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Insights from the Board

Tough Times Ahead for VCSC

Over the past 13 years in serving as your school board member, I have seen several changes in school funding from the state, in our assessed valuation, and in the budgeting process. There are several things that affect a school budget and most of those are not known at the time a budget is prepared. Enrollments, assessed valuation and attendance are a few items that affect each budget cycle.

Presently the Vincennes Community School Corporation budget is comprised of six different funds; General fund, Capital Projects, Transportation, School Bus Replacement, Debt Service, and Retirement/Severance fund. Most of these funds are supported by local tax dollars. As set by state statute, the monies in these funds are not interchangeable, meaning that money collected for one fund cannot be used to pay appropriations/expenses in another fund.

The Debt Service fund is used to pay long term debt on bond issues, rental lease payments, or other debt obligations the corporation may have. The state requires that you raise enough levy or local tax dollars to pay any long term debt.

The Capital Projects fund is also one supported by local tax dollars. Monies collected in this fund can only be used for such items as equipment, maintenance of buildings, improvements to facilities, land acquisition, and future projects. The State of Indiana sets a maximum that a school corporation can raise in this fund based on their assessed valuation.

Monies from the Transportation and School Bus Replacement funds can only be used for operational costs of student's transportation. Such as contracted transportation services or maintenance of corporation owned buses and vehicles. School buses are required to be replaced on a 12-year cycle.

The Retirement/Severance fund is a new fund established by the State a few years ago to reduce a school corporation's unfunded liability pertaining to teacher retirement. Monies from this fund can only be used for contracted retirement or severance liability. The thing about this fund is that it has to be levy neutral meaning that in order to collect dollars for this fund the levy has to be decreased in the other funds.

The levies in all of the aforementioned funds are supported by local tax dollars. The Vincennes School Corporation's assessed valuation dropped more than \$90,000,000 last year.

This leaves us to the General fund which is used to pay salaries, fringe benefits, supplies, utilities, operational costs and educational programs. The General fund is no longer supported by local tax dollars. In 2009 due to property tax reform legislation by the state legislature, the entire general fund is now supported by the State of Indiana and integrated into the state funding formula for schools. The state support for Vincennes Community School Corporation was cut \$787,443.

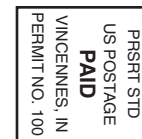
Declining enrollment, cuts in state support and decreases in assessed valuation are all major issues facing the Board of Trustees. Thus, tough decisions will be made. Rest assured the

best interest of children will be the guiding force when making these decisions. The options will be carefully thought out as they will not only affect the lives of our children but also the future of our community. Your school board is dedicated and committed to ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive a quality education and have the skills and knowledge to succeed in life.

I urge each of you as a taxpayer, home and business owner, parent or grandparent to visit one of the schools. Look at what our children are learning, see the technology in our classrooms, notice the multitude of learning programs that our schools offer, witness the dedication of our administrators, certified and support staff, and note the smiles on the faces of our children as they learn something fun and new. The Vincennes Community School Corporation will get through this tough time while continuing to do the most important thing, educating our children.

Bryan Thais

Vincennes Community School Corporation
1712 South Hart Street Road
Vincennes, IN 47591



Upcoming Dates

Feb. 18 • 6:00pm
Washington Elementary
Bingo-For-Books Family Night

Feb. 19
LHS End of Grading Period

Feb. 25-27 • 7:00 p.m.
Feb. 28 • 3:00 p.m.
Clark MS Drama presents
"Peter Pan" the musical
at Lincoln HS Auditorium

Feb. 26
LHS Report Cards Mailed
Home

March 1-10
ISTEP Applied Skills
Assessment for Elementary
and Middle Schools

March 11
Washington Elementary
Spring Personality Pictures
6:00pm • Celebrating the Arts
Night



Math Motivation: Grant Brings Together ISU Professors and Vincennes Teachers

Gary Case leaned over the student desk and slit through the tape holding the cardboard box closed. He eagerly opened the box and pulled out a plastic bag filled with tiny black erasers. He then cut open another box and pulled out white boxes of dry erase markers. The individual-size dry erase boards are still on their way. "It's like going back to the states in the 1800s," said Case, Lincoln High School math department chair.

Yet it's just one way - an old-fashioned way - of getting the students at Vincennes Lincoln High School interested in math. High tech is meeting low tech as Indiana State University professors and math teachers at Lincoln and Clark Middle School are working together to improve math pass rates for the school corporation.



