



# Valley Heights News & Notes

May 2011

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Blue Rapids/Waterville, Kansas

## Reflections

**John Bergkamp | Superintendent**

This time of year lends itself to reflection as we come to the end of another school year. Reflecting on the successes and setbacks of a school year helps us to better prepare for the next school year that will be here before we know it. Standards of Excellence on state assessments, making AYP, and ACT scores above the state and national averages highlight this year's academic success. In addition, many of our students excelled in a variety of other domains such as Music, Art, Forensics, FFA, and Athletics to mention a few. A recent success that we can all be proud of was our student body participating in a Relay for Life activity at the high school. Seeing almost 400 students, staff, and community members coming together for a common purpose was awesome.

As we continue to reflect, we want to take the opportunity to say thank you to various individuals and groups. We want to thank the class of 2011 for all of your contributions to Valley Heights and wish you the best in all your endeavors. We take a special moment to recognize Kathy Steinfort for her tireless efforts in carrying out her school nurse duties. Kathy has been a loyal supporter and a champion of healthy students and staff. We also thank Community Education Director Katie Mclellan for her many contributions in planning and organizing a multitude of activities. We extend a special thanks to Terry Roepke, Chad Parker, Ryan Woodyard, and Stephen Hendrickson for volunteering their time to serve as school board members. Much has been accomplished during their tenure as board members including facilities being upgraded which includes a two year old sports complex.

As we continue the reflection, we shouldn't forget that these accomplishments have come on the heels of economic struggles and school budget cuts. We continue to do more with less because we have the work ethic and determination to see that the job gets done regardless of challenges.

At the same time we reflect on success, we must also look at ways we might do better and how we can be a more effective school system. We can certainly do a better job of communicating with parents and letting you know how much we rely on your support. We couldn't accomplish much without that support. We can also do better when showing our appreciation to the Valley Heights community as a whole. The support we receive, whether it's another fundraiser, attendance at activities, or volunteering your time in the schools, it is much appreciated. The overall support our staff and students receive is the best there is and something we can all take pride in.

We wish everyone a safe and enjoyable summer and look forward to a great new year just around the corner.

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USD #498 Board of Education's Mission is to provide an education system that will develop the highest level of achievement for all students, educators, and patrons by managing district policies and efficient use of resources.

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# Homework!

**Don Potter | Junior/Senior High Principal**

The school year has gone quickly with so many accomplishments and proud moments for our school, faculty, staff, students, parents and administration. I am extremely proud of those many accomplishments that we have in place and plan to put into action to improve student achievement at Valley Heights JR/SR High School and USD #498. Homework completion is one of the many items that we look to improve upon for the 2011-2012 school year.

There are many items that determine the success of each student's achievement in education. Although one that is continually being discussed by educational specialists is that of homework in today's schools. The research indicates that students who receive homework to reinforce and practice skills taught in the classroom have a higher achievement rate. As you read that statement, one may think that it definitely makes perfect sense. If students complete the practice effectively how can they not get better at not only the subject they are studying, but also increase mastery of basic academic skills, such as reading, writing, spelling and mathematics? Homework is also a bridge that joins schools and parents. From the school's perspective, there is the opportunity to monitor students' independent progress. For parents, there is the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the type of education your child is receiving and to express positive attitudes towards their achievement. As a building, we will be changing our ZAP program to represent something slightly different.

In the past we have allowed students multiple opportunities to complete their homework and have had the philosophy of Zeros Aren't Permitted. However, next year this will not be the case. We have experienced students not completing assignments which are over a month old and beyond. This situation does not produce solid learning for the students, therefore something must change. Each teacher will be allowed to create their own policy to increase homework completion rates. There will still be a mandatory time after school for students who are not completing homework on time.

## **Purpose:**

Homework is an important part of the educational process. Homework helps build responsibility, self-discipline, and life-long learning habits. It is the intention of the Valley Heights staff to assign homework that provides these opportunities for improvement and to reinforce learning objectives.

## **Time:**

Students should expect to spend time outside of class completing homework. The amount of time will vary from student to student depending upon study habits, academic skills, and the classes in which the student is enrolled. Generally, as a student progresses from 7th grade through 12th grade, the amount of time spent on homework should increase. If a student feels that they are spending an excessive amount of time on homework, a conference with the teacher(s) is appropriate. Accelerated Reader is a requirement in English and other classes. Students are encouraged to pursue independent, leisure reading outside of class.

