

White and Blue Review

FALL 2013 🐾 *Education... That's the Point*

Dear Family and Friends of the Mineral Point School District,

During the month of September, schools across the country transitioned from summer vacation to fall classes.



Mineral Point students transitioned with ease due to the many efforts of the professional and support staff and administrative team. With the commencement of a new year, initiatives aimed at improving Mineral Point Schools are underway.

Schools across Wisconsin have started implementation of SLO's. The acronym SLO has dual meaning within Wisconsin's Educator Effectiveness System. For teachers, the acronym refers to Student Learning Objectives, which are performance goals for entire classrooms or subsets of students. For principals, the acronym refers to School Learning Objectives, which are performance goals for an entire school or subsets of students within the school. SLOs are detailed, measurable goals for student growth to be achieved in a specified period of time (typically an academic year), and developed collaboratively by educators and their evaluators. SLO's will be 50% of a teachers overall evaluation with the other 50% coming from teacher evaluation. At Mineral Point Schools, teachers are strategically compensated based on the overall performance of their evaluations and receive pay increases for performance rather than longevity in the profession.

The common core state standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, define the knowledge and skills students should have during their elementary and secondary school education so they are prepared to compete and succeed in the global economy. Wisconsin is a partner state in the Common Core State Standards Initiative and has had ongoing involvement in shaping the standards as they were developed, reviewing them, and providing feedback to the project writers.

The process to implement the Common Core State Standards to improve student achievement requires understanding the content of the standards, developing curriculum that reflects the standards, and then providing resources for teachers to develop lesson plans to each those standards. Mineral Point is the process of identifying resources and curriculum for the

standards based curriculum. This initiative is important, as additionally Wisconsin will be implementing a SMARTER/Balanced Assessment to deliver a high quality, common assessment across the state that connects to classroom instruction using the common core state standards.

Mapping resources and curriculum to standards will take a large amount of time. Teachers used the past two Friday collaborative release times (CRT's) to learn more about the software used to house the information for mapping the curriculum followed by actual implementation to a standard's based curriculum. Once this project is complete at year's end, a curriculum map will be available online to allow parents the ability to see what is taught at what grade level during the year. In addition, reports will be generated to learn where a standard is being taught repetitively in the K-12 sequence and where a standard is not being taught in any of the curricula.

School Safety is also a primary concern of the school district. Over the summer the district updated both interior/exterior building lock systems and added outdoor cameras at both buildings with interior cameras at the Middle/High School. Other safety measures included the removal of asbestos flooring at the elementary building, replacing a portion of the elementary roof, and replacing a section of concrete walk at the elementary that was a trip hazard.

In upcoming issues of the White and Blue Review I will additionally share information about the district's new website, the wellness committee and school garden, and safe routes for schools. In the interim, if you have any questions surrounding Mineral Point Schools, please feel free to contact me.

Fun Fact: If a Mineral Point kindergarten teacher were to be paid the amount that an average daycare provider charges for the same number of hours for the same number of kids, they would be paid \$153,000 (\$680/child/month x 9 months x 25 children = \$153,000). A starting teacher's salary at Mineral Point schools is \$33,688.

Vollmer, 2010. "Schools Cannot Do It Alone"

Kindest Regards,

Luke Francois | Luke.Francois@mp.k12.wi.us | 987.0740

It is truly an honor to be Mineral Point's superintendent.

District Mission: Our mission is to offer a high quality education that empowers all students with the knowledge and skills to become responsible citizens.

Message from Mitch Wainwright

Principal, Mineral Point High School
& District Assessment Coordinator

“Under The Big Top” was this year’s homecoming theme and what a week it was.



There were lions and tigers and I even think I saw a bunny rabbit. We had bearded ladies, clowns and ring-leaders walking within our building. Each grade level was given a unique characteristic under the main theme. The freshmen were circus animals, sophomores

were clowns, juniors were sideshow people and the seniors were the ringleaders. The students were outstanding this year participating in all the dress-up days from Merica Monday (short for America) to spirit day (blue and white) on Friday.

