

June 15, 2012

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

"It's never too late or too early to start trying to be the person you want to be, a better, happier you."

Riley Wiese (chosen by classmates of class of 2012 as student speaker at Graduation)

We had a magnificent graduation on Sunday, June 10, as we bid farewell to the Class of 2012, the 124th class to graduate from Fort Atkinson High School. Two hundred and thirty-one students crossed the stage receiving their diplomas in a ceremony that had the gift of song and inspirational messages from classmates, Mr. Matt Noll, a high school English teacher chosen by the students, and Dr. Zaspel, High School Principal. It was a most fitting ending to a K-12 educational journey in our learning community. We wish this class the very best as they move on to the next stages of their lives. Many will move on to college, some will enter the work world, and nine will serve in our armed forces.

The quote above I lifted from the remarks of Riley Wiese, a very talented young man who his classmates chose to give the student address. Riley had a very powerful and sustaining message for his classmates in quoting E.E Cummings in sharing that, *"It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are."*

We wish the Class of 2012 the very best!

Happy Father's Day: I want to wish all the fathers out there special wishes on their day Sunday, June 17. I am always reminded of the small boy's definition of Father's Day, *"It's just like Mother's Day only you don't spend so much."*

Summer School – It is still not too late to register! We begin Monday, June 18. If you need to register for some classes please come to the Luther Summer School Office early this Monday. We will be in offices by 7:30 AM to register any students wanting to enroll in classes.

College Application Boot Camp: For juniors, we are offering an excellent opportunity that you really want to take advantage of going into your senior year. On Sunday, June 24 from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM, you will have an opportunity to get a jump start on your college application essays. If you talk to any graduating senior they will tell you this can be a daunting task. This session is being offered to help ease the anxiousness by getting an early start and a "leg up" on this important responsibility you will have to complete by no later than the end of the first semester. With academics, sports, activities, working and all the things that seniors get involved in as they finish their last year of high school, you really want to do the college admissions process RIGHT, and be positioned well for your next steps after leaving Fort High. If you would like to be involved in this FREE service and opportunity come to the High School IMC on June 24.

Dates to Mark on Your Calendar: I will remind you again in my July newsletter but please note the following dates:

- Registration for fall classes will take place on Monday and Tuesday August 6 and 7.
- First day of school is Tuesday, September 4.
- Fall sports will begin in August...I will list exact dates for each activity in my July letter.

Thoughts Regarding the Recall Election: Below are some thoughts I shared with my administrators related to the recall election I thought were appropriate to share with you as well:

1. Relief that it is over regardless of one's stance on the matter.
2. Move forward the best we can appealing to our local citizens for continued support along with expressing gratitude for past support.
3. Advocate strongly for legislation that provides appropriate funding to maintain programs and services and support new reform initiatives being mandated by state and federal law.
4. Work hard to bring people together for education—and strategize ways to gain and maintain support while eliminating partisanship and polarization.
5. Continue as a learning community to be devoted to children and students in a manner that all would recognize the integrity and fidelity behind our efforts.
6. Care for every kid and family as if they were our own flesh and blood.
7. Support each other in this learning community as a team that never loses sight as to why we chose our profession.

If we do these things, we will not only endure but prevail in our mission in this learning community.

Why We Are a Beacon District: At that same meeting with administrators, I also noted just some (nowhere near all) the reasons why we are a school of choice in this area and a district in this state that is often studied for its innovative programs and services. We could not do this without the increased support granted to us by our citizens in passing the operations referendum last April. I believe after reading the bullet entries below one would agree that the return on investment has been fruitful in meeting the needs of our students.

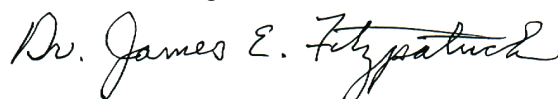
- We have three FFA/Vocational Agriculture teachers, most districts that have the program have one. Our FBLA programs are growing with a solid base being established at the middle school with kids continuing in this club at the high school.
- We have Family and Consumer Ed. at middle and high school levels. Some districts have eliminated middle school FACE.
- We have articulations with MATC and other tech schools. Some districts have the same and maybe more, but some don't have as many as we have.
- We have a great Special Education Program. Offering great services to students and families. By middle school and high school we house all programs for special needs exceeding those offered by most districts.
- We offer three foreign languages which many schools are lucky to have two and many only offer one. We also offer two foreign languages at the middle school.
- Our technology has moved forward with net-books, I-Pads, Google Docs, greater bandwidth, and smart-boards in nearly every classroom.
- We offer Gifted and Talented Programming (GATE) at elementary, middle, and high school levels, staffed by 1.5 FTE. Few districts our size have that staffing or the program offerings.
- Reading Support...nobody in this area offers the programming, has the staffing, or the cutting edge practice we employ in our literacy efforts. With our Comprehensive Literacy Program, we are regarded by the DPI as a model literacy program for others in the state to emulate—and many have shown interest in their travels to our district to observe our practice.
- Partnerships with the business community—teacher support programs, Reality Fair, portfolio/exit interview program, and now sponsorships, just to name a few. We have a close relationship with our Chamber of Commerce and businesses that few other school districts and communities can claim.

- Electives at the middle and the high school—exceed what many other districts offer.
- We have English Learning Language (ELL) support that is more robust in our learning community than most with four full time teachers serving our elementary, middle and high school levels.
- We have an IMC/Tech integrator (formerly known as librarians) in every building in our district. Few districts that can claim that level of support in our area.
- Our music programs and ensembles are among some of the best in the state with band, vocal and strings programs and award winning show choirs, marching bands, and WSMA small and large group music opportunities.
- We have 12 Advanced Placement Courses on the books, few schools in our area even offer half that offering.
- We offer a wide variety of co-curricular activities, exceeding most of the schools in our area. Except for not offering gymnastics and hockey, we measure up BIG per sports offerings compared with the biggest sports programs in the state.
- Our clubs are a vital part of the rituals and culture of our schools. The banners in the high school give us some glimpse of the opportunities (not to mention the many programs offered at the middle school and elementary buildings); but then there are even other opportunities that pop up that our kids get behind like “Teach Me How to Blackhawk” or publications like The Mark that make people take notice of the spirit and joy that comes from the “hidden opportunities.” Or a program like we host on Rock Day where the students themselves take ownership of presenting their schools with a solemnity and respect for our veterans and armed forces that was first fostered in them at early elementary veteran day observances.
- We exceed scholarship awards of any schools in our area. We are a small town that plays BIG in these opportunities, with many local scholarships. A nearby high school with more than three hundred students, garnered \$500,000 compared to the \$1.3 million afforded to Fort grads in the class of 2012.
- We have a Fort Community Foundation where we are fortunate in receiving annual support that few districts can count on per a similar level of assistance.
- Our staff development efforts have remained consistent in providing staff member’s opportunities to improve themselves in their content areas, technology, and research-based strategies and practices that advance teaching and learning.

In summary, we have accomplished all of the above through visionary efforts of many, diligent fiscal management, a magnificent educational team, *and the great support of a progressive community* that understands that an investment in education is an investment in our community and the future betterment of our society.

As I close this letter and the 2011-2012 school year, let me do so by expressing my heartfelt thanks for another great year and for supporting finer education in the learning community of Fort Atkinson. Have a great summer and I look forward to seeing you at summer school and community events!

With kindest regards,



Dr. James Fitzpatrick
Superintendent
School District of Fort Atkinson