



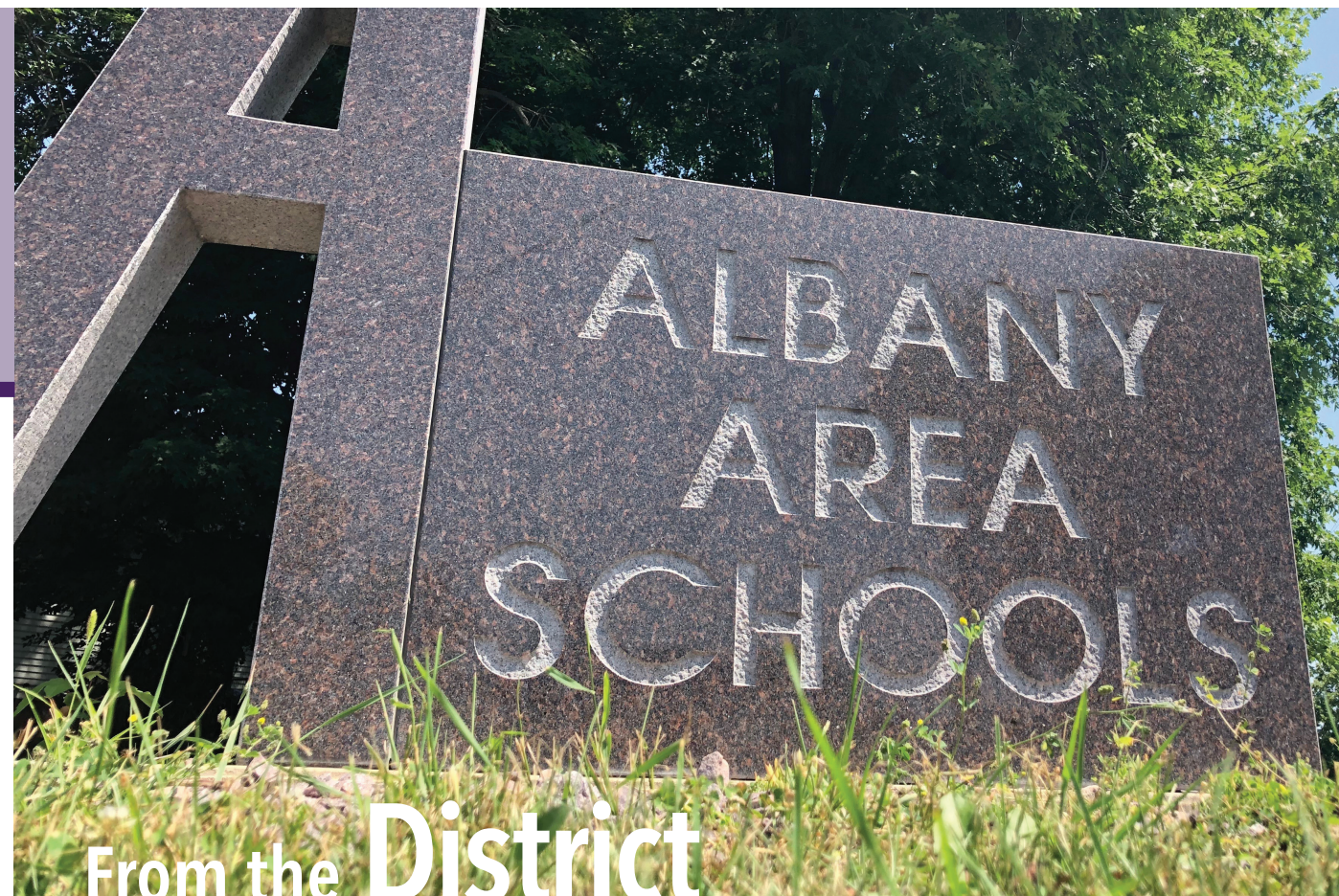
ISD #745
Albany Area Schools
30 Forest Ave.
Albany, MN 56307

Huskie Howl

FALL 2019

Who's Your Caddy? Highlights from the Golf Tournament

A big THANKS to Chad and Jill Bettin, who partnered with the Albany Area Education Foundation to host the annual "Who's Your Caddy?" golf tournament again this year. Hosted at the Albany Golf Course on July 27, the tournament raised monies to be used to create new opportunities for students and teachers of Albany Area Schools. Special thanks to National Honor Society students who volunteered to work the event and to all attendees.