Vincennes math teachers Janis Hert, Dave Hill and Eric Mikiska discuss different activities they could use to engage students in learning algebra. ISU photo/Tony Campbell

Statewide 40 percent of high school students passed the 2008-09 Algebra End-of-Course Assessment Exam, in Vincennes that number hovered around 20 percent. The school has six sections of math lab for students who have not passed the algebra exam under the course assessment test or the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP). Students must pass the test to graduate from high school. Elizabeth Brown, Indiana State associate professor of math and computer science, said the tests do not require students to simply work a problem to its solution. "They've gone beyond solving," she said. "It's predicting and interpreting."

Indiana State and the Vincennes Community School Corporation collaborated to receive a two-year, \$95,000 grant from the federal Department of Education to help Vincennes improve its math scores. The grant earmarks \$7,000 each for the middle and high school to spend on supplies such as the dry erase boards, markers and erasers. Students figure out the math problems and hold up the boards for teachers to check. "The grant helped pay for every classroom to have a set of dry erase boards. We give them these and they can write out the answer. Kids for some reason like writing on these more than a piece of paper," Case said, adding the school has one set. "We used them in a calculus class and they love them. They're wondering when they can use them again."



ISU Associate Professor Marylin Leinenbach discusses using a graphing calculator with Melissa Schroeder, seventh grade math teacher. ISU photo/Tony Campbell

Twice a month Brown journeys south from Terre Haute to Vincennes to meet with the high school math teachers to brainstorm ideas for incorporating them in classrooms. "Teachers don't have time to do this planning during the regular work day," Brown said. "We've carved out this time where that's what they can focus on. We find activities and adapt them to the classroom. We look through books from the ISU math resource library. We find an idea and see how we can develop it further."

Marylin Leinenbach, associate professor of elementary education, makes the same journey twice a month to work with the middle school math teachers. "We're discussing lots of hands-on ways to teach the concepts," said seventh grade math teacher Melissa Schroeder. By giving the students a good understanding of math in middle school, teachers hope that will help them succeed once they

reach high school. "It's an algebra grant, but no matter what math you do it ties into algebra," Leinenbach said. "Anything we do increases children's knowledge."

Recently, middle school teachers used graphing calculators to practice plotting x and y coordinates in such a way that created a tree image on the calculators. They then were able to reflect that image across the y-axis. As Kelly Wisley, sixth grade math teacher, began to think about different ways she could do activities with the calculators, Leinenbach encouraged her, "Keep thinking. You're marvelous when you're adapting." Later, Leinenbach praised the middle school teachers for adapting the brainstormed activities for their classrooms. "I'm so amazed and pleased how they modify," she said. "I'll show them an activity and they tell me time and time again, 'This is how I will modify it for my students.'"

Middle school teachers said newly implement activities such as singing songs about y=mx+b and playing games with negative and positive integers are keeping their students engaged in math. "They're excited," said Barry Clegg, sixth grade math instructor.

Although teachers have used some activities this year, in a broader launch, the teachers will implement the projects, activities and centers they created this year during the 2010-11 school year. "I think we all understand what we're doing wasn't working," said Joe Keller, high school algebra teacher. "I constantly want to try new things and see if they stick. Her (Brown) coming in gives us new things and a new way of looking at things."

"We'll be able to do some things we otherwise wouldn't have the time to do," Case said about the planning sessions' impact. "There are eight people in our department, three are coaches and one is an official and they're already teaching six classes. It's very busy." Yet, all of the teachers want to make an impact in the classroom. "We're committed to making math more interesting to students," Case said.

Keller described many of his students as ones who need activities to understand and get involved in math. "We really need some activities to get them more involved," he said. "Those type of kids are learning while doing so they're not just sitting doing problems. They're doing things while learning." One of the ideas involves learning slopes through Hot Wheels cars. "Instead of just learning the slope formula, we'll build ramps and run Hot Wheels cars and see with three books high it will go this far and with five books high it will go this far," Case said.

From the individual dry erase boards to Algebra computer games to class activities, the teachers are working to help students understand mathematical principles. "We're looking at strategies, activities, games, Web sites and instructional tools - anything we can do to wake some up, to make them interested or maybe they think for a few days that math is fun," Case said. "We're trying to motivate."

Construction Update

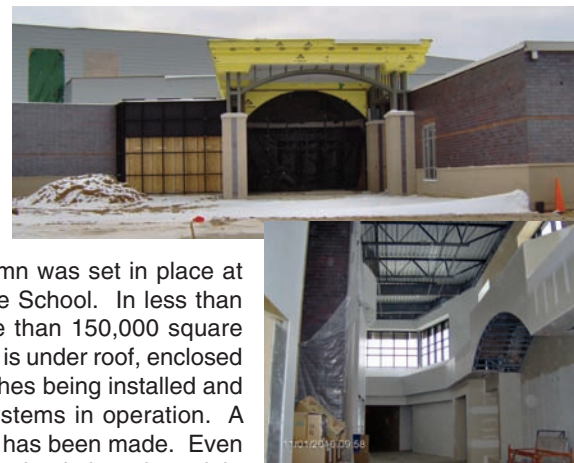
As 2010 begins the construction of the new Middle School churns on. The progress now spans the complete spectrum on the interior. In the sixth grade wing carpet and tile are being installed on the floors. Light fixtures and outlets are on. Mechanical units are providing heat. In other areas gypsum drywall is still being installed along with plumbing, electrical and heating systems. This span of construction will rapidly condense into a flurry of construction finishes all across the building.

