

# Flora CUSD #35 Newsletter

*Children are our most precious possession.*

February 2014

## **Spring (and Testing) is Right Around the Corner**

On a day where the wind chill was below zero and we were experiencing more brutal winter weather, I received an e-mail with information about the upcoming ISAT and PSAE tests in March and April. While it doesn't seem possible when looking at our recent winter conditions, this was a subtle reminder that spring is right around the corner and with it comes the annual state tests administered by schools. Although the format and the test that is administered will be changing after this year, the ISAT and PSAE will be administered the same this year as it has been in past years. Students in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade are tested in reading and math; 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders are tested in reading, math, and science; and 11<sup>th</sup> graders take the PSAE which is a combination of the ACT and Workkeys and tests the students' knowledge in reading, math, and science. Although 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders are not currently given state tests, they do take the EXPLORE and PLAN which is a precursor to the ACT and gauges their future performance on the ACT as juniors. In preparation of the new testing system next year, the state has also selected certain grades in various schools across the state to take a field test on the PARCC assessments that will replace the ISAT and PSAE next year. The state tests are designed to measure the students' knowledge on state standards, the students' progress and areas for improvement, and are used to help districts determine which areas need more attention and focus. While there is valuable information gained from these tests, the results also depend on the fit between the test and the curriculum of the school, the test taking ability of the students, the testing environment, and how the students are feeling on the particular day of the test. Below are some suggestions on helping your child to better prepare for upcoming state tests.

***Optimize chances of a good test day-***Students who get a good night's sleep, eat a good breakfast, and have materials prepared ahead of time typically have a better attitude on the test day and therefore have a higher performance.

***Know what to expect-***Many schools and teachers will send home information about the test schedule and class preparation plans before the date of the test. Knowing what test your child is taking, how the class is preparing, how it is scored, when the results will be received, and how to interpret the results can help you better prepare your child for the test.

***Look at your child's past performance-***Since the ISAT is given each year, it is possible to identify if there are areas that have been difficult for your child in the past that you can focus on for future tests.

***Provide practice opportunities-***Many teachers will send home test practice materials prior to the test. By taking advantage of these resources as well as finding other on-line resources geared towards helping students, you can help your child better prepare for the ISAT and PSAE.

***Encourage good study habits-***This is helpful not only for the success of your child on state tests but also for his or her overall academic achievement. By helping your child

organize material; providing a quiet, well-lit area for your child to study; and developing a study schedule and ensuring your child gets a good night's sleep, you can optimize your child's chance for success.

**Important Upcoming Dates:**

**February 5<sup>th</sup>**-Curriculum Advisory Committee Meeting-Unit Office-8:45 a.m.

District Focus Group Meeting-6:00-FHS

**February 7<sup>th</sup>**-Mid-term for 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter

**February 12<sup>th</sup>**-Mid-term progress reports sent home

District Food Committee Meeting-11:00-Lincoln School

**February 14<sup>th</sup>**-2:00 Dismissal

**February 17<sup>th</sup>**-No School-President's Day

**February 19<sup>th</sup>**-Board of Education Meeting-Unit Office-5:30 p.m.

**“Education is learning what you didn't even know you didn't know. “**

**~Daniel J. Boorstin**