

Friday, December 10, 2010

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

"Christmas is the season for kindling the fire of hospitality in the hall, the genial flame of charity in the heart."

Washington Irving

Let me begin this letter by wishing you and yours the very best this holiday season. As we host our winter concerts it is great to see parents, grandparents, and families join us in celebrating the season! I like the quote above. It gives us a perspective of reality and what we should strive toward in the upcoming New Year. The holidays can be a healing time for us personally and as a nation. On the heels of the most bitter political period I can remember, I think all of us are tired of the partisan bickering and want to move on and move forward!

I also want to extend a special holiday wish to those who have relatives serving in the armed forces, especially in dangerous places. May they be safe and out of harms way and home soon. In my thoughts as well are those who may be spending a first Christmas without a loved one they may have lost this past year. This is a difficult experience especially that first holiday season.

How to Run For a Seat on the Board of Education: If you are considering running for a School Board position, I would like to direct you to our website, www.fortschools.org, where you can learn about how to run for a seat on the Board, what the work entails, and the timelines established for running for a seat. We have two seats that are up this coming spring and Mr. Kent Koebke who will be completing his second term (six years total) has declared he will not run again this spring.

Anyone interested in running for one of these seats should contact the District's Director of Business Services, Jason Demerath, in the Luther Administration Center at 201 Park Street or by phone at 920.563.7800. Those interested will be given election materials including an election schedule, a Wisconsin Association of School Board (WASB) Guide for Candidates, and the necessary forms. The deadline for filing the Declaration of Candidacy form and the Campaign Registration Statement is 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 4, 2011. If a primary election is needed, it would be held on Tuesday, February 15, 2011. The elected Board Members would take office on Monday, April 25, 2010.

In my twelve years as Superintendent, it has been a pleasure to work with many dedicated Board Members. Boardmanship is a time commitment but I think for the most part manageable and most who have served would tell you, the work is rewarding.

A Message to Our Community from the School Board celebrating American Education Week: (You may have read this in the Daily Union during American Education Week. In the event you did not see this I wanted to print it in this letter). *"Students, schools and communities across the nation are celebrating American Education Week in November. On behalf of the Board of Education of the Fort Atkinson School District, we too would like to extend our thanks to our educators and staff who commit daily to helping our children and youth meet their academic and personal potential."*

Our District recently noted student performances reflecting outstanding achievement on state and national measurements like the ACT, Advanced Placement, and WKCE exams. We have also seen great accomplishments by our athletic teams and musical and theater students as evidenced by the impressive finish this past weekend at the WIAA State Girls' Swimming Meet, and the fabulous production of GREASE that filled our auditorium on four performance nights. These and other efforts are supported by an army of dedicated professionals who share a common mission and a passion for education in all its many forms.

No acknowledgement would be complete without recognizing the numerous volunteers, service groups and businesses, and residents of our District who contribute in so many important ways to cultivate our most valuable assets: our children. We also appreciate the fundamental contribution of our students' families, as parent involvement and encouragement are essential to their success.

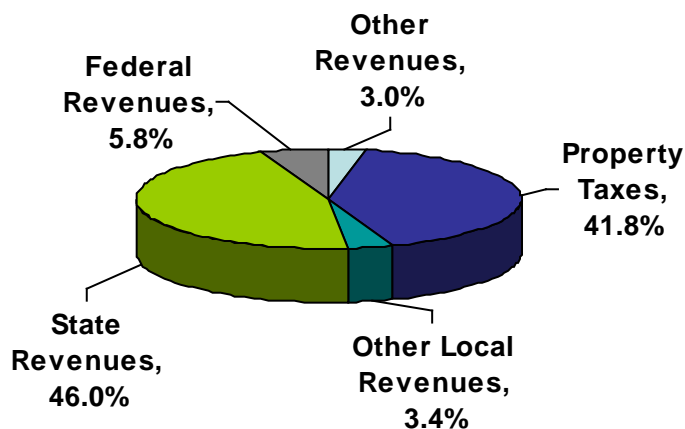
Mathematician and Philosopher Alfred North Whitehead was quoted, "No one who achieves success does so without the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude." In honor of American Education Week, we invite you to join us in thanking someone you know who has had an impact on the education of your child or a student in our community."

School District Funding and Expenditures in Fort Atkinson: The Wisconsin School Board Association encourages districts to share such information with citizens, so I hope the information below gives you a good understanding of our operations.

Below are descriptions of our revenue sources. The pie graph gives you a good idea of the proportional share of state aid we receive versus the local burden paid through property taxes.

- State aid revenues: 46.0%
- Local property taxes 41.8%
- Federal aid revenues 5.8%
- Other 3.4 % (includes admissions receipts from athletics and fine arts, student parking fees, athletic participation fees, interest on investments, gifts, drivers' education fees, registration fees, and revenues from rentals, summer school fees and student fines).
- Other 3.0% (includes open enrollment tuition, refunds of prior-year expenses, Medicaid services reimbursement and miscellaneous (liquidated damages from employees, etc.).

