

25 September 09

The Cayuse Prairie School educational community would like to welcome you to our periodic newsletter. We hope everyone had a safe and rewarding summer, and we look forward to getting to the business of providing a sound, quality education to our students.

Personnel: Since our last newsletter, some familiar faces have retired, some new faces have joined our staff, and some staff has been reassigned to increase our effectiveness. We all would like to say goodbye and thank you to Cheryl Calvert (2nd grade) and Elva Mast (counselor). Between these two fine women, they had over 60 years of educational experience (mostly with Cayuse Prairie and Mountain Brook). Their wisdom and expertise will be missed.

New additions to the staff are Annelies Pedersen (counselor), Michelle Cronk (Title aide), and Cherie Gunderson (Sp.Ed. aide). All three bring unique qualities and personalities that will contribute immensely to our school. Tommi Jo Thornburg is moving from Kindergarten to 2nd grade, and we are all excited about her new assignment.

School Board: Our present school board consists of Brad Cronk (chair), Pam Skonord (vice-chair), Bart Woods, Dan Diehl, and our newest member Roberta Maness. They are a very capable group, and do a great job balancing the needs of the students and school with fiscal restraint. They have established short and long term goals for the school, and lead the district into a promising future. Some of their short term goals are: to continue to achieve AYP status, establish a leadership program, and continue to improve the Advanced Placement program. Other short term goals are to keep on improving communication with the community and to keep cultivating community involvement with the school.

The board's long range goal is to bring the proposed gym, classrooms, elementary bathrooms, and community center addition to a vote this November. The board and the school have done extensive exploring as to the community's support of this building proposal. With the acquisition of an interest free or less than 1% loan for the duration of the bond, the local taxpayers are in line to save between \$800,000 and \$1.17 million dollars on the \$1.95 million project (over 15 years).

The school board also continues to support the effort to improve the technology capability of the school. Training and professional development for the staff in the use of technology in the classroom is also a very high priority for the board. The school will continue to improve and modify the cayuseprairie.com web page.

Future goals the board is considering are before and after school care programs, a breakfast program, a hot lunch program, and restoration of the bell tower.

Enrollment: Enrollment at the school continues to fluctuate between 180 and 190 this month. This compares to a count of 201 last year. In comparison, over the last ten years, our largest enrollment was 204 students in 2000 and our smallest enrollment was 166 students in 2004. Enrollment seems to be slowly rising from the 2004 low as more subdivisions appear in our district. The economic downturn of the last year seems to be the over-riding factor in the small decrease this year. If current economic conditions

stabilize and improve, the population of the school is expected to gradually increase as the newer subdivisions in the district begin to develop.

Website: Cayuse Prairie School's website continues to expand and improve. This is a wonderful way for the community to keep up with what is happening at the school. Parents are able to access their children's grades, read the school newsletter (Messenger), and read class letters to stay informed of future activities. The biographies of staff members are available, and all calendars and events are listed. We are also planning a community page for general use. We encourage community members who have no children at the school to stay involved with us too. Cayuse Prairie wants everyone to belong to our community school. (www.cayuseprairie.com/) If you have any suggestions for improving the efficiency or usefulness of our web site, please contact the school with your input.

New Programs: Over the last four years, Cayuse Prairie School has instituted several new programs. Some of these programs were new and innovative and some of the programs were used to reinforce existing programs. One of the programs we are very proud of is the distance learning program. In conjunction with Brigham Young University, our 5th-8th grade students who qualify, are given the opportunity within our budget constraints to take advanced classes. These are done online and are quite challenging and rewarding. Some examples of these classes are foreign languages, advanced math classes (geometry and trigonometry), practical and technical arts, and many other opportunities. The mobile lap top lab provides us with many variations of technology classes to offer to all grade levels.

We have instituted a math lab to provide assistance to students who are struggling to achieve state standards. Incoming students from other districts and states are being targeted for assistance, if warranted, by MAPS testing. These students generally, but not always, have lower test scores than students who have been enrolled at Cayuse Prairie for three or more years. As the state goals rise to achieve AYP status, more support will be instituted to assist our students.

Continuing programs that have proved successful and beneficial are: 1st Aid/CPR to all 7th and 8th grade students who may earn their cards, student council, Junior Achievement, band, and numerous others.

Exemplar School Designation: Cayuse Prairie School has been designated an "Exemplar School" by the Montana Behavioral Initiative branch of the Office of Public Instruction. Cayuse Prairie School staff and students were awarded a plaque and given this distinction at the Bozeman conference in June '08, for the work we have been doing over the years in cultivating the culture and climate of the school. The success of the students and staff were also featured in a lengthy article in the Daily Interlake. Cayuse Prairie is in select company with this designation – only 11 schools statewide have received this distinction to date.

Bond Free: Cayuse Prairie School has been bond free for the last four years. We made the final payment on the 25 unit wireless mobile lab of laptop computers, which we purchased in 2005 with a tech levy that was passed that year by the voters. The mobile

lab has been a wonderful addition to the technological capabilities of the school. The school being bond free was one of the many reasons the school board decided to pursue the building bond now. The board decided to keep a buffer zone between the amount being asked for from the community (\$1.95 million) and the bonding capacity of the district (\$3 million +). This buffer zone will be a reserve in case there was a rapid expansion in the student count instead of a slow and steady increase.

AYP Status & NCLB Report Card: All three entities (elementary, middle school, district) at Cayuse Prairie School District #10 have achieved a favorable AYP status (Adequate Yearly Progress) for the school year 2008-2009. **The state as a whole** failed to meet targeted math scores, which reinforces our feeling that the new math labs are serving their purpose. All reading score goals were met at all levels by Cayuse Prairie students. AYP status is determined by testing 4th and 8th grades in math and reading. Our school presently tests 3rd through 8th grade so that we may adjust curriculum and are able to determine how to best meet the needs of the students. Cayuse Prairie School also meets all accreditation standards for schools. **All staff** is properly trained, certified, and placed. **All teachers** are certified in Montana with the correct endorsement for their position.

Closing: I would like to not only thank the parents and families, **but the community as a whole**, for the encouragement and support we receive at Cayuse Prairie School from you. If it does, in fact, take a community to help raise and educate our children, we will always be far and away the luckiest school anywhere. I speak for the staff, as well as myself, when I say it is an honor and a privilege to be a part of the great learning community at Cayuse Prairie School.

Rick Nadeau
Superintendent/Principal