The bids for the Instructional Video, Electronic Security systems; and Classroom, Office and Media Center furniture all came in below the estimate. Great news for the overall project budget. In addition planning and pricing for the building data network and phone system is wrapping up as well. All of these contribute to the final product of a highly efficient and effective learning environment for the sixth, seventh and eighth



graders of Vincennes.

February 12th of last year, the very first steel column was set in place at the new Middle School. In less than one year more than 150,000 square feet of building is under roof, enclosed with initial finishes being installed and mechanical systems in operation. A lot of progress has been made. Even more exciting is that in less than eight months the first sixth, seventh and eighth graders will walk across the threshold of this new facility for the first time. A new decade will welcome a new and expanded opportunity for the youth of Vincennes to continue their journey to adulthood in the new Clark Middle School. Very exciting times lay ahead.



Expected Completion Date

June 2010

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Letter from the Superintendent

When the State of Indiana took over the general fund it took away some local control. Now, with the 4.5% cut to the general fund issued by the governor, which amounts to \$787,443, it is easy to see why I opposed the state controlling the general fund.

In these hard economic times, it is easy to lose focus on why we have public education. Our free Democratic Society was built on public education and that is what has made the United States strong. Education has always been a vital part of molding America, and it will continue to be vital in these tough times.

The governor had to make a decision on the state budget and he made the decision to keep the State of Indiana financially solvent. In years past, Indiana school corporations have faced similar financial issues. The one major difference is that this cut in K-12 funding is deeper than corporations have faced in the past.

With that stated, now Vincennes Community School Corporation must implement a plan and make tough

decisions at the local level to reduce costs. Our objective will be the same as the governor's reason for cutting K-12 funding, to remain financially solvent at the local level.

The financial status of the state and our economy will eventually turn around, but until that becomes a reality, we must make some tough decisions just as our governor had to make, in order to maintain the mission of Vincennes Community School Corporation.

This school corporation must not lose sight of why we have public schools in the first place, or that children are our most valuable resource and the reason education is so precious. As we struggle with all the events that have been handed down to us, let us keep this in perspective. In the present, as in the tough times of the past, we can not forget to keep the focus on children.

"...children are our most valuable resource and the reason education is so precious"

Douglas D. Rose
Superintendent of Schools



Local Agencies Provide Assistance

Santa has had a little help the past several years providing for the children of the Vincennes Community School Corporation. Starting in October local agencies and the school social workers begin thinking about the upcoming Christmas season. From October on we begin gathering information from families on specific needs that children might have. We take this information and connect with local agencies who in turn sponsor the families.

We are thankful to have such a giving community that is willing to help our children and families. Many organizations put forth a great deal of effort and time in connecting our families with gifts for Christmas. These organizations include Good Samaritan Hospital, Vincennes University, Red Skelton Fund, Generations/RSVP, Hucks, Vincennes Fire Department, Social Ministries, Gemtron, Friends who Care and Count, The Salvation Army, various local churches, community members and teachers within the corporation.

This year alone the above organizations helped the five elementary schools, Clark Middle School and Lincoln High School

sponsor approximately 350 children in our community. The gifts ranged from clothing, shoes and coats to school supplies, toys and gift cards. Some children were treated to dinner at local restaurants, shopping at local stores and even a ride in a firetruck with the local firefighters.

In addition to a pitch-in lunch to raise monetary donations, Clark Middle School is in its second year with a program called Caring Soles. This program originated from a local community member who wanted to provide shoes for children. This program continues through community donations and is an excellent resource to have during the holiday season.

The giving spirit of our community has allowed many children and families to enjoy a wonderful Christmas this year. On behalf of the VCSC and the families that benefited from your generosity, we would like to thank all the community organizations and individuals that shared the spirit of giving this holiday season.

Through the Halls A look at academic life at every level

Elementary School

Circling the State with Song

Our corporation's elementary music programs are proud to participate in Circle The State With Song each year. In 1989, the Indiana Music Educators Association initiated and sponsored a children's choral festival called "Circle the State with Song." This statewide festival was organized to provide students with an exciting and quality choral performance with other students from their area, provide an opportunity for music honor students who are ready for more challenging music to work with guest choral clinicians, to provide music teachers an opportunity to observe and learn from the clinician working with the students.

