

June 29, 2016

Dear Parents and Community Members,

I hope everyone is enjoying the summer. Time spent with family is incredibly important and influential in children's growth and development. Parents and grandparents are children's first teachers.

We are fortunate that our Board of Education has provided the leadership and clear direction for our school district. The Board of Education places great emphasis on preparing students for the challenges of the future. Our board members have set high expectations for the school district and have provided the resources necessary to help students and staff reach those expectations. Additionally, the Board of Education reduced the tax burden for three years by abating \$730,000.00. The Board hoped this would help the property taxpayers during the recession. Unfortunately, due to the continued lack of financial support from the State of Illinois the Board was unable to abate this tax year.

Today, there is high degree of uncertainty and anxiety related to the lack of a state budget. The impact of no state budget will force all school districts to spend down their reserves in order to operate (reserves: savings created over many years from local property tax dollars). In some cases, this will cause school districts to consider closing or to seek tax anticipation warrants. The State of Illinois has **greatly reduced** school funding over the past several years through the downward proration of funds earmarked for school districts. In addition, the State of Illinois has been **delinquent** in the past several years for the reimbursement of Mandated Categoricals, often making only three of four payments in the proper fiscal year for services such as special education and transportation. Keep in mind, those reimbursements are for services the school district already paid for in the previous fiscal year. Spending down the reserves/savings accounts creates even greater instability for local school districts who will be unable to deal with unforeseen financial emergencies.

The legislature's failure to appropriately fund education and inability to provide the leadership to pass a budget will ultimately impact how school districts provide services to students. I would encourage you to contact your legislators and let them know they need to appropriately fund education and pass a budget. When you contact the legislators please ask them to respond to your concerns (we will post a letter and attachments sent by our School Board to Representative Stewart and Senator Bivins on February 3, 2016).

Senator Tim Bivins

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Registration will be online again this year starting next week July 5, 2016. Lunch fees were increased this year in order to meet the USDA pricing requirements. For 16-17 school year student lunches will be \$2.80/meal. USDA sets the pricing for a full meal and school districts are required to meet the minimum amount set per student lunch. Milk prices will stay the same \$36.00/semester or \$72.00/year. Additionally, the district continues to expand the use of Chromebooks. This school year, fourth grade through high school seniors will have access to Chromebooks. Fourth graders will have access to Chromebooks all day while at school, and students in grades 5-12 will all be on the one to one model. The school fees were increased an additional \$10.00 to cover the cost of the filtering/security software assigned to each chromebook.

Pecatonica students and staff continue to achieve and meet the high expectations. I am very proud of the professionalism and dedication of the Pecatonica CUSD 321 faculty. I encourage parents to be actively involved in the educational development of their children, and we appreciate our parents who are active partners in this journey, without whose support we would not see such successful students. Together, we will continue to succeed to provide the best possible opportunities for our Pecatonica community, school district and families. Please feel free to contact me with any concerns or suggestions.

Sincerely

Bill Faller
Superintendent
Pecatonica CUSD 321