One major change to homecoming last year was moving the dance to Saturday night. This gave our students an opportunity to really enjoy a special evening and not feel rushed to leave at half-time of the football game, or shower after the game and rush to school for the grand march. Another change that was made this year was to decorate the floats in one day. Students spent Thursday working on the class floats and did an outstanding job completing some really wonderful floats through teamwork and planning.

The spirit was high and all students were excited for homecoming week. Many traditions were still observed during the week allowing for a great connection to the past. Some practices were changed to keep up with what is happening in schools today. No matter what, the best of both the new and the old came together to make us who we are, POINTERS! I could not be more proud of all the people that make up our community and the students that helped celebrate homecoming. Thank you for a great week.

Mineral Point Schools, a great place to be! 🐾

Mitch Wainwright

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From the Desk of Anne Palzkill

Mineral Point Elementary Principal
& Director of Pupil Services

While walking next to a sweet 4K student in the Homecoming Parade, I was reminded how important perspective is to educating children. A little guy looked up at me and said, “Mrs. Palzkill” this



parade is taking FOREVER. When will be done?” He stumbled and fell; I picked him up and uttered words of encouragement. He set his chin high and kept moving forward. This event forced me to ponder. Is the road too long? Are we asking too much of all our students? Our staff? Or is it our job to continue moving forward to meet the path ahead of us? Do we even know where the road ahead will take us or what challenges and joys we will experience?

How do we prepare our most valuable resource, our children, for the future? The U.S. and the state of Wisconsin are grappling with this question by increasing academic expectations, requiring more frequent monitoring of students’ understanding, and reporting our progress via a State Report card. The majority of MP Elementary students increased their achievement success last year— a 10 point gain! A small percentage of our students did not increase at the same rate as most. We continue to work hard to “Close the Gap”.

What are we doing to assure that all MP Elementary students are succeeding? During each Friday early release, our teaching staff is writing common core, standards-based curriculums. They have a standards sequence to follow, but are given the autonomy to be creative and innovative in how students learn. 21st Century Skills are also at the core of these expectations; so are the basics. This year finds us enjoying the Responsive Classroom discipline model. This is a social-emotional approach to growing and learning and a perfect partner to higher academic expectations.



What can you do to help? Parents: Set aside homework time each evening and expect homework to challenge your child’s thinking; communicate with your child’s teacher if issues arise; and have your child(ren) read books and practice math skills at home. Use our web-based practice tools like Accelerated Reader and IXL math to help. Community Members: volunteer and/or tie community connections to our schools using 21st Century Skills; speak at one of our school assemblies; or share a hands-on talent, so our children experience a variety of career options. The school board and administrative team are reading “Schools Cannot Do It Alone” by Jamie Vollmer. This book challenges all of us to combine our “efforts to build a community-wide culture of student achievement”. 🐾

Anne Palzkill

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Preparing Elementary Students for the Global Future

Livia Doyle, 4th Grade Teacher

Project Lead The Way, a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics) curricular program already set in place at Mineral Point Middle and High School, is excited to announce the development of Project Lead The Way (PLTW) elementary, the newest addition to PLTW's hands-on, project-based curricular offerings. Studies show that students decide as early as second grade whether or not they think they are good in the areas of mathematics and science. Negative feelings associated in the areas of STEM deter young students in pursuing an interest or career in these worldwide and ever increasing fields of study. With successful STEM programs already in place at both our middle school and high school levels, PLTW's elementary program is a natural fit to prepare Mineral Point Elementary students for the global future and create a pathway for students from kindergarten to career.

Mineral Point Elementary was selected as 1 of 43 other elementary schools in 23 states to receive a pilot to implement PLTW elementary. This implementation will take place throughout the 2013-2014 school year. It is designed for students in kindergarten through fifth grades and aligns to the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), a set of newly released science standards. Through a series of topic-based modules (units), students will begin

to engage in the elementary design process of engineering through hands-on problems that encourages rich student collaboration, inquiry, problem solving, experimentation, and computational thinking. The PLTW elementary program will utilize the same high-quality professional development as PLTW's other programs, but will take on a slightly different form to meet the structure and needs of elementary students and teachers.

