

Chalkboard

By

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When read this *Chalkboard* the Annual School Election will be past. As I write it, it still remains two days in the future. Obviously, I cannot thank you for passing the proposed 5-mill increase. Nor can I, nor would I, chastise you for voting it down. Whatever decision you will make, or from your perspective, did make will be/is/has to be the right decision for this year. I can and do thank all of you who will/did vote for taking part in the election process.

The Arkansas *Standards For Accreditation For Public Schools* require that schools give an Annual Report each year to the public. You could have and hopefully did read the newspaper coverage in last week's paper. If you missed the meeting and missed reading the article about it last week, you have a second chance. As in the last few years, the *Chalkboard* for the next two articles, will devote itself to providing that summary as provided by the presenters at the meeting. What follows today is the report from the high school and middle school written for you by the respective principals, Bobby King and Larry Cozens. Mr. King's report follows in the next paragraphs.

"As with the other campuses, the High School is still stressing the areas of Math and Literacy as defined by the ADE. Last years scores in the area of Math (Algebra and Geometry combined) increased 22% in the proficient or advanced categories and we remained constant at 44% proficient or advanced in Literacy. We continue to stay above the State Department standards for AYP in both areas.

Things that we have been doing at the High School include "Step-Up-To-Writing" models, "Writing Across the Curriculum", "Reading Across the Curriculum", Accelerated Reader and "Curriculum Mapping". All of these programs (except Mapping) that we are working with continuously work on improving our students reading and writing abilities which will enable them to be more successful in their lives.

This year, we are trying something new with our Algebra 1 classes. We have gone with a two period block for ALL students enrolled in Algebra 1. This allows students the opportunity to grasp the basic algebra fundamentals that will enable them to be successful in the upper level math classes offered for them in the future.

As per the ADE and NCLB every student that does not score proficient or advanced on the End-of-Course exams will need to be remediated. Therefore, we have worked into our master schedule required remediation classes. These are being taught by both our certified math and English teachers as part of their teaching responsibilities. These remediation classes are giving students that extra guidance and instruction to improve their educational skills that will allow them to enter the world of work or higher education better prepared.”

The Middle School report from Mr. Cozens follows. “Looking at the two grades (6-8) that take the benchmark test, one scored much higher than the other. The 6th grade scored in the top 20% of the state in both Math and Literacy. The 8th grade scored in the bottom 30 %. The question should be asked “Why?” Is one group smarter than the other? The answer is “No”. But the 6th grade did move faster than the 8th in the program that we were working with last year.

We have taken Stephanie Harvey’s book “Strategies that Work” and made it our teaching style. We worked hard to put into practice the ideas in this book. We will be looking at the areas of inference and evaluation this year. We are looking at the scores to continue to improve in the 6th grade and make great strides in the 8th grade this year.

We will be teaching and evaluating in the same way that they are being evaluated on the benchmark test. This is very important so the students as well as the teacher start thinking this way and it will be much easier for them as they go along.

We have also added a study hall at the end of the day for everyone. This way anyone that had trouble with a lesson that was taught will have a chance to go to the teacher and receive extra help. Every teacher as well as every student has this time to see that all work is finished and finished correctly.

This year we will be using a DRA (developmental reading assessment) with every student to find strengths and weakness. We will be able to make sure we are helping students in areas that are needed the most.

We have hired a math coach that will be available to help teachers with teaching math skills. The coach will also be able to help students and teachers with individual problems. We will also be sending all the teachers that teach math to a workshop that will show some of the best practices being used.

We have had training that will help all the teachers with a better understanding that everything works together. They will be putting lesson plans into the computer so that they will be able to see areas where there may be gaps or over runs in the curriculum of the Gentry Middle School. Then we will take it even farther when we look at the district and see that everything is working together to see that each and every student is getting the best possible education they can receive.

With only a few weeks into this school year I can see improvements at the Gentry Middle School. I do not expect to see anything slow down.”