



The Open School Monthly: September, 2009

Dedicated to keeping families informed about Open School events & volunteer opportunities

A Message from Todd

Dear Families and Friends of St. Paul Open School,

An exciting year is beginning and there is much to share. We welcome several new teachers and staff members—Evelyn Nordquist (assistant principal), Janice Kelly-Dunkins (secretary), Michelle Kunz (5-6), Kim Miller (3-4), Kristen Polanski (ELL), Kyle Warner and Joe Hesla (secondary math), Carolyn Penning (secondary science substituting for Megan Hall), Donna Clemenson (secondary reading), Chris Unger (counselor), Jim Durand (social worker), Ashley Christensen (secondary health), Ge Moua (ELL educational assistant), Morris Goodwin (volunteer coordinator), and Catherine Neuner (primary grades reading tutor). You can expect excellent service from each.

Open School students made terrific progress toward proficiency in reading and mathematics as measured by the state test. Every group listed as not proficient in 2008 was removed from the AYP list – five of five. Our 10th grade reading scores were the highest in the district and significant increases were made across the building. One sub-group, however, moved from “safe harbor” to “below target” and will necessitate movement into the pre-restructuring phase of “corrective action”.

And we are restructuring our school for the future. Our plans to open as an Expeditionary Learning school in the fall of 2010 continue. Staff members and site council have unanimously embraced the school reform model as the natural extension of Open School's best values and practices and the vision for our small urban school in the next generation. Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound is rooted in the ideas of Kurt Hahn, involves more than 150 network schools nationwide, and is rooted in authentic, deep, and cross-disciplinary learning adventures rooted in strong community, service-orientation, and standards-based portfolio assessments. Please check out Expeditionary Learning at www.elschools.org and look for updates as we begin implementing pieces of the program.

In addition to a new school design and after much discussion of the value of the Open School name and potential value of a new name, the site council, parent organization, and school staff have initiated the process of seeking a name change. Because such a change would be of value in marketing our school for its inaugural season as an Expeditionary Learning school, the process is taking place at the very beginning of the school year. A decision about a new name will be made by the end of September and opportunities for input on the name, discussion of proposed names, and voting on choices will take place by that time so that the Board of Education can review and approve our choice during its November meeting. Proposed names from all stakeholders are welcome through September 18, 2009. At that time, a task group consisting of staff members, a site council representative, and student representation (through student government) will categorize and organize the proposals for presentation to the Site Council meeting on September 22, 2009 at which time two prospects will be identified. The Site Council will host an opportunity to comment on the choices at a meeting at our Homecoming event on October 9, 2009 and stakeholders will be invited to vote on Wednesday, October 14. Votes will be tallied and a new name choice will be forwarded to the school district and Board of Education for review and possible approval.



September Calendar

3rd, Thursday, Open School Student Orientation, 5:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.

8th, Tuesday, First day of school, Grades 1-12.

9th & 10th Wednesday & Thursday, Kindergarten Parent-Teacher Conferences

10th, Thursday, First day of school for Kindergarten

10th, Thursday, PTO Meeting, 6:30 – 7:30pm, in teacher lounge at Open School.

16th, Tuesday, **October newsletter submissions due.**

21st, Monday, Picture Day.

22nd, Tuesday, Site Council Meeting, 5:30p.m. - 7p.m, includes dinner. All are invited!

22nd, Tuesday, Great River Trip (grades 3 & 4) all day

30th, Wednesday, Early Release at 12:35pm.

Monthly on the Web

The Monthly Newsletter is on our website! Go to www.Openschool.spps.org and click on “Newsletters” in the left-hand menu. All monthlies will be posted.

This will be a watershed year during which we clearly articulate our vision and collaborate with the district in restructuring our school—a school that has valued individuals and unique pathways in learning and has provided a strong community context for growth.

I look forward to seeing everyone at school.

Sincerely,

Todd Bartholomay
Principal

P.S. A Student Orientation program is planned for Thursday evening, September 3rd from 5:30 to 8:00. Students new to Open School should plant to arrive at 5:30 and returning students at 6 p.m.

Information on the H1N1 Influenza

We expect that we will see more cases of the flu this year than in past seasons because of the typical seasonal influenza and the H1N1 influenza which gained notoriety this year. Influenza of any type can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in Saint Paul Public Schools. Our highest priorities are to keep our schools safe and our students learning during this flu season. But, we need your help to do this. We are working closely with the Minnesota Departments of Health and Education and the Saint Paul/ Ramsey County Department of Public Health to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning schools. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available.

Here are a few things you can do to help.

- Teach your children to wash their hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. You need to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children not to share personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils. Teach them to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues or to use the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.
- Know the signs and symptoms of the flu. Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- Keep sick children at home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.
- Do not send children to school if they are sick. Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be sent home. Plan now for child care now if your child gets sick.

School Committees

Site Council

The Open School Site Council is a forum to discuss school issues and a place to find out what is happening around school and behind the scenes. Site Council acts as an advisory group to the principal and helps develop and monitor the School's Comprehensive Improvement Plan (SCIP.)

All Open School students, parents and staff are welcome and encouraged to attend meetings. Site Council typically meets once per month at 5:30. You don't need to be a "voting member" to attend and everyone is given the chance to speak.

However, if you are interested in being a "voting member" of Site Council...

- **Staff:** The 4 staff representatives are determined by the staff.
- **Students:** Interested students should submit their name through their advisor. If more than 11 students are interested, an election will be held.
- **Parents:** By Sept. 22nd, submit your name (and optionally a paragraph on why you wish to be on Site Council) to the current Co-Chair, Bruce Youngquist, at 651-489-7499 or bruce.youngquist@comcast.net. These will be published on a take-home ballot to elect the open positions.

The first Site Council meeting of the year is at 5:30 on Tuesday, the 22nd at Open School. You can find more information at

http://www.open.spps.org/Site_Council.html

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

Our first PTO meeting is scheduled for September 10th, when we will start work on this year's calendar of events. We'll meet in the Teacher's Lounge at Open School from 6:30 – 7:30pm. Please come to as many meetings as you are able. For more information, contact either Bonnie Youngquist (651.479.9924 or bonnie.youngquist@comcast.net) or Susan Casebeer (651.690.9217 or swpc@comcast.net). We are looking forward to this year and hope to see you there!

