

MARCH 2017

Greetings to everyone in the MBS community! With the recent dose of warm weather, the staff and students are quickly thinking ahead to the spring season. However, before we assume that the worst is over, it is important to remember the “cold truth” about the winter season lasting through the third week in March. I remind you of this because if “Old Man Winter” sends more snowstorms our way, we only have one more snow day to use. If the weather forces us to close school for a third time, then there will be no need to make any changes to the current district calendar. If we get to the point where we need to close school for a fourth time, we will be forced to make up the day. When this happened three years ago, I asked the Board of Education to approve my recommendation to open the school to students on what was supposed to be a staff in-service day. That same solution could be proposed again on Monday, March 20, where we would open school until 12:30 for students and then have an abbreviated professional development session for staff in the afternoon. The only other option beyond March 20 would be to ask the Board to approve adding on a day at the end of the year, which for us this year would be Friday, June 23. Hopefully neither of these calendar changes will be needed, so please continue to think warm thoughts!

On a related note, each year we have several families that take children out of school for unscheduled vacation trips. Sometimes, these trips are for a day and sometimes for as much as a week or longer. As a parent, I recognize and agree with the importance of spending quality time with our families whenever possible. I also realize that there are times when a parent’s vacation schedule does not coincide with school breaks, so taking children out of school is the only way for some parents to have family vacation time. Whether the time out of school is for a day, a week or even longer, there is an unavoidable disruption to the instructional process. Although some students are able to quickly catch up and not fall behind, this is not the case for every child. If you plan to be away during the school year, I strongly encourage you to notify your child’s teacher of your plans and inquire about the topics and content that will be covered during your child’s absence. Additionally, older students, especially those in middle school, should be expected to accept at least some of the responsibility of communicating with their teachers to find out what they will be missing and how to make up missing work and/or assessments when they return to school.

As we move through the month of March, there will be an emphasis on the part of the teachers to make as much progress in their academic programs as possible prior to spring break, especially since State testing will begin later in April. In response to comments about teachers “teaching to the test”, I always explain that our curriculum at every grade level is based on the Common Core Standards, which are the same standards that the PARCC tests are based on. So, in essence, our teachers have been preparing their students for these tests since September. Because of the level of technology we have in our school, our students are able to work with chromebooks on a daily basis in order to develop the skills they need to successfully navigate the test and more importantly, to use for a wide variety of instructional purposes throughout the year.

Respectfully,
Michael E. Ettore
Principal/Superintendent