



# PERRY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

*“Play, Learn, and Grow Together”*

Trevor Miller, Principal

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## PRINCIPALS' CORNER

For those of you who we haven't met, this is our first year at Perry Elementary. Before our start in Perry, Mr. Miller was elementary principal at Melcher-Dallas last year. Previously to his administrative career he taught and coached numerous activities at Pleasantville for 10 years. Mr. Martin also has a diversified background with teaching experiences as a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Honduras and Texas; a K-5 Reading Specialist in Kansas, and as a 7-8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading teacher/coach in Iowa. Since the beginning of the year, Perry Elementary staff, instructional coaches, and administrators have collaborated to develop a school culture and instructional programs centered on staff professional development and student learning. A major part of the puzzle has come in the form of weekly meetings with our Heartland AEA instructional coaches. These collaborative meetings have resulted in a system of supports designed to reinforce phonics, sight words, fluency, and reading comprehension. We have also regained a second counselor and a full time At-Risk position. The addition of these 2 positions has promoted and supported a positive school structure for family and community involvement in Perry Elementary. We continue to look forward to the rest of this year's journey and we are dedicated to the progression as a unified team.

## SCHOOL HOURS

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 7:45                         | Supervision Begins   |
| 7:45-8:10                    | Breakfast Served   |
| 8:10                         | School Begins  |
| 8:20                         | Tardy Bell   |
| 3:00                         | Bus Students Dismissed   |
| 3:10                         | All Other Students Dismissed   |
| 2:00/2:10                    | Early Dismissal Every Wed.   |
| 3:30-4:30                    | Homework Club M,T,Th <i>(for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, &amp; 5<sup>th</sup> grade students signed up by teacher)</i> |
| 6:00-7:30AM &<br>3:40-6:00PM | PACES parents enter through back door  |

## IMPORTANT DATES

- Feb. 13: Parent-Teacher Conferences 4-8 pm
- Feb 17: Parent-Teacher Conferences 4-8 pm
- Feb 21: Conf. Comp Day  
NO SCHOOL
- Mar 17-21: Spring Break



## FROM THE PBIS TEAM

This year at Perry Elementary we are building Bluejay leaders by using common expectations and language throughout the building. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a nationally known program that guides schools in creating a positive learning environment. Our focus is on recognizing positive behaviors displayed by students. The expectations at Perry Elementary are:

**Be Responsible    Be Respectful    Be Safe**

These expectations are posted throughout the school building and have been taught in every classroom during the first semester of school. When a student is seen displaying positive behaviors an adult can give them a Bluejay feather. Students collect Bluejay feathers and turn them in for prizes when the Bluejay nest (a cart with prizes) visits their classroom. They can also turn their feathers into their teacher for special privileges in the classroom.

## SAY SOMETHING

Try playing Say Something while reading. Read a few pages or a part of the book. Then stop and invite your child to say something about what's been read. (You could also take turns saying something about what's been read.) Playing Say Something helps your child practice stopping and thinking while reading, which helps him/her to monitor his/her understanding.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF KINDERGARTEN?

A great deal of learning!

Our Kindergarten students have been busy with learning the alphabet letters, letter sounds, and how to begin blending these sounds together to simple words like – cat, pat, ram, can, tan, etc. The students are also learning other frequently seen words such as: I, go, to, the, this, like, come, here, what, etc. . . The children are given opportunities to write these words in their writing journals.

Kindergarten students have also been working daily on counting, number recognition, and writing numbers. Students are working in small groups and exploring using manipulatives, and playing counting and sorting games. They are learning to see that numbers, shapes, and patterns are everywhere around them.

Kindergarten students, most recently, have been learning about money and making exchanges of pennies for nickels and nickels for dimes.

In addition to academic skills, the children are working daily on being respectful, responsible and safe at school, whether in the classroom, hallways, or playground. They enjoy earning blue jay feathers for their good choices. This is all part of our school wide PBIS program that is being implemented at Perry Elementary.

**Kindergarten is a wonderful place to learn!**



## ART NEWS

The second, third, and fourth grade classes were invited to attend a Creativity Day at the Des Moines Art Center in January. Fortunately, the second and third grade classes were able participate! The Creativity Day was developed to explore the exhibition, Gravity and Grace, which focused on artworks created by El Anatsui, a famous contemporary artist from Africa. Prior to attending the Creativity Day activities, students learned about El Anatsui and his artworks by watching and discussing brief segments of the documentary, *Fold, Crumple, Crush*. While participating in the Creativity Day at the Des Moines Art Center, students were able to view and reflect on the artworks created by El Anatsui during a docent led tour. Students were also able to participate in a creative movement exercise where they viewed El Anatsui's art and attempted to "crumble, crush, and fold" themselves with the guidance of a professional dance instructor. Using common objects students might find in a school lunch like straws and food wrappers, students began to create a collaborative piece of artwork. The student created art will be completed during art classes and will be on display in the Multiple Purpose Room at Perry Elementary. This fabulous experience was provided by the Des Moines Art Center at no cost to the Perry Community Schools!