From the District

The summer of 2019 has likely been one of the quieter summers in some time for our school district. Although our buildings have still been busy with student activities, professional development for staff, and a great deal of cleaning, it has been nice to have a break from construction. Very soon, we are all looking forward to opening our doors to about 1,772 K-12 students and 100+ preschoolers.

The 2019-2020 school year will bring the opening of a greenhouse, the development of a Portrait of a Graduate, and continued work to personalize learning for our students. We welcome over 15 new employees, many within our teaching staff.

As we begin the 2019-2020 school year, you will hear more about space needs at Albany Elementary. This newsletter explains some of the challenges we are facing. It is a good problem to have as we see consistent population growth within our entire community of Albany Area Schools. This growth leads to additional students and expanded programming.

I have heard it said many times that there is no such thing as status quo. In many respects, a school district is like any living organism. It's either growing or dying. That may sound harsh, but it is the reality faced by all school districts around the state. Unlike many out-state Minnesota school districts, I am thankful to be a part of a community and school district that is experiencing solid growth.

We have important work ahead of us, work that will not deter us from our most important goal of providing the best quality education for our students. In the end, any decisions regarding space will be well thought out and communicated with our stakeholders.

Enjoy the remaining days of summer. I wish everyone a smooth transition to a new school year.

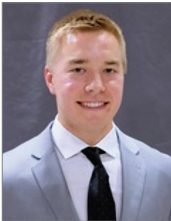
Superintendent Greg Johnson
gregjohnson@district745.org | 320-845-2171 x5050
Follow me on Twitter @gregjohnson2283



Save the Date

3rd Annual Purple Pride by Trailside

Mark your calendar for the Albany Area Education Foundation's main fundraising event, this year to be held at Shady's Hometown Tavern and Event Center in Albany on the evening of **Thursday, November 14.**



Aaron Ahrndt, Albany Elementary Physical Education Teacher

Hello! I am very excited to begin my teaching career in the Albany School District. I grew up in Benson, Minnesota. I am a recent Concordia Moorhead graduate where I majored in physical education/health and played for the Cobber football team. I am thrilled to be in a district where I can both teach and coach a variety of sports. Athletics has always been a passion of mine and I'm looking forward to sharing it with the youth and students of Albany.



Brittany Ludwig, Albany Secondary Schools Athletic Trainer

I grew up in Alexandria, graduating from Jefferson High School where I participated in basketball, track and field, and the Sports Medicine Assistant Program, which is where I found my passion for athletic training. After high school, I attended The College of St. Scholastica in Duluth where I competed on the track team and obtained my master's degree in athletic training. I accepted a job with Novacare working in many different athletic training settings, including industrial, high school, collegiate, and even with the NBA. I have gained some amazing and unforgettable experiences through all these settings, but I have always had a strong desire to work with my very own high school. This position

at Albany is a perfect fit for me: a small town, a close-knit community, and a history of great athletics. I am very excited to start the athletic training program and to work with coaches, parents, athletes and administrators to help keep athletes safe and healthy.



Jenelle Scepaniak, Albany Area Schools Executive Assistant

Hello! I grew up on a dairy farm near Albany and still live in the Albany area with my husband Tony and daughters Brooke and Lauren. I am a graduate of Albany High School and proudly served with the Army National Guard. As the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and School Board, my primary responsibility is to assist the superintendent with implementing the hiring process for the district which includes posting jobs, conducting background checks, preparing employee contracts and assignments, and orienting new employees to benefits, policies, and procedures. I also assist the superintendent and school board by assembling and publishing the school board agenda, packets,

minutes and resolutions. I am grateful to be a part of the staff here at Albany Area Schools and have been working diligently to get acclimated to the position.



