

Breakfast with Brad

March 9, 2012 (meeting notes by Margaret Dennis, Castle High School Parent Representative)

Mr. Gerry Howard, Principal, welcomed us to Tennyson Elementary School. Mr. Brad Schneider, Warrick County School Corporation Superintendent, thanked Mr. Howard and his staff.

Mr. Schneider explained some of the process that was involved in preparation for last week's **severe weather outbreak**. In advance of the expected bad weather on Friday, all staff was directed earlier in the week to review emergency preparedness plans. Mr. Schneider met with the Warrick County Emergency Management director and participated in a conference call with the National Weather Service (NWS). In that Friday, 10:30 am call NWS was forecasting a dangerous situation for our area for later in the day. Severe weather could occur at any time prior, including up to 3 hours, to the 3pm expected arrival of the front. The worst scenario would be that severe weather would hit when the students were being transported. Thus, the decision was made to hold students in school until after the storms had passed. School buildings are built to stricter construction codes than residences; it was felt that students would be safer at school than in transit or in their homes. Parents were allowed to either join their students in the school or to take their child out of the school early. Parents taking their students out did make things more difficult for school personnel since many times, the students were already in their safe area so they had to be fetched individually by a member of the school staff. During the day, communication was very important – the information on the decision was shared on the Web site, through email, through media, etc. The schools were kept informed by NOAA radio, transportation dispatch, inter-school radio, and local media. This incident highlights the importance of each family having an emergency preparedness plan of their own, as well as plans for the students in case of delayed start and early dismissal. While Mr. Schneider is pleased with the implementation of last week's plan, the administration is reviewing all procedures and debriefing all staff.

The School Board has passed a new policy regarding **cafeteria charges**. In the last few years, students have been allowed to charge meals with no limits; their families have received notifications of charges. The amount of uncollected money has increased dramatically in recent years. Previously, it would average \$3,000 a year for the entire corporation, but last year it reached \$10,000, and as of December 2011, there were unpaid balances totaling \$33,000. Food Services Department is a self-funded entity though they receive some reimbursement from the government, and capital project assistance from the school corporation. WCSC makes every attempt to work with families in need but the school board felt that the trend of outstanding balances could not be allowed to continue. The issue has been studied all year, and many scenarios were studied. After careful consideration, a policy was approved, effective May 1, 2012:

- Elementary students can charge up to \$20. After that amount is reached, they will be given an alternate meal. Every effort will be made for discretion. Those students will be dismissed with the students who bring their sack lunches; the cafeteria will give them a sack lunch consisting of a peanut butter sandwich. (If a child has peanut allergies, a cheese sandwich will be substituted

in the alternate meal.) There will be no limit to the number of alternate meals that a student will be allowed over the year.

- Middle and High School students will be allowed to charge up to \$10. No alternate meals will be provided. They will not be allowed to purchase a la carte items while they have an outstanding balance with the cafeteria.
- Parents will be encouraged to apply for “Free and Reduced Meals” if finances are an issue. There is no deadline to apply.

Mr. Schneider reminded everyone that it was the last day of the **legislative session**. While there was healthy debate on many bills, he was troubled that there was at least one education-related bill that was not debated, and was almost voted on without proper discussion. SB 384 dealt with “takeover schools” and would allow the state to strip all local control from a school with little or no accountability. In other legislation, HB 1189, the multi-count day, has still not been clarified as to the effect it might have on schools funding since all schools have lower count days in the spring due to graduations, expulsions, drop-outs, etc. SB 198, on voucher expansion, was not voted on.

The next meeting will be Friday, April 13, 2012 at the Warrick Education Center.