

I hope this letter finds you well. We are having a great school year, and time is flying by! This newsletter accompanies the first grade period report card, which reflects work done up to October 12. We've been in grade period two since then, and I encourage you to check Pinnacle for current information. Please mark your calendars for Parent Teacher Conferences, coming up November 7 & 8, from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. No appointments are necessary; conferences at Jefferson are held in an open arena format, and parents/guardians are welcome to visit as many teachers as you like.

You are all aware that we have had several curriculum shifts at the middle school level. For several years, we have been working to challenge our students with rigorous classes, but our curriculum was not meeting the increasingly complex demands of Indiana's employers, colleges, and universities; these demands are reflected in Indiana's Academic Standards. On our last round of ISTEP+ tests (Spring 2018), 44.5% of Jefferson's students passed the math portion of the exam, and 64.7% passed English/language arts. These scores do not reflect the ability of our students to learn, or of our teachers to teach. The content we were teaching wasn't up to standards and getting all our students ready for their next steps. I am confident we are on a good path!

We have made substantive changes to our math curriculum. In middle school, all eighth graders are taking Algebra I, a class which was only available to a portion of eighth graders in the past. To prepare all our eighth graders for Algebra I, we have advanced the challenge in sixth and seventh grade math. In addition to better meeting today's academic standards, this move allows our students room in their high school years to take higher level math courses, making them more attractive candidates for university programs in the sciences, engineering, and of course, math. In the past, the highest level math courses would not be available to all students. Moving to Algebra I in eighth grade accomplishes this and supports the moral purpose of our school district.

In language arts at the middle school level, we have adjusted what we call our scope and sequence to better align with state standards in that area. Simply put, we have been spending too much time on topics the students already know, so we have scaled back the time we spend reviewing. We also have adjusted the order of instructional topics to combine key information in a way that uses our time wisely and makes better sense to students.

And in sixth grade science classes, we are adding instruction in computer science. We were out in front in this area, beginning our work in coding last year. State science standards at grade six now include topics from computer science, and we will ensure students receive the information they need to meet or exceed those standards.

Across our entire curriculum, all Jefferson teachers are using research and professional learning to improve their teaching. FWCS teachers utilize continuous improvement cycles and instructional planning, delivery, and assessment strategies which are proven to be effective. We refer to these as the Teaching and Learning Cycle and Lesson Designs. We are working with established experts in the educational field (locally and nationally) to put our kids on the cutting edge of progress, and our school improvement process provides a customized plan to drive growth at Jefferson.

We have four goals in our school improvement plan (see below), and we recognize the only way we will reach these goals is to teach highly motivated students well:

- 100% of students demonstrate ELA proficiency
- 100% of students demonstrate Mathematics proficiency
- 100% of students read at grade level
- 100% of students demonstrate positive behavior

Most Jefferson students had a successful opening grade period! We will hold honor roll mini-assemblies the week of October 29, and over 250 Patriots have earned honor roll status!

Unfortunately, many students did not find success in all their classes during our first grade period. We have several programs in place to address course failure, and we will be contacting families of students with multiple F's with specific recommendations. All students are eligible to attend Wednesday Help Days, which begin on Halloween (October 31) and run through the end of the grade period. Wednesday Help Days run from 2:30 to 3:45, and students will have access to teachers for help, and school administration will hold a structured study hall as well.

Students with grade period one course failures are not eligible for extra-curricular events such as athletics, clubs, and intramurals. They are eligible to stay after school for help with teachers.

The main reason students fail classes in our school is failure to submit their assignments regularly. From a parent/guardian perspective, the best way to track this is through Pinnacle, our online grade monitoring service. If you do not have access to Pinnacle, please contact the school office at 467-4825 to get your account information.

As we continue our work in grade period two and look forward to important events in the months ahead, the following information should be helpful:

- Spell Bowl Regional October 30 @ Woodside M.S.
- PTSA Fall Food Drive November 1-10
- PTSA Fall Ball November 2
- FWCS Choice Fair November 3
- Parent/Teacher Conferences November 7 & 8
- Released Day (No School) November 9
- Thanksgiving Break November 22 & 23
- Winter Break Begins December 20 (with no snow days)

It's always important to remind our families to check local media sources or sign up for text services regarding school delays and closings. Student safety is very important to us, and from time to time weather impacts the school day. The winter season is approaching, so stay tuned!

We look forward to seeing you at Parent/Teacher Conferences, coming up November 7 and 8. If you have any questions or concerns you would like to address before then, please contact us. We'll be glad to help!

Yours in Education,

Principal Jeff King