

Cocalico principals prepare to usher in new school year

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Students get summer vacations.
Schools don't.

Five Cocalico school principals, at the Aug. 18 school board meeting, reported preparations for the 2014-15 school year.

- Reamstown Elementary principal Beth Haldeman said she has worked on safety and crisis response such as fire drills and evacuations. Haldeman said the school is also expanding its core values to include "positive behavior support." As an example, she said the school might make calls home to parents of students doing especially well.
- Denver Elementary principal Angela Marley said she and her staff are "making connections, building relationships with families." She gave kudos to custodial staff for their flexibility in renovating the building while it was in use for summer programs. Marley and Crystal Loose, Denver's assistant principal, presented a report on summer enrichment programs, which included art camps, iPad and blogging instruction, library time, and the Morning Mileage Club, which logged over 678 miles walked or run by students and families.
- Adamstown Elementary principal Nathan VanDeusen said district-wide math committee efforts last year "really helped our high-ability learners." He said the "big weakness" is fifth-grade reading, which will see more instructional time this year. He said new web-based teaching methods will reduce the need for consumables, saving the district \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year.
- Middle school principal Steven Melnyk thanked the custodial staff for "timing it just right" with repairs and upgrades despite a busy summer schedule. "The kids are gone, but there's a lot of activity (and) a lot of planning."
- High school principal Christopher Irvine said his staff is "very happy" with standardized test scores, which show "a lot of gains in a lot of areas." He added, "The work we've been doing the last five years is really starting to pay off."

Also, transportation director David Lutz said over half the district's bus fleet of 10-, 30- and 72-passenger vehicles, is brand new. Lutz said several vehicles will have GPS monitoring units. He reminded parents of half-day pre-kindergarten students that children will be bused to school, but parents must get them home.

In an invitation that sounded a little like a dare, Lutz offered board members a bus ride during School Bus Safety Week in October. "You've been in the classrooms, you've eaten in the cafeteria," he said. "I'd like to take you to my classroom."

In another matter, some serious earthmoving is in the works in Denver as Cocalico improves athletic fields, parking lots and access roads. The board approved the first phase of a project to relocate softball fields from their current poorly-drained site northeast of the high school to the south side of High School Road.

Kurt Eckenroad, director of buildings and grounds, said the work involves "a lot of cut and fill" on nine acres. The \$500,000 contract with W.G. Land Company includes extra funds for sinkhole remediation if necessary. The board also approved payment of \$33,732 to AEM Architects for design work.

The board expanded an agreement with Community Services Group to use space in all five schools for outpatient mental health assessments and therapy. Superintendent Bruce Sensenig said the program offers "support to our families and students," saving trips to Lancaster and elsewhere.