

Simpson Schools Gearing Up for the Start

While our students and many staff members are enjoying a well-deserved break this summer, our schools are being prepared for the new school year that begins August 8th. While much has already been accomplished, we still have more to do leading up to our first day for students.

One of the nice things about the start of school is it brings a sense of hope and excitement! The young lives we touch and impact is an awesome responsibility we embrace with enthusiasm and a seriousness to help each student reach his or her highest potential and ultimately graduate ready to be a productive citizen and ready for college and/or the workforce.

Living in Franklin and Simpson County brings the privileges of small town American values – the kind of values this country was founded upon. Freedom, equality, service to others, kindness, practical approaches to solving problems and dealing with change, family, faith and an appreciation for honesty are just some of the values that permeate our community. We also share the passion about caring for our children for the greater good of our community. This includes supporting education and having high expectations for our schools and in particular our students. We have capable students - we must expect excellence from them. We have well-trained teachers, administrators, and support staff – we must expect excellent teaching, leadership and support for our students. We are working hard to attract and retain the very best staff to work with and around our students. Having won a Best Place to Work in Kentucky award for the last three years straight, it shows we are trying to give our employees the resources and support they need to do this critically important work.

As we prepare to enter the new school year, we are planning for the second year of the new Unbridled Learning reform as required by Senate Bill 1 of 2009. The Unbridled Learning initiative places an emphasis on college and career readiness. The new focus on career readiness along with college readiness is a welcomed change and better matches our community values. Another centerpiece of the reform is the implementation of the new and tougher common core standards in reading and math. Early indicators show some good signs based on some results from the state testing, though final results won't be available until September or October. FSHS students took End of Course exams (EOC's) in algebra 2, English 10, biology and U.S. History and achieved excellent results on the multiple choice portion of the exams. Based on these preliminary results, our students achieved a 99.7% pass rate! Our juniors took the ACT exam in March. Preliminary results indicate an average composite score of 18.8, up from 17.7 the previous year. Though not part of the official state assessment program, our 9th and 10th graders took the ACT PLAN test in May, which measures college readiness in English, math, reading, and science. Our freshmen scored an average composite of 18.8 while our sophomores scored 19.2. Both scores are way above the state and national averages. In fact our 9th graders tied the 10th graders at South Warren High School, while our 10th graders increased their score almost 2 points from the 17.3 they scored in September!

The new Unbridled Learning testing and accountability system is based on higher and tougher standards, so the state has predicted lower proficiency rates. Additionally, the new system values multiple measures, which will give us a better picture of how we're doing getting students prepared for

college and careers. Consequently, we are going to expect a lot from our students and staff. They are up to the challenge and we need parents and community members to support these higher and tougher expectations. These new challenges will take our students and staff members out of their comfort zones. Beginning with the class of 2014, we are requiring every student to earn either a college or a career readiness credential to graduate. There are multiple pathways to achieving one of these credentials and it is important that students and parents understand these options. Our teachers, administrators and support staff are ready to help each student achieve this and graduate ready to enter adulthood prepared for success. For more information about the new graduation requirements, see the FSHS Course Handbook located in the Parent Resources section of our school district website at <http://www.simpson.k12.ky.us/>. Together, we can ensure every student graduates ready for life – to contribute as a productive citizen and ready for college and/or careers in the workforce!