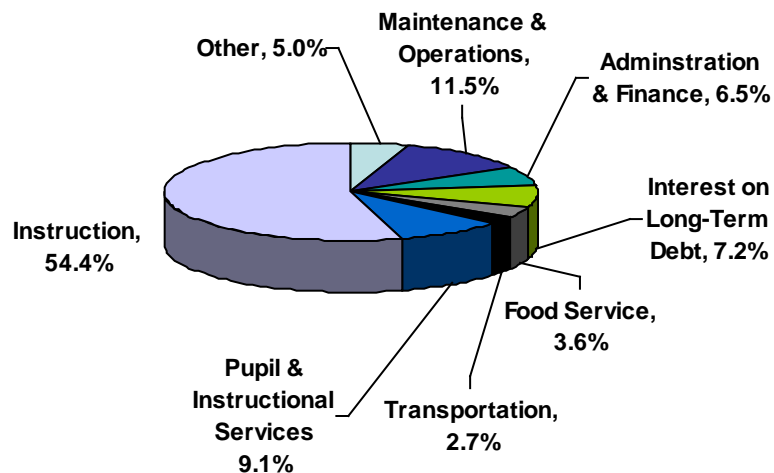
Revenues



Here is a look at our expenditures:

- Instruction 54.4 %
- Building and Grounds (maintenance) 11.5%
- Pupil Services 9.1 %
- Administration and Finance 6.5 %
- Interest and long term debt 7.2%
- Food Service 3.6%
- Transportation 2.7%
- Other 5.0% (includes technology, telephone service, property liability and workers comp insurance, post-employment benefits, open enrollment tuition (out), and our community service program).

Expenditures



School Cancellations Due to Weather: We will utilize our ALERT NOW system in calling homes as soon as a decision is made in the mornings or in the event we would need to dismiss early. In the event this system would fail (unlikely) you would be wise to go to our website for our message, or to listen to WFAW (940 AM). Those are my first two contacts, before I notify the TV stations.

First Call Reminder per Open Enrollment Application Window February 7-25 before 4 p.m.: I want to make sure families are aware of the open enrollment window. For families now living in our District who may be considering moving out of our District but wish for their children to remain in the Fort Schools or for parents from other districts wanting to enroll their students in our School District, you may apply very soon on line once the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) prepares their ON-LINE OPEN ENROLLMENT APPLICATION. We will also receive hard copy applications in January.

Please contact my assistant, Debbie Kopps, at 563-7807, for information on open enrollment. The process is very simple and painless; it is just a matter of doing it within the timeline noted above. Any applications coming in after the deadline cannot be accepted per the open enrollment laws. So please mark your calendars and let us help you if you need our assistance.

Upcoming Holiday Concerts: *I am at the mercy of the post office per our bulk mail permit. My apologies if the dates and times of the events listed below will have occurred by the time you receive this letter. Hopefully this letter arrives home Friday, December 10th in time to remind you of the following:*

- **Holiday High School Concert Sunday, December 12, at 1:00 p.m.:** Our High School Music Department will present its annual Holiday Concert this Sunday, December 13. I hope you can attend. It is a magnificent site to see all the students perform at this concert. In addition, you will really be into the Christmas and holiday spirit after the performance.
- **Middle School (Grades 5-8) Choir and Orchestra, Sunday, December 12, at 3:30 p.m. in the High School Auditorium:** Come see the progress made by these students with some great Christmas and holiday music.
- **Middle School Band Concert Monday, December 13, at the High School at 7 p.m.:** Come enjoy the fine efforts of the Middle School Band. They too, have come a long way and will perform some great music.
- **Luther Holiday Concert (Grades 3-5), Tuesday, December 14, at Luther at 6:30 p.m.**

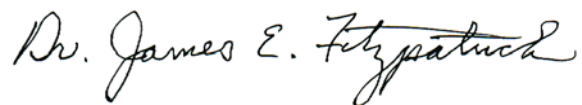
Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K): Below are some timelines that have been shared with 4K agencies in our community that we partner with related to registration timelines in preparation for the 2011-2012 school year.

- January 17 – Registration forms available at 4K partner agencies and Fort Atkinson elementary school offices.
- March 11 – Priority registration deadline
- April 6th – 4K Registration Day – 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM at Luther

In closing, I have started a blog that you can access by going to our web page www.fortschools.org and scrolling down on the left side to Dr. Fitz's Blog. I will try to post items of interest there for your comments and thoughts. My most recent post focused on the *great attitude* that the late Ron Santo, the Chicago Cubs legend, demonstrated through a lifetime of seemingly overwhelming challenges. In this holiday season, I think it is a good time to reflect with gratitude for all the things we have, along with the burdens that we do not have! The latter is something we might overlook at times.

Best Wishes and happiness this Christmas and holiday season!

With kindest regards,



Dr. James Fitzpatrick
Superintendent
School District of Fort Atkinson