## MEET OUR NEW COUNSELOR

My name is Katie Fahey and I am the new school counselor at Perry Elementary. I joined the counseling team this January, so I am still learning names and faces. I received a bachelor's degree from the University of Iowa in International Studies and went on to pursue a master's degree in counseling from the University of Northern Iowa. While in graduate school I worked with several school districts with students in grades K-12. I have a passion for working with children and families and I am excited to be here and be part of such a wonderful school and community! As a school counselor, my primary responsibility is to promote the academic, personal, and social development of all students. I look forward to offering support to the students, staff, families and community. I will be meeting with students individually and in small groups during lunch, conducting classroom lessons, meeting with parents, collaborating with teachers and staff, and consulting with community organizations to benefit and meet the needs of all students and families at Perry. I am excited to work alongside Andrea Brandner, school counselor at Perry Elementary, to help create a positive and supportive environment conducive to learning and success. Any student can request to meet with a counselor or they can be referred by a teacher, administrator, or parent. I encourage you to reach out if you have concerns regarding your child. If you would like a counselor to meet with your child please do not hesitate to contact us.

Andrea Brandner: [andrea.brandner@perry.k12.ia.us](mailto:andrea.brandner@perry.k12.ia.us) or phone at 515-465-8344.

Katie Fahey: [katie.fahey@perry.k12.ia.us](mailto:katie.fahey@perry.k12.ia.us) or phone at 515-465-8221.

I'm excited to be here and I look forward to getting to know you and your children!

Sincerely,

Katie Fahey

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AT THE ELEMENTARY

One of the primary goals in professional learning for the district this school year is to begin creating a ‘guaranteed and viable’ curriculum by ‘unpacking’ the Iowa Core. The idea of a ‘guaranteed and viable’ curriculum simply means that teachers are identifying precisely what they expect all students to learn at each grade level based on the Iowa Core, and then number of different concepts and skills is realistic based on the amount of time that students are in school.

‘Unpacking’ means that teachers are working in teams to become very clear and consistent about the specific concepts, skills, and literacy skills (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, listening) that students are to learn at each grade level. Elementary teachers are focusing this year on unpacking the Iowa Core for mathematics. The first step in unpacking the Iowa Core is for each grade level team to review the standards from the Iowa Core for their grade level and break each standard down into one or more learning targets.

As you can imagine, this list of learning targets will be quite long! Next, teachers prioritize the list of learning targets by determining which ones are absolutely essential for all students to master. Learning targets that are essential for all students to master are those that include concepts and skills that are found in lessons and units throughout the school year, have great application to other content areas such as science or social studies, and are necessary for students to master in order to be successful in the next higher grade level.

Here is an example. In first grade, one of the essential concepts is for students to develop an understanding of whole number relationships and place value, including grouping in tens and ones. Therefore, three of the essential learning targets are: (1) Understand that the two digits of a two-digit number represent amounts of tens and ones, (2) Compare two two-digit numbers based on meanings of the tens and ones digits, recording the results of comparisons with the symbols  $>$ ,  $=$ , and  $<$ , and (3) Given a two-digit number, mentally find 10 more or 10 less than the number, without having to count; explain the reasoning used.

After identifying all of the learning targets for their grade level and then prioritizing ones that are absolutely essential, each team of teachers writes what are called “I can...” statements. These statements simplify the learning target by breaking down the learning target into separate concepts and skills using student-friendly language. Thus, the “I can...” statements focus on the content (concepts and skills) students will learn as well as the literacy skills (i.e., vocabulary, speaking, listening, writing, reading) students will need in order to master the learning target. These “I can...” statements are displayed somewhere in the classroom every day and discussed by the teacher and students. The “I can...” statements provide students with a clear way to know if they are being successful learners so be sure to ask your students what “I can...” statements they learned about each day.

Next month I will share what teachers are doing in to continue improving learning and teaching in literacy. In the meantime, please feel free to send any questions you may have about professional learning as I will be happy to answer them either in person or in a future column.

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