

Friday, March 15, 2013

Dear Family and Friends of the School District of Fort Atkinson,

*"If you're lucky enough to be Irish, then you're lucky enough."
Popular Irish Saying*

Happy St. Patrick's weekend! Even though I am Irish and the day has always been a day for celebration among my relatives and Irish friends, to me it is also a day where with any luck we are beginning to finally turn the corner to spring.

I want to thank everyone for the nice cards and notes I have received of late as I close in on the end of my career here in Fort Atkinson on June 30th. I also want to extend my thanks to a wonderful committee of people who decided that on Sunday, March 17, they would hold a Community Open House for me at the High School from 11 a.m., to 2 p.m., and a dinner with Corned Beef at Jansen's in the evening. I sincerely appreciate the kindness that has been extended to me in affirming my work here in Fort Atkinson the past fourteen years.

I still have plenty of work to do before I "put the keys on the table" and I look forward to seeing many of you this weekend.

New Superintendent: Upon receipt of this letter you will know who the new Superintendent will be. If you happen to see a Board Member in the next few days, be sure to thank them for the many hours they devoted to conducting this search in a transparent and diligent manner. They are Rodger Thomann, Board President; Carrie Chisholm, Board Vice President; Scott Johnson, Clerk; Kristin Wallace, Treasurer; and Bob Chady, Member. They define what representing the citizens' means in its purest sense in their efforts these past several weeks. District Finance Director Jason Demerath, and my assistants, Debbie Kopps and Cindy Fairfield provided the Board great support through the process.

Why we are a BEACON DISTRICT: The good news has really been flowing in of late. Since my last writing we learned the following:

1. **Fort Atkinson School District has been chosen as having Wisconsin's most EXEMPLARY Reading Program by the Wisconsin Reading Association.** Over the past several years we have placed a great emphasis on literacy. We adopted the *Comprehensive Reading Model* where our teachers are coached and receive training from two of our district literacy coaches, Mrs. Candice Johnson and Mrs. Rachel Ehlen. We have had many districts come to Fort Atkinson to observe our literacy program. Amy Oakley, our Director of Instruction, has provided great leadership and training to our teachers and principals in advancing our school district in literacy. Later in April the International Reading Association (IRA) will honor our district in an awards ceremony in San Antonio, Texas, at the IRA Annual Literacy Convention.
2. We are one of the **WISCONSIN Department of Instruction Nominee for the 2013 US Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools recognition!** This recognition can be attributed to the many energy conservation measures we have implemented since 2006 that include geothermal heating and cooling systems in four of our buildings, solar energy panels above our high school and middle school pools, photovoltaic solar panels on the roof at Purdy, (and soon Rockwell), the extensive installation of energy saving light bulbs, and our wind turbine. As noted at our last Board Meeting report on energy savings—we have incurred almost \$630,000 in energy savings since 2006. Mr. Dennis Kuchenmeister, our Director of Buildings and Grounds, has provided the leadership and vision in making sure that all of our buildings have GRADED OUT as green ribbon schools validating the energy efficiency we now have in place across the district.

3. **Jones Dairy Farm Inc., has been selected the *DPI Business Friend of Education*** for its support of our Industrial Technology Education Program! Earlier in the year, it was reported Philip Jones and Jones Dairy Farm, Inc., per our Sponsorship Program, designated \$36,000 to be used to improve and upgrade our Tech. Ed. department equipment. In addition, this company will invite us to take part in internships and work with their supervisors complimenting nicely are “school to work” initiatives. If the above were not enough, Jones Dairy Farm will also sponsor two scholarships to MATC worth \$1,250 each for students who took Tech. Ed. courses in our high school and plan to pursue a certification program at MATC which should allow them to become highly trained and attractive to an industry or manufacturing company looking for qualified, trained workers.
4. **Kohl Fellowship Award Winner—Lisa Hollenberger of Purdy Elementary:** We were pleased to receive word that Lisa Hollenberger, a Special Education teacher at Purdy, has been selected as a Kohl Fellowship Award Winner. Lisa, in the relatively short time she had been in our district, has demonstrated excellent methods of helping students learn while also sharing with colleagues strategies they too, can employ to help struggling students. All of us in Fort Atkinson share a great reflective pride in her selection as one of Wisconsin’s finest educators!
5. **Our Luther IMC and Special Education Efforts Honored!** We received great news that our Luther Elementary School has been invited to Syracuse University with all expenses paid to present at a national conference on our successful efforts to coordinate services from our IMC to advance the teaching and learning for our special needs students. The University of Wisconsin Whitewater, very familiar with our services nominated us for this honor. Michelle Maniaci, our Luther IMC Director, Stacy Hartin, a Luther Special Education teacher, and Emily Bouvier, 4th grade teacher, will represent our district on this national stage. We congratulate Luther on this wonderful honor!

As I mentioned the above news has been most welcomed!

School Board Election is Tuesday, April 2: We have three candidates running for two seats on the Board of Education – Bob Chady, a current Board Member, Kent Koebke, and Robert Vincent. We thank all three for their interest in serving on the Board. You will want to mark your calendar to make sure you vote. Some, due to spring break, will want to file an *absentee ballot ahead of time* if you are going out of town on April 2.

