



Valley Heights NEWS & NOTES

February 2016

From the Desk of John Bergkamp | Superintendent of Schools

School Finance the Focus AGAIN!

The recent decision handed down by the Kansas Supreme Court declaring the current funding structure for Kansas Public Schools unconstitutional is a victory for the Valley Heights students. Although the Block Grant system did not harm us locally this year, going forward we would encounter other difficulties under that system. If we were under the previous formula this year, we would have garnered less state aid due to a decline in enrollment. The prior funding formula was based on Full Time Enrollment (FTE) from the September 20th count day. Since the Block Grant system basically froze our funding for the next two years (2015-16 and 2016-17), we escaped reduced funding. The Block Grant system actually helped Valley Heights in a year where we experienced this decline...but, don't be fooled.

Inherently, the Block Grant system is bad for public schools in Kansas for many reasons. Going forward, if the Block Grant system were to remain in place, the biggest detriment for us would be the equalization piece. "Equalization" in the previous formula allowed Valley Heights to be on a level playing field with wealthier districts and did not harm us because of our zip codes. As a poor district with declining enrollment, Valley Heights was very dependent on the previous formula that compensated for those two factors. The "weightings" in the previous finance formula allowed us to receive state aid regardless of wealth and enrollment. This additional funding allowed us to maintain a quality education for our students regardless of a zip code.

The funding formula in Kansas should continue to be revised as needed, but the big problem with the previous formula is the fact that it hasn't been appropriately funded for many years. Under the formula, primary state funding is the Base State Aid Per Pupil (BSAPP). At its height in 2008, the BSAPP was \$4,400. It is now \$3,852, which is misleading because it was raised at the expense of some weightings a few years ago. If it had simply kept pace with inflation, the BSAPP would now be \$6,059.

Some people point to how the overall funding has actually increased over the past several years, which is true, but they are including KPERS, which hasn't traditionally been counted as "school funding" and cannot be spent by school districts. In fact, very little new "school funding" can actually be used to operate schools. The vast majority of increased equalization funding resulting from previous Kansas Supreme Court rulings went to local property tax relief because districts were forced to raise local taxes as a result of equalization funding being lowered. All anyone has to do is look at their most recent county tax assessment to see the evidence. Our property taxes increased due to the lack of state aid.

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State courts may order the legislature to “adequately” and “equally” fund our public schools but that doesn’t mean they will. The legislature has repeatedly ignored court orders in relation to school funding over the years. However, the most recent court order did put a June 30, 2016 deadline for the legislature to come up with a constitutionally sound school funding formula or risk shuttering our public schools this fall. Surely that will not occur, but a great deal of work lies ahead for the legislature to establish an equal and adequate funding stream for the students we serve in Valley Heights.

A concern we should have is the fact that our small rural district does not have a lot of voices in Topeka. Although we only have the two voices, we need to make sure they hear us loud and clear. Let them know we want our students to be educated equally and adequately regardless of our zip codes and wealth.

Email Representative [Sharon.Schwartz](#) or contact by phone at (785) 296-7637, and Senator [Elaine Bowers](#) or contact by phone at (785) 296-7389. Be sure to let your voice be heard.

District Information

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www.valleyheights.org

Trenton Horn

JR/SR High School Principal

Valley Heights JR/SR High School has a new staff member. April Kuckelman was hired for the spring semester to teach Freshman and Sophomore English as well as a Creative Writing course. She is a graduate of Axtell High School and received her degree from Kansas State University in December. April and her husband, Andrew, live in Marysville. Please welcome April Kuckelman to the district.

Spring Parent/Teacher Conferences have been scheduled and will be held on February 22, 2016 and again on March 7, 2016. The conference scheduled for Monday, February 22, is by invitation where some parents have been invited to come and visit with us about their students and the work we see. We invite all parents to the come and go conferences on Monday, March 7, from 5:00-7:00 pm at VHHS. Please plan to attend the conferences to learn about what is taking place.

Driver's Education will again be hosted by Valley Heights High School. There will be a meeting for eligible students and their parents on March 7 at 6:00 pm in the Valley Heights Commons. Students must be 14 years old by June 1, 2016 to enroll in Driver's Education. The deadline to sign up for the course will be March 10, 2016. The cost of the course is \$150 and space is limited. Therefore, those who sign up and have paid their fees first will be given the first opportunity. The course will last for four weeks and will begin on Tuesday, March 22, 2016. The driving session will begin in early June.

