

August 16, 2017

Dear Parents and Community Members,

This summer has flown by, and we are getting ready for the 2017-2018 school year. The schools have survived the torrential rains with minimal issues. The Middle School Life Safety Project, which was completed two years ago, properly moved water away from the Middle School. Had the project not been completed, we would have dealt with significant water damage to and within the building itself. Despite little damage to the Middle School building, the fields surrounding the Middle School experienced large volumes of water moving towards the creek located on the eastern edge of the Middle School property.

Our Board of Education has placed a very high value on academic achievement and has set clear expectations on staff accountability, professionalism, academic rigor, and the creation of an educational environment conducive to student success. Our staff and students have embraced the challenges/expectations set by our Board of Education, and the results are reflected by how well our students perform on the state-mandated achievement tests (PARCC and SAT).

PARCC (state assessments grades 3-8) and SAT (high school grade 11 assessment/college entrance exam) scores for the 2016-2017 school year will be made public soon. Historically, Pecatonica students performed exceptionally well during the 2015-2016 school year; so well, in fact, that our students had the "highest meets"/"exceeds" scores in the region. This year's PARCC scores showed that **our students' 2016-2017 scores improved over the previous year!!** As you are aware, the 2016-2017 school year was the first year for the SAT, which was required by Illinois State Board of Education. Our juniors performed very well on the SAT compared to the state average. Again, official results for the 2016-2017 PARCC and SAT scores will be made public soon.

In addition to creating an environment which challenges students with a rigorous curriculum, our district has set high expectations on student behavior. Recent changes in the law regarding student discipline focused on limiting exclusionary discipline practices, such as referring students for out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. Subsequently, the use of Saturday school detentions and in-school suspensions have increased. This year, students who fail to follow the rules and policies in the Student Handbooks may also lose parking privileges, homecoming/prom/winter formal privileges, extracurricular opportunities, and, depending on the severity and significance of the offense, the right to participate in the graduation ceremony. I would encourage parents to review the Student Handbooks and understand the expectations for student behavior and the changes to the bullying policy.

Furthermore, over the last few years, Pecatonica (like all school districts across our nation) has closely monitored the national conversation about the transgender community and how to accommodate transgendered students in our schools. As stated in our Board policies and student handbooks, the District is committed to providing an educational environment which promotes tolerance and respect for all of its students, regardless of gender or gender identity. In our schools, faculty and staff work daily to promote the dignity and maintain the safety of all our students. Based on recent legal developments and the *Illinois Human Rights Acts*, which protects students from discrimination based on their sexual orientation, including gender-related identity, the District has and will continue to honor a student's request to use the bathroom or locker room of the student's gender identity.

I look forward to the return of our students!! Pecatonica Schools will continue to provide the academic educational environment which will prepare our students to succeed at whatever direction they chose to go when they graduate from Pecatonica High School. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Bill Faller