



**From the Superintendent's Desk**  
Proctor Public Schools, ISD 704  
John Engelking – Superintendent of Schools  
Wednesday March 17, 2010



This is my weekly update on the state of the district which focuses on a variety of issues relating to facilities, curriculum, activities, and programs occurring throughout our district. There may be weeks in which I only focus on one or two topics, but I do want to keep you informed. I welcome comments and feedback regarding this update or any of your concerns regarding our district.

### **Curriculum:**

As we move closer to finishing the work of our Instructional Teams and Grade Level Meetings of this school year, I am impressed with our team work and our vision. Recently, I had the opportunity to sit in and observe the work of our Technology Instructional Team, our 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Transitional Team, and the elementary team piloting our *Storytown* Elementary Language Arts Curriculum. Each one of those groups is doing some pretty amazing work. Our principals also report good things happening throughout the district in our teacher led organizations. I recently read a book in which the author envisioned a time when teachers got together to discuss student work and then worked collaboratively to design lessons which improved student learning. It's nice to see that vision come to life at the Proctor School District.

On the state scene, as I predicted, our governor has blamed the teachers' union for Minnesota not making the list of finalists in the Race to the Top Grant. Remember how easy it is to play the blame game. Certainly many things contributed to Minnesota's grant application not making the cut. On the national scene, we are in the midst of seeing the Obama administration move away from the punitive aspects of No Child Left Behind and move toward a reward based system for school. At first blush, this sounds like great news, but we'll have to wait to see what other strings are attached to schools and standards.

### **Editorials:**

I'm including my thoughts on editorials regarding some that have been published lately. To begin with, I think there is an ethical responsibility on behalf of the editors to publish the name of individuals writing editorials. In general, it's not uncommon for the public to "vent" their frustrations in local newspapers or digitally post them on the Internet. Far too often the "venting" public has misinformation or simply a negative slant on every topic. It's equally not uncommon for individuals to fire off an angry retort. From my perspective, all of the back and forth banter does little to clarify issues and often just serves to fan the fires of controversy and misinformation. From a public employee's standpoint, we are often held to a higher standard in everything we do. Because of special nature of school environments, we are also bound by data privacy practices which prevent school employees from stating what we would like to state. I prefer to adhere to those higher standards and stay away from the public venting forum.

### **Calendar of 2010-2011:**

Our calendar committee has prepared a draft calendar for next year. There was effort given to try to mirror the Duluth School District's calendar to help with shared transportation concerns between our two districts. The draft is in the hands of the calendar committee and will be presented to the teachers' union this week. I look forward to your comments and input.

### **Future Funding for Schools: (I promise I won't be a gloomy prognosticator of inadequate funding)**

The last time I wrote about school finance, I received no responses from anyone. Well, this is

something you might find extremely interesting. I am going to include a document I recently read in an update from the State House of Representatives. I think you'll like it.

## School trust lands potential “gold mine”

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If Minnesota follows Utah's lead, it could grow a stealth education revenue source: its 2.4 million-acre Permanent School Fund lands.

Revenue from the Minnesota fund is expected to generate \$27 million for school districts this year mostly through mining and logging activities, according to House fiscal analysts — but it could be worth tens of millions more, if Utah's example is an indicator.

Margaret Bird, director of Utah's Children's Land Alliance Supporting Schools, told the House K-12 Education Policy and Oversight Committee that Utah's fund, after reform efforts there, transformed from a “molehill” into a “gold mine” worth \$1 billion. It generates around \$150 million in school revenue annually from land sales and leases for a variety of uses including oil and gas, wind power, geothermal fields, telecommunication sites, grazing and farming.

[HF3475](#), sponsored by [Rep. Denise Dittrich](#) (DFL-Champlin), would establish an independent agency to oversee the management of Minnesota's permanent school lands, now under Department of Natural Resources management.

The House State and Local Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee approved the bill and sent it to the House Environment Policy and Oversight Committee.

[Sen. Chuck Wiger](#) (DFL-Maplewood) sponsors a companion, [SF3042](#), which awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

- *Kris Berggren*

There you go, how's that for a glimmer of hope?

### **Closing Comments:**

I am sorry I didn't get an update out to you last week. Thanks for all of your comments I received regarding next year's calendar. I appreciate your activism and your support for our district and our students. I will be at the Minnesota Association of School Administrators Conference for the next couple of days. Have a nice St. Patrick's Day and I hope you have a fantastic weekend.