We have set our schedule for the Kansas State Assessments at Valley Heights JR/SR High School. Students in grades 7, 8, 10 and 11 will be tested this year. Please see the testing schedule below:

Grade:	Date:	Test Area:	Class Period:
7th	3/7 & 3/8	Multidisciplinary Performance Task	1st & 2nd
8th	3/7 & 3/8	Multidisciplinary Performance Task	3rd & 5th
10th	3/7 & 3/8	Multidisciplinary Performance Task	2nd & 6th
11th	3/7 & 3/8	Multidisciplinary Performance Task	2nd & 4th
7th	3/8	Math Performance Task	5th & 7th
8th	3/8	Math Performance Task	2nd & 4th
10th	3/9	Math Performance Task	5th
7th	4/11, 4/13 & 4/14	Math Assessment	5th & 7th
8th	4/11, 4/13 & 4/14	Math Assessment	2nd & 4th
10th	4/25, 4/26, 4/28 & 4/29	Math Assessment	5th
7th	4/25-4/29	English Language Arts Assessment	1st & 2nd
8th	4/25-4/29	English Language Arts Assessment	3rd & 5th
10th	4/14 & 4/15	English Language Arts Assessment	2nd & 6th
8th	4/14 & 4/15	History/Government Assessment	3rd & 5th
11th	4/26 & 4/27	History/Government Assessment	2nd & 4th
8th	5/5 & 5/6	Science Assessment	2nd & 4th
11th	5/5 & 5/6	Science Assessment	1st

Valley Heights JR/SR High • 2274 6th Road • Blue Rapids, KS 66411
(785) 363-2508

Robert Green

Elementary Principal

Professional Learning Communities

As parents, you are aware that Valley Heights schools have an early release of students on the first Wednesday of every month. Many of you know that this is the time that teachers have PLC. I would like to explain what VH Elementary does during PLC.

Professional Learning Communities allow time for teachers to collaborate. The collaboration is a systematic process in which Valley Heights teachers work together to develop and analyze ways in which to improve student learning. Teachers collaborate to develop SMART Goals. SMART = Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented and Time-bound goals. (O'Neill & Conzenius, 2006).

A major problem that teachers face today in education is too much content and too little time. Schools that do not use Professional Learning Communities often have their teachers rush through material. In addition, teachers will find themselves using individual judgment regarding which material or information is the most significant or essential. A Professional Learning Community allows teachers to form collaborative teams to develop essential learning outcomes that must be mastered. Essential learning outcomes are critical skills or knowledge each student must acquire by the end of a unit, course or grade. Basically, a team of teachers and administration examine the state and national standards, develop curriculum and come to an understanding of what essential skills a student must learn to be successful and advance.

Teachers develop or select common assessments that students take to determine if learning has taken place. The data from these assessment results are carefully examined at Professional Learning Communities. Using this data the effectiveness of instruction is examined with the goal to improve student achievements. As struggling students are identified, timely interventions are developed to insure that every student receives daily support during the school day.

A major goal of Professional Learning Communities is to focus on learning, not teaching. Through this collaborative effort called Professional Learning Communities, Valley Heights is determined to have all students learn and be successful.

Valley Heights Elementary (K-2)

307 E. Lincoln Street
Waverille, KS 66548

(785) 363-2530

Valley Heights Elementary (3-6)

508 Chestnut Street
Blue Rapids, KS 66411

(785) 363-7693

Barbara Buck

Valley Heights HS Counselor

I Have to Leave?

When my oldest daughter, the sweetest, most sensitive, caring and obedient child I could have hoped for was a high school junior, I commented to a friend on how fortunate I felt. She laughed and said, “Wait until next year. She’ll turn on you. It’s part of the separation process.” I thought, “Oh, sure. Not my child.” Well, that same daughter was rather mouthy and not always nice—especially to me—her senior year.

Although everyone responds differently, anxiety in high school seniors is very common. When I Googled “High school senior anxiety,” I got 25,500,000 hits. Narrowing it to “High school senior separation anxiety” reduced it to a mere 81,000 hits.

My years of experience with high school seniors has led me to identify “separation” or “transition” as the number one cause of anxiety in seniors. Yes, there is the concern of making many decisions about their future, selecting and being accepted into a college or finding a job, scholarship applications—not to mention keeping up on high school assignments and activities. Underlying all this, however, is quite often anxiety about separating—from parents, friends, siblings, their home, their community, their teachers, and yes, even Valley Heights. Whether the past 18 years have been positive, not so positive, or a mixture of both, they are leaving everything they’ve known—and that’s scary.

