

News from River Mill Elementary

As the incoming River Mill Elementary Principal, it is very exciting to have this opportunity share some of my experiences so far. Over the past couple of months, I have been fortunate to participate in classrooms, speak with staff one-on-one, and witness the positive student-teacher interactions happening within the building. These experiences have led me to a couple of conclusions about River Mill:

1. I have quite an act to follow in the work Tina Rhue has done and in her relationships with students, staff, & parents.
2. The success and the reputation established by River Mill leave me feeling very thrilled to be a part of this school.

Over the course of this spring trimester, it has been a real pleasure to observe the variety of activities and events happening at River Mill. On one of the "Fantastic Fridays," I was able to work (and learn quite a bit) with a group of students studying and discussing the contents of owl pellets. The Division I "Spelling Bee" also took place at the beginning of this month. It showcased some of the district's top spellers, while challenging a number of adults in the audience, including me. I was also lucky to be invited to the school's third grade "folk tale festival" to see some wonderful costumes and hear some folk tales written and told by students.

In April, River Mill held its annual "Kindergarten Round-Up." As a first-timer at this event, it was a lot of fun to watch families come to enroll for the fall. Some of the parents who came to enroll an incoming kindergartener had other children in the school, but there were a few parents who were bringing their first child to enroll in school. The families of incoming kindergarten students were able to meet the kindergarten teacher, see their classroom for next year, and go on a school-wide scavenger hunt. Although it was a great chance to meet some of the new students and their families, one of the highlights was watching the faces full of anticipation and eagerness of those who are beginning a new adventure!

Last week, River Mill held its annual "Grandparents' Day" and "Science Fair." The halls were filled with people of all ages looking at insightful and investigative science projects while grandparents were taking tours of the school, led by their grandchildren. The cafeteria was packed with students,

grandparents, parents, and siblings snacking on cookies and juice while students and their grandparents were able to pose for photographs together. Based on the number of attendees and the positive comments I overheard, "Grandparents' Day" and the "Science Fair" were a huge success.

Visiting classrooms over the past few weeks has also been a great experience. There is a clear "student-centered" focus in all the classrooms. The "centers" at the primary level and the "cooperative learning" approach at the intermediate level both address various strengths and needs of individual learners. Seeing teachers working closely with parents and each other to meet the needs of students is an affirmation of their dedication to providing a quality education that meets for each student's individual needs and learning style.

The one-on-one discussions with staff have given me important insight into the dynamic and commitment of River Mill's staff members. Through these conversations, each staff member had an opportunity to discuss some of the strengths of River Mill as well as some hopes and aspirations for the coming years. One common theme in all these discussions is the dedication of the staff and their ability to collaborate to best meet the needs of students. It is clear there is a genuine enthusiasm for working with students among *all* staff members.

Next year, Tina's presence will definitely be missed. However, the "anticipation and eagerness" of the incoming kindergarten students can be seen in everyone at River Mill. Through continued efforts to work together and a focus on student learning, I expect another great year.

Finally, I again want to emphasize my excitement for the upcoming year and look forward to seeing you at the events throughout the remainder of this year and next fall.

Professionally,

Seth Johnson
River Mill Elementary
"Principal Elect"