Debra Moritz, Albany Elementary Administrative Assistant

Hello! Thank you for the warm welcome I have received since starting at Albany Elementary. I am super excited to be here. I know I have some big shoes to fill, but I am up for the challenge and am honored to be part of such an amazing team. I live in Albany with my husband Joe, our four children (Mikayla, Zach, Taylor, and Brandon) and their dog Oliver. I enjoy reading, going for walks, and watching my kids play sports – as long as it is not too cold, windy, or raining. I look forward to meeting many more of you as we kick off the school year and hope everyone has had an enjoyable and safe summer break.



Josiah Passe, Albany High School Science Teacher

Hi! I am very excited to return to Albany. I grew up in the small town of Redwood Falls, Minnesota. I attended Saint John's University and graduated in 2018 after my student teaching experience right here at Albany High School. Prior to this year, I taught ninth grade science in Fairmont, Minnesota, but I really missed this part of the state. I am extremely excited to return to central Minnesota and reconnect with familiar faces and get to know new ones as well!

Science has always been a passion of mine. I am looking forward to working and learning with students as we explore the workings of the natural world. I became a science teacher because I love experimenting and investigating and I feel so lucky to be able to help students do the same every day.



Shania Hirdler, Avon Elementary and Albany Middle School Art Teacher

I am so excited to be joining the Albany School District! I grew up in Princeton, Minnesota, and attended college at St. Cloud State University where I received my degree in art education with a minor in special education. I now live in St. Cloud with my husband and our cat and dog. I like taking photos, painting, and gardening. Whether it was teaching art classes at the Boys & Girls Club or teaching dance classes, I have always loved leading youth on their artistic path. I

can't wait to meet the students in this community and see what they bring to the art classroom. I hope to help cultivate their creativity and teach them all I can about visual art. Go Huskies!

Summertime: Your Teachers' Turn to Study and Learn

Summer is time for teachers to hone their craft with professional development, research, study, and professional responsibilities. And the district's teachers have been busy this summer. Here is just a snapshot of some of this work.



1. New Initiatives High school teachers Sonya Hoffarth, Jen Hiltner, counselor Jess Savolainen, curriculum director Amy Notch, and principal Tim Wege developed a college and career readiness program for high school students. This program will guide students in choosing careers and colleges, will teach real world life skills, and will include a community service opportunity for students.

In July, Duane Lichy, Peter Maas, Amy Spohn, and Jen Hiltner attended the Jostens Renaissance National Conference in Orlando, Florida. Jostens Renaissance is a program promoting a positive school climate and culture based on 5 Rs: Recognize, Reward, Reinforce, Respect, Results. They returned to Albany bursting with ideas and strategies to promote a positive, inclusive, enjoyable, and

FUN learning environment. Every single Huskie deserves to be recognized for being a member of the Albany pack! Exciting events are in store for Albany High School -- stay tuned, folks!

2. Teaching and Coaching World language teacher Monica Cofell worked with Upward Bound this summer, teaching French and crepe making techniques.

Industrial Arts teacher Duane Lichy offered an horticulture course, during which students learned through hands-on application; students planted and maintained perennials and annuals on the school grounds, among other skills. Mr. Lichy also directed FFA students in refurbishing a Farmall M that the FFA Alumni will raffle as an FFA fundraiser.

Mornings in June high school math teacher Cory Schlagel hosted 90 elementary boys basketball players teaching fundamental skills. In June and July Coach Schlagel worked with athletes in grades 9-11 to improve offseason development.

3. Workshops and Conferences High school English teacher Dana Amdahl and middle school social studies teacher Mariah Benn attended "Using the Body, Voice, and Movement to Unlock Texts" at the Perpich Center for Arts Education, learning how to use tools of theatre and dance to comprehend different kinds of text.

At Grand Portage and Isle Royale National Park, Albany Elementary teacher Angela Haynes refined her science and natural environment knowledge through a National Park Service/MN Sea Grant camping experience.

High school Family and Consumer Science teacher Lori Young broadened her experience in culinary arts at a workshop at St. Paul College. She also spent three weeks attending training to teach interior design on an online platform.