So, a few suggestions:

1. Recognize your son or daughter may be feeling some separation anxiety. This may be conscious or subconscious on their part. They may also be uncomfortable verbalizing their concerns, afraid that others may not take them seriously or see it as a lack of maturity. Let them know it is okay to talk about their concerns.
2. Recognize that you may be feeling concern about separation as well. It is often tougher for parents than most teens realize.
3. Allow them to start dealing with some things on their own. A small example is scholarships. We expect students to complete those themselves. Let them know that they are competent—if they are heading to college or a job, they will need to be confident that they can be successful without your help.
4. Discuss the phone call/text expectations. Do they WANT you to call them or text them each day. Some will appreciate the frequent contact and others will resent it as they try to become more independent. Keep in mind, it’s about their needs, not yours.
5. Support their decisions and keep the lines of communication with them open.

The happy ending to my own story is that once my daughter settled in to school the next year, she again became my wonderful, respectful, adult child—and I suddenly became much smarter.

Tony Yungeberg

Community Education Corner

Get to Know Our Youth!

As parents and grandparents, we have a long list of titles that apply to us in relation with our kids/ grandkids. We serve as chefs, nurses, bankers, mechanics, teachers, chauffeurs, coaches and maids...just to name a few. As community members and business owners we are employers (past, present & future), mentors, advisors, familiar faces and teachers.

Now is the time that, as families, communities, businesses and schools, we come together and make a commitment to engage, empower and enthuse our youth to do all of these things. Let's spend time in and out of school to get to know what our youth are doing, and let's work together to understand what is put in front of them today.

In school and after school, we strive to help our students become better members of our community and world. Part of that is to keep them safe, here and in the world at their fingertips. With digital citizenship we hope to keep students looking ahead and viewing the world around them both near and far. Our summer program "Camp Exploration" will introduce our students to Netsmartz internet safety programs. This online curriculum is a great resource that can help us connect with youth and their families. Times change and so must we.

How often have you heard the phrase "kids these days"? Probably quite a bit. Maybe you've said it yourself or just nodded along when someone else does. Let's try and imagine what is going on in their world that maybe wasn't an issue when we were that age.

To quote the Shel Silverstein poem:

"My Uncle said, "How old are you?"
I said, "Nine and a half," and then
My uncle puffed out his chest and said,
"when I was your age.... I was ten."

Let's connect with our youth and realize that the past is the past and that they live in the now!

For more information on the Netsmartz program go to <http://www.netsmartz.org/Parents>.

Please call or stop by the office if you have any questions.

SPRING EVENTS

Week of February 28
Substate Basketball @ Washington

MARCH

- 2 All-School PLC Dismissal @ **2:05**
- 4 End of 3rd Quarter | **Noon Dismissal**
- 7-10 Spring Parent/Teacher Conference Week
- 9 Board of Education meeting | 6:00 pm
- 11 P/T Day | **No School**
- 13 Daylight Savings Time Begins
- 14-18 **SPRING BREAK**
- 25 Good Friday | **No School**
- 27 Easter
- 29 JR High Drama Night | 6:30
Freshman Orientation | 7:30

APRIL

- 1 HS Spring Sports pictures
- 6 All-School PLC Dismissal @ **2:05**
- 9 NHS Carnival | 6:00-8:00 pm
- 13 Board of Education meeting | 6:00 pm
- 16 JR/SR Prom/After-Prom
- 19 PreK-2nd Class pictures
- 20 3rd-6th Class pictures
- 22 NHS Banquet
- 25 FFA District Banquet
Forensics Night | 7:00 pm
- 28 Highland Art Day

MAY

- 1 K'Prep Round-Up | 5:30 pm
Kindergarten Round-Up | 6:30 pm
- 4 All-School PLC Dismissal @ **2:05**
HS Athletic Banquet
- 6 Play Day
- 10 Play Day rain date
Spring Fling
- 11 Board of Education meeting | 6:00 pm
Awards Night 7:00 pm
- 12 Seniors Last Day
- 13 PreSchool/KinderPrep Last Day
- 14 Graduation | 2:00 pm
- 16 End-of-Year Award Assemblies | PreSchool-6th
- 18 JH Awards Assembly | 11:00 am
Last Day | **Noon Dismissal**