Now, more than ever, our nation's industries are continuously adding and creating STEM related fields in the workplace. Employees and members of today's workforce need to be equipped with the knowledge of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to better adapt to our ever changing world. So why begin Project Lead The Way at the elementary level? It's rather simple. Students at a young age LOVE it!!! Children are naturally curious and are eager to probe and examine through inquiry and exploration. They are open to new ideas and enjoy hands-on learning. Through this collaboration, Mineral Point will mentor the next generation of leaders in science, prepare our students for our nation's diversified workforce, and continue to enhance innovation and creativity as we lead our students to a strong and successful future. 🐾

ACT

The ACT test aims to measure how well students are prepared for college. Wisconsin students overall had a composite ACT score of 22.1, exactly matching last year's performance. The state tied with Iowa for the No. 2 spot among states with 50 percent or more of their students taking the exams. Minnesota students posted the top score, with 23.0. The national average was 20.9, according to results released Wednesday by ACT, an independent nonprofit agency. The highest possible ACT score is 36.

Mineral Point student's average composite score of 23.1 exceeded the State and National averages and ranked 80th overall across all districts in the state. Platteville led area schools with an average composite of 23.7. Mineral Point posted the sixth best average composite score for CESA 3 area schools and followed Dodgeville (23.6), Fennimore (23.4), and Belmont and Benton (23.3).

For the first time in Mineral Point's recent five-year history the district exceeded the State and National averages in all four subject areas: Reading, Mathematics, English, and Science. Mineral Point excelled in average reading and science scores by posting the third highest scores in the CESA 3 area with an average composite of 23.7 and 23.4 respectively.

Superintendent Luke Francois was pleased with the results and stated, "ACT scores are a reflection of teachers at all levels coupled with efforts by students and parents that are joined together by a common goal of high expectations for students at Mineral Point. Our community should celebrate our recent ACT scores yet also aspire to continue to raise the scores amongst comparable districts in our area and across the state."

Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, all public high school juniors will be taking the ACT test as a way to gauge all students' abilities. The proposal is part of sweeping educational reforms proposed by State Superintendent Tony Evers and the state Department of Public Instruction.

"Changes to our statewide assessments are just one of the educational reforms Wisconsin is pursuing to improve student's achievement," Evers said in a DPI news release.

The state's students did well on the exam, Evers said, but "we have work to do to get students to take the rigorous coursework that will help prepare them for college and careers and help bridge achievement gaps." 🐾

NEW STAFF WELCOMED TO MINERAL POINT

Tim Ekenberg, Middle School Band Director



I was born and raised in Mount Horeb, WI. I did my undergrad at the University of WI – Platteville as well as a semester in Newcastle, Australia, where I was involved in just about every musical ensemble I could be through my years there. Mineral Point is my first teaching job out of college. I chose Mineral Point because I really enjoyed my student teaching experience here and feel there's a lot of potential to build a really strong middle school band program. I've really enjoyed reconnecting with the kids and seeing the progress they've already made in such a short amount of time. My greatest challenge has been just keeping up with the busy school life and adjusting to the duties and responsibilities of being in charge of my own program. In my free time I enjoy playing music of all kinds, including gigging with a Dixieland jazz band that I founded while in college, exercising, reading, exploring the Mineral Point area, and feeding my pet tarantula. 🐾

Janice Needham



I am from Middleton, WI. I attended UW-LaCrosse where I majored in Spanish with an English writing minor. I then received my Masters in Special Education from Edgewood College. I have nine years of experience in education including teaching in MCPASD, and substitute teaching in area schools. I enjoyed subbing in Mineral Point and have hopes for the same outcome in teaching. I truly enjoy the students in Mineral Point. The new state requirements are challenging.

I enjoy spending time with my family that includes nine siblings (including a twin brother), and lots of nieces, nephews and great nieces and nephews. Both of my parents are doing well at 81 years of age. 🐾

Justin Leonard



I grew up just outside of Hollandale, WI on a family farm near Jonesdale. I earned my undergraduate degree in physical education from UW-Platteville with minors that included adaptive PE, health, and coaching. I then earned my masters in secondary education. The following two years I substitute taught. I then accepted a teaching job at Weston High School as the special education teacher under an emergency license. During the next two years I earned my licensure in cross categorical special education and was the head football coach. In 2012, I accepted a special education position at Cuba City high school. I held that position for one year before I accepted my current position in Mineral Point.