4. Book Studies Members of Albany Elementary along with curriculum director Amy Notch read and reviewed phonics strategies for teaching reading in *Making Sense of Phonics* by Isabel Beck and Mark Becky.

To benefit his craft in the classroom, high school business teacher Jacob Boone read and studied *Teach Like A Champion* and *The Differentiated Classroom*.

Elementary teacher Crystal Schlosser was deeply impacted by the ideas and experiences shared both from a teacher and a parent perspective in the book *Rewiring Education*.

Elementary teachers Lori Burg and Nicole Snoberger delved into personalized learning and its benefits in Dr. James Rickabaugh's *Tapping the Power of Personalized Learning*.

Elementary teacher Vicki Pfeffer found inspiration in Dave Burgess' *Teach Like A Pirate*. "Light yourself on fire with enthusiasm and people will come from miles around just to watch you," is one quote Mrs. Pfeffer found inspiring. She said, "We need to do everything we can to keep our passion of teaching students burning."

5. Continued Education

High school business teacher Jacob Boone took two courses to improve his depth of knowledge in website building, HTML, and CSS for his computer applications courses.

Studying online, elementary teacher Kim Koehn attended SCSU learning about best practices in literacy instruction.

Six elementary and middle school teachers, Nikki Myogeto, Kristi Spohn, Ross Resley, Kelly Klasen, Jody Abraham and Stephanie Sauerer teamed up on a master's degree action research project studying how the addition of physical activities can help students focus in class.

Music teacher Amy Wilwerding attended St. Thomas University earning Kodaly Certification, a child-developmental approach to music education.

6. Curriculum Development

High school math teacher Cory Schlagel created personalized learning opportunities for students studying algebra mixing traditional lecture, cooperative learning, and self-study using texts and video.

Elementary teacher Nicole Snoberger learned about the program "Battle of the Books" and created plans for an after school activity for elementary students.

Middle School teacher Kathy Gilk has read as many young adult novels as she can pack into the summer so she is better able to match students with books they will enjoy. A few titles she will recommend this year include *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library* by Chris Grabenstein and *The Fire Horse Girl* by Kay Honeyman.



E-Learning

This summer, the school board approved the use of e-Learning days for 2019-2020 when school is closed for inclement weather.

E-Learning Days are a means to maintain student learning during days of inclement weather. The goal of e-Learning is to minimize the disruption to academic progress caused with emergency school closures by making those out-of-school days as educationally productive and engaging as possible.

The 2017 Legislature amended the Length of School Year; Hours of Instruction (Minn. Stat. § 120A.41) to include the option of a school using e-Learning days with the following guidelines:

- Due to inclement weather.
- Up to five days in one school year.
- Counted as an instructional day and included as hours of instruction.

In the event of a school closure due to inclement weather, learning expectations for all students continue through e-Learning activities, which will serve as student contact days. Albany Area Schools will strive to provide valuable, Minnesota State Standards-aligned, learning activities for our students on these days.

A number of other districts in Minnesota are using similar activities for e-Learning Days. We examined what other districts were doing to get ideas in putting together a plan to best meet the needs of our students, while complying with state laws that set expectations for e-Learning days.

Beginning this fall, teachers will be sharing e-Learning information with all families. Plans will look very different depending on the grade level. At the high school and middle school, all of our students have access to a device and can communicate with teachers using learning management systems. In grades 6-12, an e-Learning day will be a continuation of what is currently going on in classrooms.

At elementary schools, families will be given a learning plan that can be completed without technology. This plan will consist largely of independent activities, and will be one which can be completed either at home or at daycare.

We hope we never experience another winter like 2019. However, in the event that we do, e-Learning will allow us to be as productive as possible without disrupting our school year calendar.

Cutting-Edge Education: Leveraging Technology for Learning

While technology has drastically altered most industries in recent years, one of the biggest impacts has been in the education sector, and Albany Area Schools works to leverage this technology for education.

