

The School District Report
By
Scott Johnson, District Administrator
February 2019

Greetings to all parents and community members of the School District of New Auburn! In an effort to offer as much communication and transparency as possible, I have decided to start providing our school community with a monthly school district news report. This report will appear on our school district web page, our school Facebook page, and in our school newsletter. It is my intention to share with our community a summary of actions taken at our monthly school board meetings and any other current and relevant news that we can share. We invite you to all stayed tuned into our school news.

The February monthly school board meeting was held on Monday, February 18th. Below is a summary of actions taken by our school board:

- **GYMNASIUM IMPROVEMENTS** - Our school board is interested in trying to provide our public with a safer means of getting in and out of our bleachers in the big gym. The school board gave the approval to have our bleacher aisles widened and install handrails on the north bleachers. If this is well received, the bleachers on the south side may be modified at a later date.
- A contract was also approved to have the basketball backboards, gym curtains, and bleachers inspected and serviced to make sure they are all in safe, working order.
- **TESTING** - Each year the state requires public schools to provide a report to the school board that shows progress made with closing the achievement gaps between classifications of students. This is known as the AGR report. Ms. Mason, the Principal, presented this report, based on the first year results of our new achievement testing system. The school board approved her report, which identified areas our students are showing gains.
- **THERAPY DOG** - A new trend in public schools has been the introduction of trained therapy dogs coming into schools for the purpose of helping children cope with social and emotional struggles. The theory is somewhat similar to a child going to a doctor's office and being given a teddy bear to hold and cuddle to feel safe. In schools, the dogs are trained to provide children with an escape from their anxieties so that they can relax, talk, and share what they are feeling in order to get the help they need. Mr. Kowalski, Guidance Counselor, is giving the school board some ideas to consider that include the possibility of bringing a trained therapy dog into our school in the future. The school board is curious as to how this would be received by our community.
- **SCHOOL CLOSINGS** - It is no secret that this winter has been one to talk about when it comes to school closings. We went from a winter without any snow to a year of unprecedented numbers of school closings statewide. Most schools have been forced to add school days to meet the state requirement for the minimum number of instructional hours required per year. In New Auburn, we were fortunate enough to have enough additional instructional hours already in our school schedule so that we did not have a lot to make up. After seven days of school closings this year, we were only ten hours short of our requirement at the time of the school board meeting. February 22nd was scheduled to be a half-day of parent-teacher conferences and teacher in-service time. Instead, the school board voted to cancel those activities and hold a full school day. On top of that change, the school board also agreed to remove the hall passing minutes each day and have the administration include convert those minutes into instructional time. This

has positioned our school district to be caught up on our state required time for classes and still be ready in case of one or two additional cancellations yet this year.

- **SUMMER SCHOOL** - Summer school is back in New Auburn for 2019! After a year off that involved some classroom renovations, we will be holding a two-week summer school program with full-day classes from June 10-21. We will be offering instruction at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Watch for summer school announcements that will be coming out soon!
- **RETIREMENTS** - I would like the community to join our school board and staff in congratulating and thanking Dan Hanson and Sharon Sonnentag as they have decided to retire this spring. They have both done a very nice job in keeping our school building and grounds in fantastic condition over the past decade or two. They will be moving on and enjoying the next phase of their lives.
- **NEW MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR** - I would also like the community to join us in congratulating Dennis Webb as our new Maintenance Director in the school district. The Board agreed to promote Dennis into this position after serving in the second position for several years. Dennis has been a pivotal employee on our custodial staff for several years and is ready to step up and take over Dan's duties.
- **CUSTODIAL VACANCIES** - We will be posting two full-time, night custodial positions with fringe benefits. Qualified and interested community members are encouraged to apply in the district office. Approximate wage rate will be \$12-\$14 per hour. Those positions will be filled as soon as possible.
- **COACHING EVALUATIONS** - The school board has also approved a new evaluation system for all athletic coaches. Under the new evaluation system, all coaches will be required to meet specific expectations surrounding communications and player development. It is our hope that this new system will assist coaches in consistently improving their coaching abilities and providing the best opportunities and experiences for all athletes and their parents.

At the risk of making this first article too lengthy, I will call it a day and send this on to my staff to publish. If any of our readers have specific questions for me about this article or about anything you would like me to comment about in the future, please send me an email at the address below.

I am also interested in offering a monthly coffee social at our local restaurant if any of our citizens would like to sit and visit in person with Ms. Mason, Principal, and myself. We would love to have coffee and visit to talk about school events. Please send us an email or call us if you would like to be a part of that.

Have a wonderful day and drive safely.

Thank you.

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