## **Responsibilities of the Teacher:**

- Assign relevant homework that reinforces learning objectives
- Give clear instructions and make sure students understand the purpose of the homework
- Provide feedback on homework in a timely manner
- Require that students enter assignments in their student planner
- Check each student's planner in their seminar at least twice a week
- Involve parents and provide a grade summary on a regular basis

## **Responsibilities of Parents:**

- Establish a regular study time each day
- Provide a quiet, well-lit study area
- Check the student's planner to monitor the student's organization
- To the extent possible, monitor the student's grades by checking them online and receive automatic email notifications
- Call or email the teacher to express concerns or ask questions

# Homework! (cont.)

**Don Potter | Junior/Senior High Principal**

## Responsibilities of the Student:

- Write down assignments in your planner
- Set aside a regular time for studying at home
- Work on homework independently whenever possible so that it reflects your ability
- Produce quality work. Recognize there is a relationship between effort and achievement
- Complete assignments according to the instructions given and on time
- Check on your grades for each class on a regular basis

## Compliance and Interventions:

- Students are expected to complete all assignments
- Additional time and support will be provided
- Teacher assistance before, during or after school
- Effective use of Seminar time
- Voluntary use of the ET after-school program
- Mandatory program after school
- Teacher conference with student
- Teacher conference with parent

As stated previously, homework is a significant factor in a successful education. We feel that with successful commitments, interventions and follow-up this will advance each student to a higher level of learning. Thank you for all of your support and dedication to your student and Valley Heights JR/SR High School. We expect great things to happen in the 11-12 school year. Please, if there are any questions regarding your student's education, do not hesitate to call.

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# Legacy

**Barbara Buck | Junior/Senior High Counselor**

Throughout the years, I have often written of the strong influence adults—especially parents and grandparents—have on youth. Although I have always recognized this influence, I have come to understand it even more this past year. My mom passed away in February. Since that time, I am amazed at how many times I catch myself starting a thought with, “Mom would ....”. Mom had seven grandchildren; six adults and 2 year old Enna. Shortly before her death, the older ones sat down with her and thanked her for all she had given them. They then asked her for her words of wisdom. Recognizing the influence she had had on their lives and the fact that Enna would not have the opportunity to learn from her as they had, they wanted words they could pass on to their little cousin.

My niece printed Grandma's thoughts, which she labeled “Advice From An Angel,” and gave copies to each of us. As a tribute to my mom, and in recognition of the fact that much of what I write in these newsletters I learned from her, I'd like to share with all of you my mom's words of wisdom to her grandchildren. I hope all of you will take time to think about the legacy you are creating.

1. Don't be passive. Stand up for what you believe in.
2. Find a significant other to discuss things with and be equals.
3. Embrace strangers. Sit at a new table, enjoy other people's stories.
4. Money does not make happiness. Just have peace, love and happiness. Happiness is one of the most important things in life.
5. Don't say hate.

Have a great summer!

# Mission, Vision, Commitments, and Goals

Rhonda Trimble | Elementary Principal

It is hard to believe that it's the end of another school year. It amazes me how quickly the time passes and how much the students and teachers have accomplished from August to May. Our elementary buildings are continuing to grow as strong members of the Valley Heights Professional Learning Community which stimulates ongoing, collective inquiry into teaching and learning among all adults and children. This is proven repeatedly by the unending learning accomplishments by our entire school community. Here is a review of the Valley Heights Elementary mission, vision, commitments, and goals.

## MISSION STATEMENT:

The Valley Heights community will prepare students to become lifelong learners and productive citizens.

## VISION STATEMENT:

As a Professional Learning Community, we envision a school in which staff:

- Unites with parents and community to achieve specific goals with a common purpose;
- Works together in collaborative teams;
- Monitors each student's individual progress to guide instruction;
- Improves student achievement on a continuing basis by implementing effective, research-based strategies;
- Demonstrates a personal commitment to the academic growth and general well-being of all students;
- Nurtures a caring, positive, child-centered learning environment;
- Values everyone within the school community.

## COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS:

In order to achieve the vision of a school that functions as a Professional Learning Community, Valley Heights Elementary staff makes the following collective commitments:

- Actively involve parents in the educational process of their child.
- Create a positive learning experience in collaboration with the entire Valley Heights community. (For example: Open House, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Colt Booster Club Activities)
- Work collaboratively in developing instructional strategies and designing methods of assessment to advance the vision of the school.
- Use varied methods of assessment to monitor the learning of students and use the results to guide individual instruction.
- Provide a positive, child-centered classroom with clear expectations, consistent consequences, and specific, articulated academic goals where all students are valued.
- Model life-long learning through commitment to ongoing professional development and continuous improvement.
- Improve communication between school and home.

## GOALS:

- Improve student performance in Reading, Language Arts and Math in each grade level as measured by performance on local, state and national assessments.
- Improve behavioral and social skills that will develop citizens of good character and teach them to be responsible for their own actions.

We will be able to bring back Camp Exploration this year, which was dearly missed last summer. Also, with the continuance of our Early Childhood Block Grant this year, the Valley Heights School District will again be able to provide a summer program for young children ages 3, 4, and 5. To be eligible to attend the summer program, children must have turned 3 years old by August 31st, 2010. The Early Childhood Summer Program is divided into two sessions and coincides with our Camp Exploration and summer school sessions. The first session of each will begin on June 13th and end on June 30th while the second session will begin on July 11th and end on July 21st. Camp Exploration, summer school, and the Early Childhood Summer Program will all be held at the Waterville Elementary building. Please look for information coming home on all three programs.