Personalized Learning: Personalizing the education experience through a personalized learning initiative is a district-wide goal. Technology is one tool teachers use to adjust education to meet the individual needs of our students: the pace of introducing new information; the modality – visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic; and the number of repetitions are just a few ways technology is used to personalize learning for individual students.

Building Community: New for the '19-20 school year, Albany Area Schools will stream music performances from choir and band concerts to elementary music performances. A partnership with Albany Mutual Telephone allows Albany Area Schools to connect with community in this new way.

Academics: While technology is ubiquitous in the classroom to complement learning, students will now have Wi-Fi on activity buses. Students often travel on school nights, whether to a speech meet or a basketball game. Wi-Fi access will enable students to access online classrooms, documents or presentations on their google drive, and other online resources students might need to complete projects, research, and study. Albany Mutual Telephone has worked with the district to install four portable Wi-Fi units on buses.

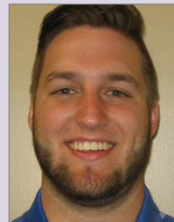
Kit Pennie, Albany High School World Language Teacher



Hello everyone! I am very excited to be joining Albany Area Schools as their new Spanish teacher! I have lived in Albany for the past fifteen years with my wife Lynn and two daughters and cannot think of a better place to raise a family. Prior to joining the staff at AHS, I enjoyed teaching and coaching softball and golf at Eden Valley-Watkins Schools as well as taking students on trips to Spain and Costa Rica.

I am originally from Villard and a graduate of Minnewaska Area Schools. After graduation, I continued my education at South Dakota State University where I received my degree in Spanish and economics. During this time I studied abroad in Quito, Ecuador, and the bug for international travel was firmly planted. I eventually made my way to St. Cloud State University where I received my degree in Spanish education. As I begin this new chapter in my life and career, I am looking forward to taking on a more active role in the community.

Bryce Savage, Albany High School and Middle School Social Studies Teacher



Hello! I am excited to join the Huskie community! I was born and raised in Paynesville and I received my bachelor's degree in social studies education from the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota. Once I received my degree, I wanted to come back to central Minnesota to teach in the area in which I grew up. I am looking forward to meeting the students and getting to know all of you!

Philicity Messman, Albany Middle School Social Worker

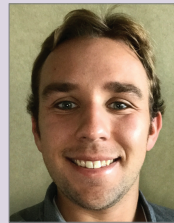


Hello! I am very excited to join the Albany Area School District in the fall. I previously served the St. Cloud School District since 2000; during those years I gained a great deal of experience and knowledge as I worked in a variety of settings serving students from the ages of 5 to 21. I'm thrilled to put those skills to work in the Albany Middle School.

My husband and I moved to Central Minnesota in the fall of 1991 when he accepted a teaching and coaching position in Holdingford. We quickly fell in love with the area and have made it our home. We raised two sons who have both graduated from St. John's and (so far) have decided to remain in central Minnesota.

This is a great place to be and Albany School District has an amazing reputation that I am grateful to be a part of and to serve!

Lucas FOX, Albany Middle School Social Worker



Hi! I was born and raised in Becker, MN. After graduation, I attended Bemidji State University where I studied social work. This will be my 4th year as a social worker, and I am excited to work in this new community. I look forward to meeting and getting to know the students and staff at Avon Elementary.

Katelyn Rusch, Albany High School and Middle School Counselor



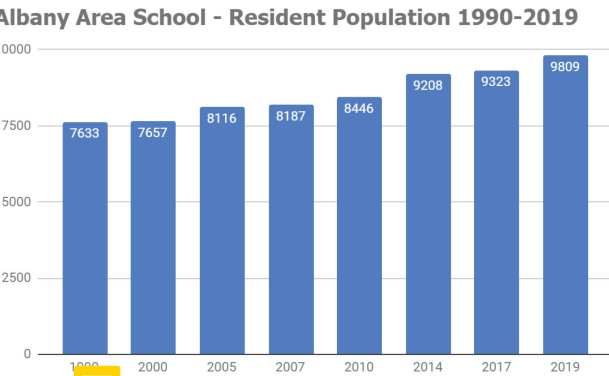
Hello! I am originally from Pennsylvania and graduated with a degree in special education from Penn State University. After teaching special education for a few years in North Carolina and Washington, D.C., I decided my heart was in meeting the social emotional needs of students. I began a master's degree in school counseling at Johns Hopkins University. After meeting my husband, I transferred to St. Cloud State to complete my master's degree. In 2012 I was fortunate enough to get a position as a long term substitute school counselor at Albany Middle and High Schools. Since then, I have worked as a school counselor and cross country coach in the St. Cloud School District. I am excited to return to the close-knit and wonderful community of Albany.

