

## **Breakfast with Brad**

**November 18, 2011**

### **Notes by Margaret Dennis, CHS Parent Representative**

Mrs. Lynn Pierce, Principal of Elberfeld Elementary, welcomed parent representatives to her school.

Mr. Brad Schneider, WCSC superintendent, thanked the Elberfeld PTS for their hospitality.

**Academic achievement:** WCSC continues “improving upon a tradition of excellence”. The 2010 ISTEP+ scores had the highest overall pass rates in WCSC history. Under PL 221, Indiana’s accountability law, all 10 elementary schools and two middle schools earned “exemplary” status. The remaining schools achieved academic excellence but were held back from “exemplary” status because of unfairness in No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the federal accountability law. Indiana department of education (IDOE) is going to apply for NCLB waivers with the federal DoE because our state standards are already more stringent than the federal ones. WCSC uses test scores to adjust instruction on specific standards and improve overall education. Some of the “new” reforms being proposed and advocated by the IDOE are actually programs that have been in existence and which research shows have little instructional benefit. Scope of public education has changed dramatically over the years, and schools are now expected to do a lot more than basic education. The superintendent shared a LONG list of changes in public education since 1900 in terms of additional areas of education that schools are charged with imparting to students.

**Budget & Grants:** With the downturn in the economy, even grants have decreased. WCSC will have some tough decisions on whether and how to fund some of those services currently funded through grants, such as school resource officers and social workers.

**IREAD-3:** New state legislation, PL 109, requires the evaluation of reading skills for students who are in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to ensure that they can read at grade level prior to fourth grade. They will take a test the week of March 19-21, 2012. If they do not pass the test, they will be offered summer remediation and another opportunity to take the test. If they still do not pass, and do not fall into certain exemption categories, they will not be promoted to 4<sup>th</sup> grade, regardless of the opinion of educators or parents. (Under previous guidelines, a school could recommend that a student repeat a grade level but the parents made the final decision. Schools made the recommendation based on many factors including academic, emotional, and social maturity over a period of time.) Information on the new legislation and program has been sent to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade parents and is available on the IDOE Web site ([www.doe.in.gov/assessment/iread\\_resources.html](http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/iread_resources.html)). No additional funding is available for the program. Mrs. Wilhelmus, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, is confident that most of our students will be promoted.

**Curriculum & Course offerings:** Building administrators have some flexibility to cater course offerings within the scope of the WCSC mission. Some time the decisions are based on community needs or interests, other times they are based on staffing. For example, at Castle South Middle School, when the

Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) teacher retired last year, WCSC went through several iterations of posting and interviews for a replacement without finding a good match. Instead they hired a business teacher who could offer some of the FACS elements plus new business curriculum. Another example is the availability of foreign languages at our high schools. In addition to other languages, Boonville High School offers Latin, while Tecumseh HS offers Entomology and Castle HS offers Japanese. Most of these decisions have been due to staff availability.

**Winter Weather:** Student and staff safety is always the primary concern when making decisions regarding school closing or delays. WCSC covers 391 square miles. The superintendent and director of transportation stay abreast of the forecast, drive roads starting at 4:45am, consult local and state highway personnel, law enforcement, and school superintendents. A decision is made by 5:45am and communicated on the Web site, local media, and the "School's Out" alert service. Parents should HAVE A PLAN and make sure their students know what to do in cases of delayed start, early dismissal, or school cancellation. All snow days must be recovered to meet the state mandate of 180 instructional days (though there are no restrictions on the number of 2-hour delays). WCSC recommends that parents discuss with their teen drivers whether to drive to school or ride the bus in inclement weather.

The next Breakfast with Brad meeting will be held on Friday, December 9, at Yankeetown Elementary.