Students are selected from their school choirs to participate in Circle the State and are given the music prior to Christmas

and gather together during January and February to rehearse.

This year's Circle The State Festival will be held March 6 on the campus of Lincoln High School. There will be approximately 200 elementary students from the Southern portion of Indiana joining together in song.

In addition to the Circle Festival, students have the opportunity to audition for the Indiana Honor Choir that performs during the annual music conference held in January. Over 1,000 students audition and the choir is made up of 140 students from the state.

This year the VCSC had seven students selected to be a part of this prestigious choir. This year's honor choir students were Seth Arnold, Washington Elementary; Carolina Provines, Alexis Edgin, Becca Rutherford, Sammy Primus, Diana Coffman, Aly Graves and Abby Mercer, Franklin Elementary.



Middle School

Clark Drama Department to present "Peter Pan"

"Peter Pan", the musical, will be presented by the Clark Middle School Drama Department, at Lincoln High School on Thursday, February 25th, 7:00pm; Friday, February 26th, 7:00pm; Saturday, February 27th, 7:00pm; and Sunday, February 28th, 3:00pm.



A live orchestra, including string instruments, will also be used for this spectacular production! The flying effects for the show are provided by ZFX Flying Incorporated, the backdrops are from GROSH - Los Angeles, California, and the costumes are from The Costumer - Schenectady, New York.

Premium Reserved seats (center section and aisle seats) are available for \$7.00 and General Reserved seats (all other seats) are available for \$5.00. Please call 812-882-6101 for your tickets. Tickets will also be available 30 minutes before each show.

Thursday Night's show is "PCD" Night. For every ticket sold, \$1.00 will go to the PCD Foundation to help the Travis and Bessie Connor Family and their daughter, McKenna, find a cure for PCD.



Clark Middle School Geography Bee Finalists



The CMS Spell Bowl team captured 1st place in the Indiana Academic Spell bowl competition held at Woodrow Wilson Middle School in Terre Haute.

welcomed by the city council. With their hosts, there were bonfires, flashlight tag, DDR and Guitar Hero, pumpkin carving, a birthday party and trick-or-treating. Several students stayed with band members, so they attended practices, helped with the haunted house, and went to cheer the Pride of the Green as they competed in state competition. They went with Mrs. Query and her French 4 class to IU where they attended French classes and ate lunch at a French restaurant (one boy was thrilled to see "real chicken with real sauce"! They spent a day in Indianapolis, where they visited the Indiana State Museum and did some obligatory shopping. One special day was spent in a guided tour of the Amish country near Montgomery. They ate a huge meal in an Amish home, took a buggy ride, and even visited an Amish schoolhouse.

When it came time for the students to leave again, there were many tears and promises to stay in touch. Not only did the French students have an unforgettable time, but their host families were greatly enriched by sharing their way of life and learning about another country, another language, and another culture.



Spotlight on Distinguished Alumni

ANDREW KRAMER *Class of 2003*

Born in Vincennes to Brian and Donna Kramer, Andrew attended Tecumseh-Harrison Elementary and Clark Middle School before graduating with academic honors from Lincoln High School in 2003. He began his swimming and music careers upon attending Clark. While at Lincoln, Andrew continued in both as a member of the marching, jazz and concert bands and was a four-year letter winner and two-year captain of the swim team. He was also a member of the student council, National Honor Society and an officer in the Foreign Language Club.

Upon graduation, Andrew was selected to attend the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He was an active member of the Academy's triathlon club competing in all distances, culminating that experience by competing in Ironman Arizona in 2007. He graduated from the Academy that same year with a Bachelor of Science degree in Military History, a minor in German and a commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Air Force. Andrew attended Undergraduate Pilot Training at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, flying the T-6A Texan II and the T-1A Jayhawk. Following pilot training, he was selected to fly the largest aircraft in the American inventory, the C-5B Galaxy.

In July 2007 Andrew married Rebecca Brown of Monument, Colorado. After assignments to Illinois and Texas, they are enjoying their lives in Dover, Delaware. Andrew currently flies missions in the C-5 throughout the world including combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Rebecca performs volunteer work for several non-profit agencies around the Dover area.



2010 Night for Kids • Saturday, February 27

This year's event "A Night at the Races" will be held at the Vincennes Moose Lodge with meal provided by Carla's Catering. More than ever, your help is needed. This exciting event provides an opportunity for us to work together to improve the academic advancement of our students. Proceeds are used directly on children via classroom grants, graduate scholarships, etc. Tickets for the event are \$100 for couples and \$50 for individuals. If you would like to make a donation of a silent, live auction or cash donation, please contact Amanda Linn at 886-6949.

Vincennes Education Foundation