

Published August 18, 2005

District prepares for successful year

by Dr. Debra Bowers

I hope you're enjoying these last few weeks of warm sunshine as you begin to prepare for the upcoming school year. We at St. Louis Park Public Schools are also busy preparing for the start of a new school year, which begins on Thursday, September 1 for students in first through twelfth grades. The first day of kindergarten is Tuesday, September 6.

So how does our school district, as a whole, prepare to help students learn?

We take time to reflect on student achievement. Last year, scores on standardized tests increased slightly for St. Louis Park students. We analyzed those test scores as well as discipline and attendance data, parent survey results and other achievement indicators at a data retreat early this summer.

Teams from each school, community education and other special groups took a comprehensive look at a broad spectrum of data. The data provided insight and focus as each team developed site-specific goals, using our strategic plan as a guideline. This process is ongoing. We monitor student progress throughout the year to keep students on track for continuous growth.

We recognize that parent and community support is an essential ingredient of school success, so we prepare a framework for involvement. Parents: You may have already received information and sign-up forms from your child's school detailing ways you can get involved in your child's education. Think about which opportunities are the right fit for you, then sign up!

We're dedicated to using the best tools to help parents communicate with their students' teachers and other school staff. This fall, we are implementing the Internet parent access portion of PowerSchool, the district's student information system.

Parents can check student progress and attendance over the Internet. Look for more information about PowerSchool for junior and senior high students in September and for elementary students in November.

We've also been busy this summer making sure our facilities are the best they can be. We've resurfaced gymnasiums, repaved parking lots, spruced up restrooms and installed new water coolers. These improvements, and many more, are being completed on time and on budget. Our well-maintained facilities help give children a sense of pride in their schools.

These are some of the many ways we are preparing for the upcoming school year. We look forward to a positive year as we challenge all learners to achieve great things.