I accepted the teaching position at Mineral Point for a couple of reasons: first to get closer to home and second, there was tremendous support from people in the community to accept the position. For the first time I feel like this is home and this is where I want to raise my children. My favorite thing about Mineral Point is the sense of community. My personal goals are to implement a strong sustainable special education program with consistence.

I am married to Erin Leonard (Gaulke) formerly of Belmont. My wife currently is a fourth grade teacher at Platteville Middle School. We have two kids, Owen who is 2 and Stella who will be 1 in December. My parents are Gary and Willette Leonard (Fitzimons). I have two brothers Jason and Jared. I enjoy coaching football, participating in a variety of sports including basketball, golf, and racquetball. I also enjoy deer hunting, fishing, and spending time helping on the family farm. 🐾

Lesley Stephenson



I am a Mineral Point native. Out of high school I received my Cosmetology Degree. I then receive my bachelors degree in Art Education from UW-Platteville. This is my first year teaching.

This was always my dream job, to come back here and be the next Bonnie Laverty. When the position opened it seemed to good to be true. Mineral Point School District continues to live up to it's name, including the art program. So far I love it because the staff, students, and community have welcomed me with open arms.

I have a wonderfully supportive family. Some of the things we enjoy doing together are going to my brother Lee's football games and sending time with family and friends at my parent's beautiful home. 🐾

Collaborative Release Time

Luke Francois, Ed.D.

Collaborative Release Time or CRT has been in the Mineral Point School District for years. Traditionally CRT days for professional development and collaboration were termed early releases or late starts and occurred monthly. The 2013-2014 school year introduces weekly CRT's found on Friday afternoons from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Making a fundamental change in how our schools operate such as this is always made carefully as the change impacts the next generation of kids. Fortunately, the district could look to Dodgeville as a successful school using weekly CRT's on a Wednesday as a comparable before making the decision.

Mineral Point made the decision in large part because of the many great initiatives that have been implemented by the state of Wisconsin that include most recently: Response to Intervention, Educator Effectiveness, Common Core State Standards, and Smarter Balanced Assessments. It became clear to me that the district needed to modify our learning communities with teachers to allow time for a reflective conversation about what works. One teacher asked, "When will we find the time to have meaningful conversations as a team about what practices best work for our students?" This question coupled with the need to have deep discussions about strategies that reinforce learning for students who were not succeeding were equally as necessary.

The change to weekly CRT's was supported through best practices by leading authors DuFour and Eaker, *Professional Learning Communities that Work*, and Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock, *Classroom Instruction that Works*. The book study shared that, "Educators who are building a professional learning community recognize that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all. Therefore, they create structures to promote collaborative culture." (DuFour p.3) Despite evidence indicating that working

collaboratively was best practice, monthly late starts forced teachers to continue to work mostly in isolation with little or no common collaboration time.

Inferences about how collaboration time was used were inaccurate. Some equate the term "collaborate" with building camaraderie in the building. Others equate the term to mean developing a consensus around operational procedures around matters such as tardiness or supervising recess. Still others believe that collaboration is a committee to oversee discipline, technology, or the social climate in schools. Each of the above types of collaboration have merit but are not representative of the professional dialog and collaboration that are transforming Mineral Point into a professional learning community.

The collaboration time at Mineral Point Schools is a systematic process where teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practices.

The collaboration time at Mineral Point Schools is a systematic process where teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practices. Teachers work in teams and engage in deep cycles of questions and answers that strengthen teaching and student learning. Most recently conversations surrounded questions regarding how to ensure that all students are taught the common core state standards with units aligned at the proper grade level to ensure rigor and high expectations.

