

Stephen/Argyle Central State of the School

The 2008-2009 school year has been moving along as briskly as the Northwest wind. It is cold and we are looking forward to warm weather and spring. The Stephen/Argyle Central School District continues to work at preparing our children for today and tomorrow. The task of preparing students for 21st century challenges is sometimes very complex with the speed of changes in technology that influence the work place. These are challenges that our staff and students are meeting daily.

In our rural community the most important issue is sustainability for the future. We work consistently on preparing five-year projections of enrollment, five-year revenue and expenditure plans, and strategic planning documents identifying SAC goals and objectives. This long term planning and vision is critical to sustainability. These strategies become increasingly important as the State of Minnesota tries to meet the obligation of creating a balanced budget. With a 5.2 billion dollar state wide deficit, it means that there will be no additional support from the state. We will have to work locally to support our schools.

Another critical issue for our small schools is student enrollment. Student enrollment drives revenue and expenditure, as well as long term planning. We have had a very balanced enrollment for the past 4 years, and we have good enrollments in current pre-school classes. The challenges that we face today and in the future are influenced by the increase in family mobility and declining enrollment in the future. These issues concern all rural districts in Northwest Minnesota. The following information is our current enrollment projections over the next five years:

2008-2009	340 students (30 Pre-School)
2009-2010	343 students (16 Pre-School)
2010-2011	340 students (19 Pre-School)
2011-2012	335 students (17 Pre-School)
2012-2013	317 students (15 Pre-School)
2013-2014	300 students (9 Pre-School projected 1/1/09)

The projections demonstrate a gradual decline in the next few years. The factor that is difficult to project is the mobility of families. If one family moves out of the district with 3 children it can mean up to a \$40,000 loss to the district revenue, without much of an adjustment on expenditures. We will continue to strive to stay on top of fiscal planning today and into the future.

“Project Playground” is a major undertaking currently taking place in the school district. We strongly believe that facilities and resources are a major tool to recruit families to our schools and communities. The updating of the elementary playground will be a tremendous asset to the communities. We are currently working on fund raising efforts, grant writing, and resource allocation to prepare for the playground revitalization in June of 2009. We have currently raised over \$10,000 for installation costs.

SAC has a tremendous commitment to technology integration for students and staff. Staff have worked through the year to integrate SMART Boards, Interwrite Pads, NEO2 computers, and the internet into student curriculum. Preparing students for 21st

century jobs and challenges involves the engagement of students in curriculum that includes technology, problem solving, and critical thinking.

Our curriculum continues to evolve with the addition of state and federal standards. We have tremendous science and math staff that work diligently to provide challenging and relevant academic opportunities. Some of these opportunities have involved turning our schools into Green Schools. Water usage, recycling, and energy usage have all been topics that our students have addressed and as a result we are making changes that can make our schools more cost efficient and environmental friendly.

We continue to work on the school district web-site as a major communication tool with parents, students, and our communities. Please take the opportunity to visit www.sac.k12.mn.us for updates on school activities and announcements.

Stephen/Argyle Central is a strong school system because of the community support for the education of our youth. As we look to the future, the preparation of our children is import for the prosperity of our communities. If we prepare our children for the 21st century they will be ready to be capable leaders for the future. Our students and staff would like to thank the communities of Argyle and Stephen for their continued support.