2022-23 District Family Update No. 16 | Jan. 30, 2023

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⏰**Reading time: Three minutes, 45 seconds**

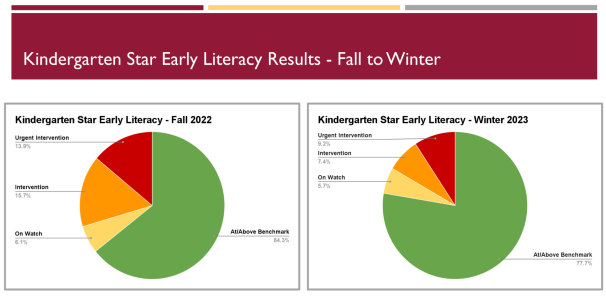
Greetings, Northfield School District Families:

Thanks for your partnership in supporting your student(s) education. We feel privileged to play this vital role in their journey toward lifelong success.

K-8 mid-year academic benchmarks

Our district is committed to excellence in student academic results. We recently completed a mid-year check on student growth. The significant items are:

- Students demonstrated substantial gains in reading and mathematics across all grade levels.
- The district's investment in the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training for teachers is having a positive impact on student growth in reading.
- Students in classes where teachers are trying out a new elementary math curriculum are also showing significant results.



You can see a visual representation of student fall-to-winter growth here.

Congratulations to our students, teachers, and families on this excellent work. Let's keep working together to center this essential academic work!

Black History Month

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Since 1976 every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.

I encourage you to learn more about the significant contributions Black Americans have made to our nation during Black History Month. One excellent resource is the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture at https://nmaahc.si.edu/.

Winter weather and decision-making

While I enjoy winter, I am also pleased to see this January exit the calendar. As we know, we had several winter storms that disrupted our in-person learning schedule. A few essential items:

- This winter is reported as the fourth snowiest on record. So far, we've had a blizzard warning, a significant freezing rain event, and two other major winter storms.
- We prefer to have in-person learning **every** school day, but there are times when dangerous road conditions prompt a shift to an e-Learning day.
- The district stretches over 170 square miles. Dangerous road conditions in one portion of it can prompt a decision to close and move to an e-Learning day.

As I shared in 2022-23 District Family Update No. 6, several factors play a role in our decisions. These include, but are not limited to:

- Heavy snow and/or ice that substantially impacts safe travel.
- Visibility.
- Extreme cold/wind chill.
- Timing of the winter storm.

In terms of decision-making:

- The district collaborates with Benjamin Bus on making decisions about school closures.
- On many winter storm mornings, a district and Benjamin Bus staff team drive the city and rural roads around 4:00 a.m. We discuss conditions with other plow crews and law enforcement as appropriate.
- We regularly connect with the National Weather Service about the latest forecast.
- We use our best judgment based on the available information when the decision needs to be made.

There are differing perspectives on decisions to close school (or not) due to weather. We prioritize safety while balancing the substantial disruption that school closures cause many families. e-Learning days are intended to provide a bridge through winter weather events so that students can maintain academic momentum and avoid rescheduling days at the end of the school year.

Parents can always excuse their students in these situations:

- If we have not closed school and you feel it is unsafe for your student to attend, report the absence to the school and it will be excused.

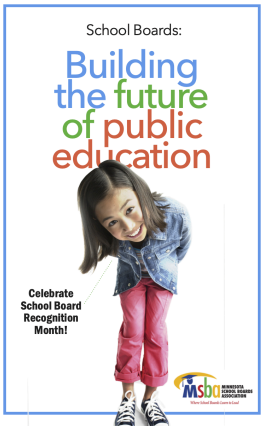
- If we have closed school and you prefer not to have your student participate in e-Learning, report the absence to the school and it will be excused.

Please contact me directly if you have feedback about our processes. We are at the point in the winter when many of our friends and neighbors are tired of it and want spring to arrive. Let's have patience for one another — we are in this together!

Paraprofessional Recognition Week

Governor Walz has proclaimed January 23 - 29, 2023 as Paraprofessional Recognition Week in Minnesota. Were are grateful for all educational assistants and their contributions in supporting student learning and successful outcomes, through small group and one-on-one instruction, instructional assistance, support, and assessment. Thank an EA for their work!

Board update



February is also **Minnesota School Board Recognition Month**. It's a great time to recognize our elected community members who selflessly give their time and energy to support high-quality public education. School boards are responsible for developing a vision to guide the school district. They make difficult decisions that require considering a great deal of information and competing priorities. Through collaboration, and with school district staff, their governance and advocacy are building the future of our state.

This February, we're encouraging all community members to thank a board member. Please thank them for giving their time and playing a vital civic role that helps form the bedrock of our democracy — public education.

The school board held a regular meeting on Jan. 23. The meeting included the annual financial forecast. I encourage you to read the report from Director of Finance Val Mertesdorf included in the meeting packet. I will be following up on her report in upcoming parent updates. The board packet & table file are **located on our website**. A video of the **regular meeting** is available on our website and you can **listen** to my recap of the meeting on KYMN radio. The board will hold a workshop on Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. in the District Office Boardroom.

Thank you!

As always, thank you for trusting us with your child's education. We appreciate the partnership!

Sincerely,

Matt

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