

SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

NOTES FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

The construction projects made possible by the community's support of the **Safe. Secure. Connected.** bond in May 2014 are nearly complete. On behalf of the students, the staff, and the entire district, thank you for supporting this effort. Because of this support, our students and staff study and work in much safer buildings. I appreciate the many positive comments I've received on both the improved safety and security measures put in place, as well as the additional instructional technology available to our students. Both the students and the teachers continue to amaze with their creative uses of the technology in classrooms throughout the district. Many of the buildings have had their Open Houses allowing parents and community members the opportunity to see the improvements. Those interested in taking a tour of any building should contact the building administrator to arrange a visit.

The winter weather has finally arrived, which means there are times we must consider canceling or delaying school if travel is deemed unsafe. We do not make the decision to cancel school lightly as the students need to be in school. I'm often asked how we make the decision to cancel or delay the start of school. The process begins daily at about 4:30 a.m. when we check the weather forecasts and radar. We also communicate with our neighboring districts, the County Road Commission, and law enforcement to learn about weather and road conditions. If by 5:45 a.m. we feel we cannot transport the students safely to school, we make the decision to close or delay. In most cases, we will close instead of delay to allow for the snow plows to clean the roads and our staff to plow the parking lots. We notify local media and also send automated messages (phone, text, email) from our parent notification system to families and staff informing them of the closure or the delay. In addition to road conditions, we also consider closing school due to sustained, dangerous actual or wind

chill temperatures. Finally, as we all know, predicting the weather is a difficult task. There are times when the weather deteriorates or improves after the decision to close or remain open, and this can lead to some confusion as to the decision. The decision to close or delay is made with the best information we have at the time. The district covers more than 300 square miles and the weather can be terrible in one part of the district and fine in another. We consider the travel of the entire district when making the decision. Ultimately, the decision to close or not is based on whether we feel students can come to school safely, either by bus or family vehicle.

Sault Area Schools is proud to join the U.S. Coast Guard Partners in Education (PIE) program. More than 65 members of the Coast Guard stationed in Sault Ste. Marie have volunteered for the program which pairs Coast Guard volunteers and teachers throughout the district. The Coast Guard volunteers bring many different areas of expertise with them to the classroom. The program has four primary areas of focus: **Advocacy/Advisory** (e.g. advising on special projects like the science fair or serving on committees); **Instructional Support** (e.g. serve as guest instructors, assist in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math – STEM – instruction); **Enrichment** (e.g. create interactive lessons for students/staff, assist with extracurricular clubs); **Extended Service** (e.g. provide job shadowing experiences, sponsor tours, recognize outstanding students and staff). We thank the Coast Guard volunteers and look forward to this exciting new partnership!

Dr. Tim Hall

Superintendent of Schools