Welcome to Albany!

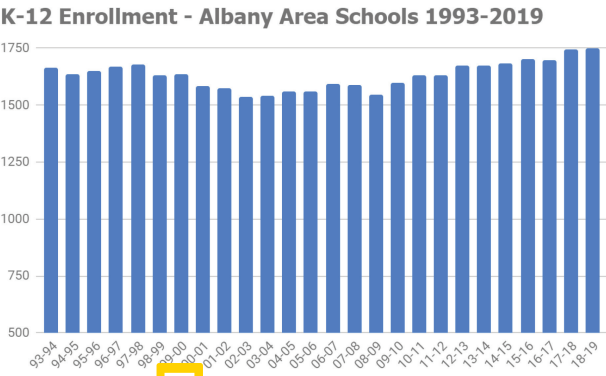


Nearly every data point related to our school district population, enrollment, census, etc. points to continued growth in Albany Area Schools. This exciting growth will provide new opportunities for our students, our school district, our businesses, and our community.

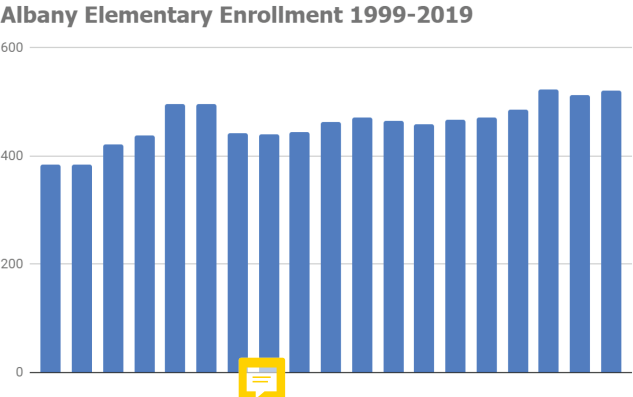
This first chart shows the population growth within our school district boundaries, representing residents from birth to age 100+. Since 2010, the population across our communities has gone from just over 8,000 residents to nearly 10,000. This data comes from the State of Minnesota’s Demographer’s Office.



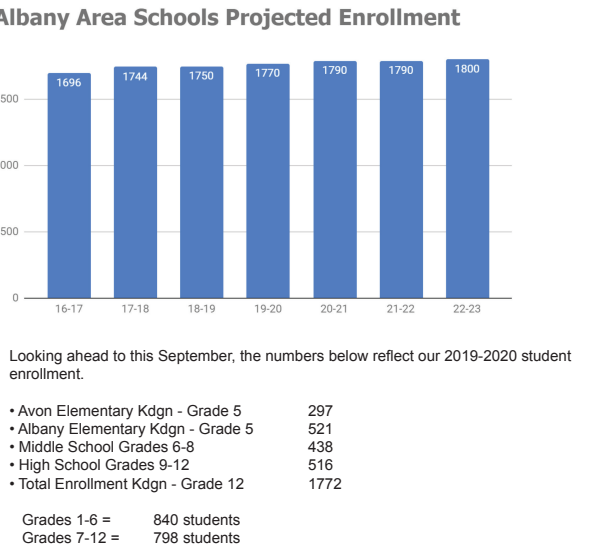
This next chart shows kindergarten-Grade 12 enrollment since 1993. You can see over the past 10 years our school district has experienced strong, steady growth.



Growth at Albany Elementary is consistently on the rise with enrollment numbers exceeding 500 students over the past few years.



