



GALENA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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SUPERINTENDENT
Jim Merriner

August 19, 2019

Dear GCSD Families and Community Members:

I recently learned that students in Brazil start school at 7:00am so that they can finish their formal education by noon each day in order to have their mid-day meal with their families. Do not worry ... I have no plans to advocate for such an early start (or end). However, this cultural emphasis on the importance of family reminds me, and hopefully you as well, how important it is for each of us to devote ourselves to each other as family does.

Speaking of family ... today marks our first day of classes in Galena where we welcome each student into GCSD's family of learners. All of our district's programs are doing very well. Our school choice homeschool support program (IDEA) is once again experiencing an increase in student enrollment. Enrollment at GILA and SHS appears akin to last year. GCSD anticipates, once again, our largest enrollment district-wide. The continued increase in our enrollment numbers speaks volumes to the quality of services that we provide our families statewide and, more importantly, to the variety of educational options that we offer for families to determine the most appropriate educational plan for their students.

The 8 million (7.6 million state grant dollars) remodeling of the old military "Headquarters" building on the GILA campus is in full swing. Now referred to as the "S.T.E.M. Building," (STEM = science, technology, engineering, and math), this renovation will provide SHS/GILA high school students a state-of-the-art math and science instructional facility. This was the district's number one priority in our six-year capital improvement plan. Everything remains on track for the planned move-in date at the beginning of next school year (2020-2021). During their August 14, 2019 meeting, the GCSD School Board approved the district's new six-year capital improvement plan. Moving forward, the proposed number one project is an energy efficiency upgrade to the aged GILA Composite instructional facility. GCSD plans to submit an application to the Department of Education and Early Development's Major Maintenance Capital Improvement Project grant program on September 1 for potential funding for this project. The proposed number two project is an energy efficiency upgrade to the aged SHS instructional facility. GCSD and the City of Galena are proud of the continuous improvements to our facilities. These improvements allow greater utilization of these buildings in support of the district's educational mission.

During their August meeting, the GCSD School Board reviewed district summaries and school summaries from last spring's administration of Alaska's state assessments in English/language arts, math, and science. This was the third year of the PEAKS English/language arts and math assessments. GCSD will use these assessments to determine areas within our English/language arts, math, and science curricula that provide data points worthy of celebration and, conversely, data points that provide an opportunity for improvement. Outlined below is a snapshot of the district and state results.

Spring 2019 State Testing Results

| Assessment | GCSD% Proficient | State% Proficient | GCSD% Advanced | State% Advanced |
|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| ELA | 40.2 | 29 | 18.7 | 10.1 |
| Math | 30.6 | 29.5 | 3.2 | 6.2 |
| Science | 30.5 | 25.8 | 28.5 | 18.9 |

Families will receive individual student reports in the mail. Your school's principal will have school results. If you would like to discuss your child's or your school's results, please contact the principal of your school.

In closing, I want to thank all of our families for partnering with GCSD in the education of your child(ren). The district is extremely proud of the educational services we provide families statewide, and we could not do it without your input and guidance. Thank you for that support, and thank you for providing to your school's principal any improvement suggestions that you might have; GCSD is always looking to improve educational services to our students and their families. And please feel comfortable contacting me at the phone number above or the email address below if you would like to discuss any aspect of this letter in greater detail, or if you would like more information on any district initiative.

Yours in Education,



Jim Merriner, GCSD Superintendent
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