The Governor’s Proposed Budget for Pre-K-12 Schools—Parents Should be Concerned! In late February, the Governor proposed his 2013-2015 Biennium Budget. Despite the fact that the state will end the year with 1.7 billion unexpended, the proposed budget freezes public school districts’ revenue limits while increasing state payments to independent private, charter and voucher schools by \$600 per K-8 pupil and \$1400 per high school pupil.

How is this fair?

Adding insult to injury the achievement measures and report cards public schools are held accountable for do not apply to private/voucher/and choice schools.

It has been encouraging to see that some leading senators including Republican Senator Luther Olsen, Chair for the Education Committee, and others are listening to their constituents and have been publicly critical of the Governor’s revenue limit freeze. In the House of Representatives the sentiment as of this writing is to support the Governor’s K-12 revenue limit freeze and voucher plan. While school funding should never be a partisan issue, the Republican majority in the House favors the revenue limit freeze while democrats support a modest increase.

For Fort Atkinson the revenue limit freeze is devastating. Most school districts were assuming that revenue limits, on the heels of Act 10 and the defeat of the state deficit that was the huge issue in the last biennium, expected a rebound after the \$550 reduction per pupil in the first year of the last biennium. Senator Olsen initially proposed a

\$200 revenue limit increase that would be reasonable and not an unfair burden on tax payers per stopping the erosion of public school programs and increasing class sizes.

A modest increase of \$200 per student next year compared with a revenue cap freeze means that in Fort Atkinson we went from \$17,000 to the good per meeting our needs for 2013-14 to a minimum deficit of \$227,000 if we have to endure a revenue limit freeze! This is really bad news not only for Fort Atkinson but all districts that see similar shifts on their revenue limit sheets.

What can parents do?

Contact your legislative representatives and let your voices be heard that a freeze in the revenue limit to public schools while increasing non-accountable private/voucher/choice schools in light of a 1.7 billion surplus is unconscionable per the support being withheld to help public schools prosper in Fort Atkinson and in Wisconsin. At minimum Wisconsin Public Schools need a minimum commitment of \$200 per pupil as originally proposed by Education Chair Senator Luther Olsen. Legislating such an increase will consume less than 40% of the unexpended 1.7 billion in the state budget.

Some legislators will share with you that school districts can always go to referendum to seek permission to spend above the revenue limits. This is a *Pontius Pilate* approach of “washing one’s hands” of the constitutional obligation legislators and the state have to provide support and adequate funding for ALL public school children. School Districts do not desire to go to referendum for BASIC NEEDS of children, nor should they have to! If a legislator shares this view with you they are abrogating one of their most important duties.

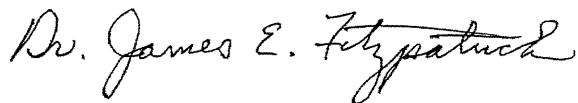
As my colleague Don Childs, Superintendent in the Clinton School District, noted “For all of its faults, public education is the only abundant, democratizing resource in American Society.” We can’t let a public school system like Wisconsin’s that has always been among the nations’ best continue to erode and become a shadow of what it once was. Below are our representatives and their contact information. Please request of them fair funding for your children in Fort Atkinson and children in all public schools in Wisconsin.

- Representative Stephen Nass, rep.nass@legis.wisconsin.gov, (608) 266-5715
- Representative Andy Jorgensen, rep.jorgensen@legis.wisconsin.gov, (608) 266-3790
- Senator Neal Kedzie, sen.kedzie@legis.wisconsin.gov, (608) 266-2635

Calendar and Spring Break: On the back of this page, is the one-page calendar for 2013-14. As a reminder, Spring Break begins at noon on March 28 and classes will resume on Monday, April 8.

In closing, I am ready for spring and getting outdoors. We are rapidly closing in on the fourth and final quarter of the School year. In April and May the pace of activities and the wonderful events that are a part of our Learning Community will give me a chance to see many of you. Take care and my best wishes to all of our families!

With kindest regards,



Dr. James Fitzpatrick
Superintendent



School District of Fort Atkinson 2013-2014

August '13						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

December '13						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April '14						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

First Day of School - September 3

Non-Student Contact Days (Teacher Contract Days)

Teacher Workday (former SWEIO) - August 26
Convocation Day - August 27
Building/In-Service Days - August 28 and 29
Semester Records Day - January 24

New Teachers Report

August 21 and 22

Noon Dismissal - Teacher Records Days

October 31, April 4 (end of quarters)
June 10 (last day of school)

September '13						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

January '14						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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May '14						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Noon Dismissal - Staff Development

October 4, December 13, January 23, February 13, May 2

Holiday/Vacation (No Classes)

Labor Day - September 2
No Classes - November 1
Comp Day for Fall Conferences - November 27
Thanksgiving - November 28 - 29
Winter Break - December 23 - January 1
No Classes - February 14
Spring Break - March 24 - 28
Comp Day for Spring Conferences - April 18 (Good Friday)
Memorial Day - May 26
Independence Day - July 3 and 4

October '13						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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February '14						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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23	24	25	26	27	28	

June '14						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

November '13						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

March '14						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

July '14						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Tentative Conferences

Elem: Nov. 14, Nov. 19, Feb. 6, Feb. 11
MS: Nov. 12, Nov. 14, Feb. 25, Feb. 27
HS: Nov. 7, Nov. 11, Apr. 10

High School Graduation - June 8

(Seniors last day - June 6)

Summer School

Start Date - June 18
Last Day Elem., Middle School - July 25
Last Day High School - July 31