

## **State of the School “Challenges and Opportunities”**

Stephen/Argyle Central enters 2013 with many challenges and opportunities for the future. We face challenges of declining enrollment, balancing the general operating budget, and providing diverse opportunities for our students in academics, arts, and athletics. We also have opportunities in technology integration, curriculum enhancement, and collaborative services with other area districts.

As we have continued to face a dramatic decline of students during the 2012-2013 school year, we continue to work to plan for the future. We have reduced staffing during the year and are undergoing a significant budget reduction process district wide to reduce an additional \$250,000-\$300,000 for the 2013-2014 school year. The following are the current and projected enrollments for the future:

2011-2012 – 343 K-12 students	
2012-2013 – 307 K-12 students	23 Pre-School
2013-2014 – 296 K-12 students	21 Pre-School
2014-2015 – 288 K-12 students	25 Pre-School
2015-2016 – 277 K-12 students	8 Pre-School
2026-2017 – 269 K-12 students	17 Pre-School

The decline in enrollment will require an increase in our Operating Referendum during the 2013 election. The Operating Referendum generates revenue to support a balanced budget. A combination of budget reductions in administration and staff positions and increased revenue through an Operating Referendum are needed to provide fiscal stability to the district.

As we work to balance our budget in the present and into the future it requires a combination of increasing revenue and decreasing expenditures. The major expenditure in all schools is personnel – administration, teachers, secretaries, para-professionals, cooks, custodians, and bus drivers. It is difficult to start the process of reducing personnel when we are truly fortunate to have such a dedicated and caring staff. There have been reductions made in all of these areas in the past, but we must focus on the future at this time. We will be working through the process of reducing staff through retirements, reduction of staffing, and reducing program offerings in elective areas. The goal is to reduce staffing expenses and still provide quality programs to all of our students pre-school through graduation.

We have recently added activity/athletic fees and have made changes to how revenue from our concessions program is used. The goal of these changes is to continue to fund our diverse extra-curricular opportunities. We are very fortunate to be able to offer programs such as Jazz Band, Robotics, River Watch, JETS,

Knowledge Bowl, School Musical, and One Act Play. In addition, our students participate in wrestling, baseball, softball, cheerleading, cross-country, track, football, volleyball, golf, and basketball. We know that students that are active in extra-curricular opportunities are more successful in the classroom and in life. We believe strongly that these diverse offerings have a major impact on our students' success. We thank the Sports Boosters for their support of these programs.

Anytime there are challenges there are also opportunities. We believe there are many ways to expand student opportunities through the use of technology in our schools. Our students are currently involved in programs that enhance the classroom through the use of technology in the areas of science, math, social studies, business, and English. Digital curriculum is replacing textbooks and research is replacing memorization. Students are working to provide presentations on research to not only demonstrate their knowledge, but educate their peers as well. This type of change in learning is happening throughout our schools.

Curriculum options are no longer only based on the textbook and teacher. There are a number of on-line curriculum options and resources that can enhance the offerings that our students have in our schools. Access to hardware and software increases student's readiness for post-secondary and career options. We believe that investment in staff training in the use of technology to enhance instructional methods, digital curriculum, and student driven learning will provide diverse learning opportunities for all of our students.

As we have fewer students and staff, we must work to collaborate with other area rural district to have efficient services. We are working with other districts to provide low enrollment classes such as foreign languages and College in the High School, business and administrative services, and staff development opportunities. We believe that working together we can provide efficient services and maximize our resources.

Stephen/Argyle Central is a proud school system that has graduated many very successful people. Our alumni represent our communities daily in all walks of life. We look forward to carrying on the tradition of excellence in academics, arts, and athletics. Together we can take the current challenges and turn them into opportunities for the future. Support our schools and our future.