Enrollment projections reflect steady growth for the next several years. It is difficult to make any enrollment assumptions beyond 2023.



Open Enrollment

Managing enrollment and space is an ongoing challenge for most school districts. With space issues at Albany Elementary, Albany Area Schools is looking at all possible solutions. One of those includes adjusting open enrollment procedures. Open enrollment has been a part of Minnesota school districts since 1988. Albany Area open enrollment numbers have fluctuated some over the years, but overall, we gain more students than we lose. Currently, on average, we gain about 50-60 students a year more than we lose.

Because of space concerns at Albany Elementary, the school board recently closed open enrollment at Albany Elementary. Any families requesting open enrollment in grades kindergarten through Grade 5 will attend Avon Elementary beginning this school year. I know some people have said that Albany Area Schools has completely closed open enrollment. This is not true--we are just trying to manage it a little better at the elementary level. Each year the school board will monitor nonresident enrollment and review the open enrollment procedures.

Q: *We passed a referendum in 2015 to address space needs. How can we have concerns only four years later?*

A: The main reasons are steady growth within our community and the demands of pre-K programming. In just four years, programming for 4-year-olds has grown considerably. In 2015, we offered one section of all day 4-year-old programming, and this past year we had six full-day sections for four-year-olds. We don't see this need changing as families, schools, and legislators continue to expand expectations for pre-K programming. Over the years, we have observed this shift take place with kindergarten shifting from part time to full time and now four-year-olds having the same opportunity. Altering our pre-K programming would have a negative impact on our ability to best prepare students for kindergarten and meet state and national goals of reading proficiently by Grade 3.

Q: *What options has the district considered to address space needs?*

A: Many. They include doing nothing, changing boundaries, open enrollment, leasing space, and building. Of these options, doing nothing would be an easy approach, but it would not be proactive and best for our students and community. We have leased space in the past (St. Benedict's Center in Avon) and many districts do the same to address space needs. Changing boundaries does not have a significant impact on building space and would likely increase transportation costs and time students spend on buses. Building new space is expensive and would require a referendum and land. While it would be a good long range plan, we feel it is best to wait and see what the next few years bring with enrollment and the economy before we choose to go back to our voters. Other ideas are being considered and will be analyzed in the months ahead. In the end, something will need to be done as the space needs at Albany Elementary are not going away.

Q: *Why would we lease space and not just build our own?*

A: Leasing space has its advantages and disadvantages. It has worked for us in the past, and many districts use leasing as a way to add space. The safe part of leasing is that if things change and our enrollment were to decrease or the economy would falter, a lease can be terminated. Leasing does have an impact on taxpayers, but it does not require a referendum/vote. In many ways, leasing can address space needs for the short and mid term and essentially buy the district time until another building project needs to be considered.

Q: *Why are we looking at leasing space in Albany and not Avon?*

A: Our district's space needs are in Albany. Albany Elementary enrollment this fall will be over 520 students. Avon enrollment is projected to be 297 students. Prior school district surveys clearly indicate that our families want their children in a school closest to where they live. Currently, 80% of our preschool programming is at Avon Elementary with over 60% of the students residing in Albany.

Q: *Why don't we just add on to Albany Elementary?*

A: Adding on more space to Albany Elementary will only serve to intensify our space concerns. Currently, common areas at Albany Elementary are at full capacity. Hallways, cafeteria, gymnasium, and the playground simply cannot handle additional students. Long term planning needs to include removing students/programming from Albany Elementary to take pressure off these areas. Additional classrooms, portables, etc. are not the solution for Albany Elementary.

Q: *Why don't we simply close all open enrollment? Wouldn't this free up enough space?*

A: In June, the school board adjusted open enrollment at the elementary level. All nonresident students entering our district in grades K-5 will now need to attend Avon Elementary, where we have room. However, closing all open enrollment will not have a significant impact on space as these students are spread across all grade levels (about 15 students/grade level). Closing all open enrollment would also negatively impact our budget, as the revenue these students generate (over \$300,000) would no longer come to our district. The State of Minnesota also discourages school districts from closing open enrollment and has strict criteria that must be adhered to.