

August 2009

Dear Valentine Hills' parents,

This year marks the seventh year of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. This government program requires that all schools in the nation make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), as determined by student performance in math and reading administered by one state-mandated test alone.

For the first five years under the NCLB Act, Valentine Hills Elementary School successfully met all AYP goals. However, based on the results of one exam, a handful of students in specific categories did not meet increasingly demanding goals in either reading or math. We are required by the federal government to refer to these demographic categories of students as Special Education, Limited English Proficient, Free/Reduced Priced Lunch and Hispanic. Although this does not mean our school is underperforming as a whole, NCLB has designated Valentine Hills as a school in need of improvement for the second consecutive year. To review how other schools around the state are performing please refer to the Minnesota Department of Education's Website, School Report Cards, <http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/index.do>.

Continuous improvement is a goal at Valentine Hills Elementary and throughout Mounds View Public Schools. We believe we have many tools in place to ensure success for all of our students:

- Individual student growth goals in math and reading
- Appropriately leveled instruction based on individual student needs
- Building-wide goals and grade-level specific goals focusing on math and reading, as well as building-wide staff collaboration where student growth and achievement is the focus of all discussions
- Additional student support through Title I
- Extended Day opportunities through Elementary Targeted Services (ETS)

It's equally important to note that we are committed to our own District-administered testing that does not rely entirely on one exam. Instead, our teachers administer a variety of useful assessments that measure ongoing progress for individual students. This gives Valentine Hills classroom teachers valuable, student-specific information they can use to modify teaching methods to improve achievement.

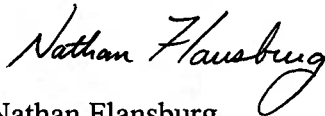
For five years, we tempered our pride in meeting the NCLB requirements because they reflected student performance on one state test, and experts and analysts agree it is virtually inevitable that most schools in the nation will eventually miss proficiency targets set by their state. In the same way, we should temper our concern now. Public opinion surveys consistently show overwhelming skepticism of the NCLB act's integrity and an increasing public belief that this federal act does not present a fair picture of a school's performance.

I am confident your student is receiving an exceptional education at Valentine Hills, and as always, all parents are welcome and encouraged to participate in a variety of school improvement efforts. To learn more about joining our improvement efforts, please contact me directly for more information.

NCLB rules allow you to transfer your child to a school within our district not identified for improvement if you so choose. These choices include Pinewood Elementary School in Mounds View and Sunnyside Elementary School in New Brighton. Transportation will be provided by the District as long as Valentine Hills remains in Title I School Improvement. To pursue this option, parents must first contact me at 651-621-7800 by August 24. After this contact, parents also must then contact either Bill Book, principal of Pinewood (651-621-7500) or Paul Good, principal of Sunnyside (651-621-7600). These principals can provide information on the academic achievement of their schools. Parents can also find information at the Minnesota Department of Education's Website, School Report Cards, <http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/index.do>.

While the future of the NCLB Act remains uncertain, you can count on this certainty: Valentine Hills' well-deserved reputation as an exceptional school will remain intact as we continue to work tirelessly to provide the best education possible for all students.

Sincerely,



Nathan Flansburg
Principal

Spanish translation of this letter is being sent to our Spanish-speaking populations. For translations in other languages, please call 651-621-7477.