beginning. We are still in need of helping hands. If you are interested, let us know and we can help you with registering.

We've had some changes in the Student Accident Coverage that is normally handed out at registration. We encountered a change in vendor for this coverage. Basically, we will have the same "school time" coverage available for all students, and we now have "optional" coverage available as well if desired. If you desire to obtain this additional accident insurance coverage, you can pick up a brochure at the Unit Office, or you can go to our website to view and/or print. There is also more information on the company's website at [www.studentinsurance-kk.com](http://www.studentinsurance-kk.com).

We've had some questions and inquiries about our breakfast and lunch program recently. Due to USDA legislation, we are now required to be much more strict on what is served daily for lunch. In order for us to get federal and state reimbursement for costs, we have to adhere to these guidelines perfectly. Some say the kids aren't getting enough to eat. Others say the menu doesn't offer things kids like. While we understand and sometimes agree with that, our hands are tied to the requirements. There is always an option of sending a lunch with your child. Other than that, we are pretty well locked into this situation for now. Our lunch program lost \$40,234.54 this past year. While we do not want to make a profit on the program, we would like to be close to breaking even. We brought in \$237,459 last year, and spent \$277,694. Most of that loss was from food costs and some from people not paying for lunches. Food costs obviously aren't going to drop, so we may have to increase lunch prices a significant amount soon. Our main issue is that over 55% of the students are on free or reduced lunch prices. While that

percentage helps our Title I funding somewhat, we take the hit elsewhere. We have talked about going with private vendors who would be able to come in and provide a variety of foods for sale. The problem we face with that is whether that 55% of free/reduced students would be able to carry cash and pay for those foods on a daily basis. So, again, with the government regulating this program, we are faced with it. The quality and quantity of food has decreased dramatically.

A popular question to several of us including board members has been the question of why students had to pay “athletic fees” for the sports that are currently being privately funded. I hope I can help explain this. When approximate fees were figured last April to estimate what each sport would cost, there were several costs not included. Some felt that when they helped pay to privately fund a sport, they shouldn’t have to pay athletic fees. I spoke at our public meetings up front about this and stated that money contributed was a donation to the district and that no other privileges would provide a benefit for the donor. We ended up having to hire a person to take care of athletics and our transportation requests. This was due to privately funding 7 sports that were cut, in addition to the 8 we kept. Scheduling contests, officials, etc. was too much to handle when there wasn’t a designated person in charge. We also have numerous daily transportation changes requested and the decision was not to change the policy on pickups. This salary was added back from the original cuts made. We also incur dues for IHSA, IESA, and SIJHSAA for each activity/sport participating. We are responsible for staff mileage reimbursement since we will not be transporting to and from contests. We pay \$1,000 per year for an intergovernmental agreement with the North Clay Park District. We also receive bad payments or no payment from some for expected expenses. We have entry fees for tournaments, and we purchase a large amount of letters, trophies, plaques, and awards for ceremonies. We will be cutting down on banquet costs this year by shortening the banquets without meals. I hope that answers speculation on this topic. If there is a light on this topic, this year the “per mile” rate for transportation is \$2.37. Last year, it was \$2.80. That means that privately funded totals required this spring will be lowered.

We plan to offer more links on our website at some point this school year. Reconstruction is in the works, and we are posting more and more items on the site for your benefit. You can view this at [www.northclayschools.com](http://www.northclayschools.com).