

## **August 2014 Article – RASD Pre-season Mini Camp**

As with any professional team, pre-season work is paramount to a successful season. The Ripon Area School District is no exception. Every August our teaching staff returns to school weeks before our students to prepare for the start of the new school year.

During the third week of August, fourteen newly hired teachers participated in three days of orientation to learn about the Ripon Way. What is the Ripon Way? It is a focus on education and instruction that includes best practice and research strategies to promote high student achievement. In addition to learning about district curriculum, instruction and assessment, these professionals spent time learning about district technology and met with their mentors.

The orientation days occurred just one week before all teaching staff returned for three days of in-service. The in-service days provided time to update staff on the School Board goals for the year, new curriculum materials, and student achievement data. The staff also received information about the upcoming referendum.

The School Board goals for 2014-15 focus on achievement. All instructional staff will write a Student Learning Objective (SLO) to demonstrate student growth in literacy. Teachers will use multiple forms of data, similar to a dashboard in a car, to monitor student growth and adjust instruction as part of Response to Intervention (RtI). K-8 language arts materials were purchased this year in an effort to further strengthen the writing skills of students.

Recent ACT college readiness assessment results show that Ripon surpassed the state average for the 17th year in a row. Ripon's score increased from 22.6 in 2013 to 23.0 in 2014. Wisconsin, with 73% student participation, ranked second in the nation for academic achievement at 22.2.

The Ripon Board of Education unanimously approved referendum resolutions calling for the election of proposed borrowing for the purpose of paying the cost of construction additions and updating curriculum and technology. Two referendum questions will appear on the ballot:

- Question 1 requests permission to borrow funds not to exceed \$29.1 million for renovating and remodeling the high school to create a combined middle school and high school on one campus; demolishing the current middle school to convert the space into a parking lot and tennis courts; undertaking safety, security and other improvements at the elementary schools; and acquiring the necessary furnishing fixtures;
- Question 2 requests the continuation of the existing \$500,000 operational referendum for the 2015-2016 school year through 2020-2021 for non-recurring purposes consisting of updating curriculum, updating technology, performing maintenance and replacing vehicles.

The School Board further specified the referendum be held on the next regularly scheduled primary or election day, which is Tuesday, November 4th, 2014.

This decision was based on more than a year's worth of work, multiple studies, a community survey, and extensive communication with the community. Over the course of the year, the Board moved from eight building options to four options. The community wide survey results narrowed the four options to the final combined MS/HS facility.

During the in-service days we recognized and celebrated the accomplishments of staff and the contributions of the community. This year 21 staff members received recognition for 410 years of service to the students and families in our community. The Ingalls Field group received the district's Friend of Public Schools award.

Last summer as I joined the district team, the School Board asked me to develop a long range facilities plan, transition the district through anticipated administrative team changes, and move the district forward to greater academic achievement in all schools. 2013-14 was a very successful year.

Through the diligent efforts and commitment of our staff, RASD has moved forward to raise achievement, develop a long-range facilities plan, and recruit top talent to join our team. As we move forward into the 2014-15 school year, our focus will continue to be on raising student achievement, developing our district team, and maximizing our district resources.

Thank you for your continued support. Please remember to drive safely and slow down in school zones as our students return to school on September 2.