

Greetings:

A new school year will be starting in September after Labor Day weekend, so I wanted to give you a brief overview of some of the exciting things going on at our school district.

--One of the exciting things happening is that the federal program (CEP) that enables us to serve free meals to qualified students has now been expanded so that everyone eats free, regardless of income, at Sand Hill & Belfair elementary schools, Hawkins Middle School and James Taylor alternative High School this year—all due to the overall levels of free and reduced lunch needs at these four schools. This is a boon to our kids and families as it ensures two solid meals a day (breakfast and lunch) to students where food may be scarce at home (and this eliminates stigma etc.). North Mason High School did not qualify this year but may possibly in the future.

Ensuring students eat so they are ready to learn and can control their behaviors is a part of our focus on the whole child. By making sure we meet the needs of our children in as many ways as possible—emotionally, physically, as well as academically—we increase the chances of each of our children to succeed. Children living in poverty (and we have many of them in our school district) often face increased stresses and pressures in life that interfere with their ability to learn. By meeting the needs of the whole child, we enhance learning for all students.

--This summer, the football stadium stands have been contracted and work has commenced so that we are expecting it all to be completed later this fall. The new stands will be covered, and we are retaining the old stands (money saving) to be the visitor's side.

--We plan to run a levy in February and will soon be putting together a levy committee. Many people think the state eliminated levies with the McCleary court decision, but that is not so. We are still reliant on levy funds to provide for those staff, materials and services not included in the legislature's definition of basic education. This includes some special services, athletics and other student activities but also many positions essential to district operations, things even as essential as custodial services, and keeping buildings and grounds safe, and including not fully funding transportation costs.

McCleary does not fully fund the classified positions that support our children in classrooms every day, nor teacher needs or counselors, nurses and therapists on whom our students rely. We will be asking you, our community, to support our efforts on behalf of our students. We expect to continue to be frugal and keep costs to our citizens as low as we can.

Finally, school starts in a short time. Please help us celebrate our incoming students and support them as much as you can. When children know the adults in their lives are with them and supporting them—and this is all of us in our community—they respond in many ways positively and their path to responsible citizenship is more readily and successfully navigated.

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North Mason School District