I welcome you to contact me and join a Friday CRT to learn more about how collaboration time between teachers is enhancing student learning each and every week. 🐾

Mineral Point Ag. Dept./FFA

The fall is a busy time of year for Mineral Point FFA. As school starts the FFA is attending Leadership workshops, World Dairy Expo., selling fruit/local products, the annual donation auction and looking forward to national FFA convention. The Agriculture classes are off and running doing welding, building picnic tables, working in the oak savanna, raising a calf, and learning how to care for a pet.

Upcoming Dates

Oct. 10-31 FFA/Skills USA Fruit and Local Products sale

Oct. 30-Nov. 1 National FFA Convention

Gallery Night Done Right

Mineral Point students will be the featured artists and musicians at the Walker House for the December 7 Gallery Night. A Gala Dinner will be held from 4:00-5:00 p.m. This event is open to the public. Dinner tickets cost \$10 each (\$5 of the meal ticket will be donated to the school to start an Art Fund). The purpose is to honor the students who created the art, art frames, and music for Gallery Night. For more information or to purchase tickets contact: walkerhouse1@gmail.com.

District Report Card Luke Francois, Ed.D.

This school year brings many exciting changes to the Mineral Point School District. This year also brings changes to the way districts themselves are evaluated by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

A new **District Report Card** will accompany this year's **School Report Card**. The DPI will issue a District Report Card for our district and for each district in Wisconsin. Both report cards are now available online at the DPI website.

Similar to the School Report Card, the District Report Card provides valuable information on how our district is performing and where it can improve. It provides us with a broader, district-wide perspective that supplements and enriches the information found in each School Report Card. The School and District Report Cards are intended to help all districts get a better picture of how well they prepare students to graduate ready for college and career.

The District Report Cards are calculated for the district as a whole. In other words, these report cards treat the district as if it were "one big school" responsible for all students in the district. District Report Cards look very similar to the School Report Cards with one primary exception: District Report Cards include both attendance and graduation scores.

Here is how the report cards work. Each public school and district earns an overall accountability score, from 0 to 100. This score is displayed in the top left corner of the School or District Report Cards. It is important to note that the 0 to 100 accountability score is not a "percent correct" measurement. The score is based on our 2012-13 performance in the following four priority areas:

- **Student Achievement proficiency in reading and mathematics on state assessments**
- **Student Growth measured by year-to-year improvements in achievement**
- **Closing Gaps in performance between specific student groups (comparing English language learners, low-income students, students with disabilities, and members of a racial or an ethnic group with their peers)**

- **On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness is a measurement using reliable predictors of high school graduation and potential post high school success**

Schools and districts are also evaluated on their test participation rates, chronic absenteeism rates, and dropout rates when applicable. These are measures of student engagement. Based on our scores, our district and schools were placed into one of five categories, from *Fails to Meet Expectations* to *Significantly Exceeds Expectations*.

Our school's 2012-13 overall scores were: Elementary school 72.5 with rating that meets expectations, Middle school 70.3 with rating meets expectations, and High school 74.3 with rating exceeds expectations.

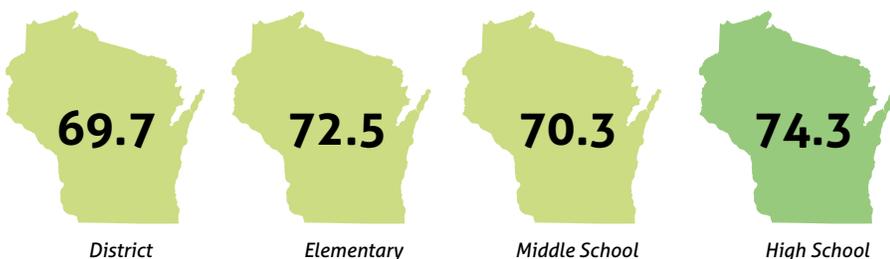
Our district's 2012-13 overall score was 69.7 with rating meets expectations.

The School and District Report Cards will be issued every year. Individual student results on state assessments will continue to be reported separately. DPI has produced two versions of each Report Card: one labeled "School Report Card" and lengthier version, "School Report Card Detail," with extensive information about the data used in the report cards. Both versions can be accessed online at http://acct.dpi.wi.gov/acct_accountability.