Once again, congratulations to our entire school community on all their achievements over the past year. It's been a wonderful year and we look forward to the 2011-2012 upcoming school year. I encourage all of our staff and students to have a safe and enjoyable summer break.

## 2011 Seniors: Plans for the Future

Listed below are the 24 Valley Heights Seniors and their plans on where to go or what to do after graduation.

**Aaron Boeschling:** Kansas State

**Annie Pralle:** Cloud County then transfer to Kansas State  
Major in Political Science

**Benton Coon:** Highland Community College  
Play football, transfer to a four year school, major in  
Communication

**Brody Dobrovlny:** Highland Community College  
Play football, transfer to a four year college and major in  
Business

**Chris Winslow:** Advanced Individual Training  
Attend K-State Salina to study helicopter mechanics

**Cody Trimble:** Highland Community College  
Play football, majoring in Sports Administration or Business  
Management

**Dani Lockhart:** Highland Community College  
Play basketball

**Ellie Musil:**  
Kansas State  
Major in Science and Communication Science & Disorders

**Jake Carlson:** Join the Air National Guard  
Manhattan Vo-Tech to study Electrical Power & Distribution

**James Winkenwader:** Join the U.S. Marine Corps

**Jimmy House:** Take online college classes and find a full-  
time job

**Karri VanAlst:** Will take a year off and maybe attend  
Hutchinson Community College to become an emergency  
dispatcher

**Katie Atkinson:** Join the U.S. Army as a medic

**Kayla McNary:** Cloud County  
Major in Criminal Justice, transfer to Washburn to earn an  
Applied Science degree

**Kristen Hays:** Kansas University  
Major in Journalism

**Kurtis Larson:** Kansas State  
Major in Agricultural Business

**Mason Walsh:** Evangel University in Springfield, MO  
Major in Audio Engineering, emphasis on Recording  
Technology

**Megan Wanamaker:** Highland Community College  
Major in Elementary Education, emphasis on Math

**Mikala Fuller:** Cloud County  
Major in Elementary Education, transfer to Emporia State

**Miranda Bargdill:** Midland College in Fremont, NE  
Pursue a degree in Education

**Ross Bergsten:** Bethany College  
Pursue a degree in Biochemistry

**Sam Jones:** Emporia State  
Study Nursing

**Tristan Dreith:** Kansas State

**Zach Montanino:** Highland Community College  
Play football



**Congratulations Graduates!**

## Scholarships Awarded

*Each spring at the annual Awards Night, scholarships are given to graduating seniors.  
Here is this year's list of scholarships presented and their recipients:*

State Bank of Blue Rapids	Miranda Bargdill
American Legion Auxiliary	Brody Dobrovolny
Valley Heights	Benton Coon, Samantha Jones, Mason Walsh
Charles Steele Memorial	Aaron Boeschling
Edwin Brychta Memorial	Mikala Fuller, Kristen Hays, Dani Lockhart
Citizen's State Bank	Aaron Boeschling
Larry Nolte	Megan Wanamaker
USD 498 Foundation	Miranda Bargdill
Lowell Blaser Family Memorial	Benton Coon
Terre & Bev Carter	Samantha Jones
American Red Cross/FCCLA	Kristen Hays
Waterville Lions' Club	Kayla McNary
Jeremiah Byard	Aaron Boeschling, Tristan Dreith, Mikala Fuller, Sam Jones, Dani Lockhart, Ellie Musil, Annie Pralle
Lawrence Lindquist/ VH Agricultural Leadership	Kurtis Larson
Joe Stryker Memorial	Mason Walsh
Lillian Brychta Memorial	Kristen Hays, Cody Trimble
Lynx Outstanding Senior Athlete	Ellie Musil
VH Education Association	Mikala Fuller
Gene & Sandy Harding Family	Megan Wanamaker
DO & Delores Parker Family	Kurtis Larson
Waterville/Blue RapidsVFW/ Blue Rapids American Legion	Kurtis Larson
Dennis White Mustang Pride	Ellie Musil
Non-Valley Heights: Pony Express Riders	Miranda Bargdill, Kristen Hays



Izzy Baier shows Dad how to “start building!”



Elliott Buchara thinkin’ “outside the box.”



Dawson Vermetten and his friends show Mrs. Gros and his mom how to line ‘em up straight.



Audra Steinfort is making sure they’re balanced perfectly.



Bryce Wittgartner looks like building design could be in his future.

ValleyHeights’ ParentsAs Teachers sponsored “BLOCKFEST” at the Waterville Multi Purpose Room on April 28th from 6:30-8:00pm. The idea was to let children have fun with a wide assortment of blocks while at the same time, learn from what they were doing. Block play helps children develop early math, science and literacy skills. A number of “stations” were set up and each child, accompanied by at least one adult, spent a specified amount of time at each station. Attendance was good at this event and kids, as well as adults, had a great time.