The report cards are one part of a statewide accountability system for schools. The State Superintendent, Governor, legislative leaders, and DPI staff worked closely with parents, educators, and members of the business community to develop the system. The U.S. Department of Education has reviewed the recent changes to the accountability system. Both the accountability system and the report cards will continue to improve and evolve in future years as more data becomes available.

I am confident that these report cards, as well as many other changes being implemented throughout our state, will help our school/district identify our strengths and continue to address our challenges. Please let me know your thoughts and questions as they arise.

I look forward to working with you to make 2013-14 a successful school year for your child! 🐾



Overall Accountability Ratings

Significantly exceeds expectations: 83-100

Exceeds expectations: 73-82.9

Meets expectations: 63-72.9

Meets few expectations: 53-62.9

Fails to meet expectations: 0-52.9

Food Service Report



My name is Michelle Denk and I am the new Food Service Coordinator for Mineral Point Schools. I have been the Director at Mount Horeb for the past five years and I am very excited for this new opportunity.

School meals have changed over the last two years and now offer students low fat white and flavored milk; a wider variety of fruits and vegetables; proteins and whole grains; and meet strict limits on saturated fat, sodium and portion size. Students must take at least ½ cup of fruits and/or vegetables to qualify for a reimbursable lunch so please encourage your child to take a fruit or vegetable with every lunch. Water is available in the cafeterias in place of milk.

Check out our new menus! Each menu will feature a fruit and vegetable of the month with nutritional information and tips.

If you have any questions, please contact me:
michelle.denk@mp.k12.wi.us.

Meet Michelle Denk

Michelle is currently the Food Service Director for Mount Horeb Area School District and will now coordinate both districts. This is her 7th year in school nutrition. She received a bachelor's degree from UW-Stout in Dietetics and is a Registered/Certified Dietitian and a School Nutrition Specialist. She completed her Dietetic Internship through the University of Northern Colorado while working as a Dietetic Technician for a nursing facility. She currently serves as the Education Chair for the School Nutrition Association of Wisconsin where she spends time planning conferences and finding opportunities for education for other Food Service Directors. Child Nutrition has been a very rewarding experience that she is very passionate about. She lives in Stoughton with her husband and enjoys being outdoors and spending time at their cabin with family.

Award and Recognition for The Oak Savannas



The Iowa County Land Conservation Department recently presented the Mineral Point School District with an award for its efforts in conserving the oak savannas. The award was presented in front of a large crowd gathered for the Farmers Appreciation Day in Dodgeville and celebrates the use of our savannas for project-based learning.

In addition, the Don Hawkins Oak Savanna was featured on the cover of a DVD produced by the US Fish & Wildlife Commission. The video describes how the Fish & Wildlife Commission partners with organizations and communities to preserve wildlife habitats. The Commission was one of the original partners involved in launching the elementary school savanna project.

We encourage you to venture into the savannas with your families. You will see golden grasses, rusty oaks, and beautiful purple asters grown from seed planted by last year's third graders. And, to keep the momentum going, this year's third grade has been working with high school students to harvest prairie seeds, which they will eventually replant in the savanna.

The informational kiosk at the Elementary School provides a good starting point - and guidepost. Take some pictures and post them on our new Facebook page! (Facebook.com/FriendsoftheOakSavanna)

Students Work Together at Oak Savanna

Highlighting one of the experiences to this point of the year would be the Natural Resources class working with a group of 3rd graders from the elementary on an Oak Savanna project. The group effort involved the Ag. Students guiding the 3rd graders on a search for prairie plant seeds through the Oak Savanna. The 3rd graders gathered the needed seeds and then also spent another day with the Ag. Students trashing the seed to help purify it for planting. The final step will come in the spring when the 3rd graders and the Ag. Students plant the seeds. The project was coordinated and supported by community members Don Hawkins and Don Hay. The high school students were working on identifying native prairie plants and trees of Southwest Wisconsin and the 3rd graders were studying seeds. It was a perfect fit for both groups and the experience was enjoyed by all.



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