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March 2017 Parent Update

Student Health and Risk Prevention Survey (SHARP)
Superintendent Doug Jacobs



The Morgan Board of Education has unanimously approved the use of the SHARP Survey in the school district. The request to administer the survey was presented to the Board by the Morgan High School Community Council.

The survey is sponsored by the Utah State Board of Education, the Utah State Department of Health, Weber-Morgan Human Services, and the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health. The survey gathers data about alcohol, tobacco, and drug use; the factors that place students at risk for problem behaviors; and the factors that protect students from problem behaviors. Information gained from the survey will allow our district to continue to provide prevention programs for students in our schools.

The survey is administered every other year (2017, 2019, 2021, etc.) to students in grades 6,8, 10, and 12. Parents must give permission for their child to take the survey. Parents of students in the surveyed grades will be receiving a permission slip in the next few weeks.

Please note that your child's **participation is completely voluntary, confidential, and anonymous.** If you do not wish to have your child participate, he or she will not be penalized or lose any school benefits. Your child may discontinue or skip any or all questions on the survey without penalty. There is no evidence to support the concern that exposure to the survey increases usage. In fact, in the years that the survey has been administered, usage of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use has declined.

Copies of the survey are available at <http://www.bach-harrison.com/surveyforms.aspx?index=2> For additional information about the survey, contact SHARP Project Director Mary Johnstun (801-842-2682/mary@bach-harrison.com) or your school counselor. I am also happy to answer any questions.

The members of the Morgan Board of Education encourage parents to visit with their children **before** and **after** the survey is taken. It can be a great opportunity for to have a conversation about prevention.

Thanks for your support!

Doug Jacobs
Superintendent

Parent Update December 2016

Invitation to Serve

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



The Morgan Board of Education is moving forward with plans to accommodate the rapid growth in the district. Enrollment has increased over 400 students to a total of 3007 in the past four years. The Board is projecting increases of 120 new students each year for the foreseeable future and readying new buildings for occupancy in 2020. Morgan High School will reach capacity in 2018, Morgan Elementary School in 2019 followed by Morgan Middle School and Mountain Green Elementary shortly thereafter. Here is a review of where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going.

In March of 2015, the Morgan School District Growth Task Force Committee presented a number of recommendations to the Board of Education which included an addition to Morgan High School and a new school in Mountain Green. The committee also suggested the use of portable classrooms to accommodate growth until building projects could be completed.

With the addition of a new middle school in Mountain Green, capacity would decrease significantly at the two existing elementary schools and at Morgan Middle School. The new plan would modify both middle schools to include grades 5 through 8. Students living in the Mountain Green area would remain in their neighborhood schools until high school. The Board already owns land in Mountain Green on Trapper's Loop Road. Regarding Morgan High School, the Board has determined it would be more cost effective to build a two-story addition and to demolish the old classroom wing. The new addition would add capacity for 300 students and improve classroom-lab space. The estimate for the combined building bond would be \$30 million dollars (\$10 million at MHS and \$20 million for a new middle school). The bond would require voter approval in 2017.

In 2025 the Board will have paid off the Qualified School Construction Bonds used to build the Trojan Century Center and Bus Garage. In 2027, the Board will have paid off the debt incurred with the construction of Mountain Green Elementary School and past additions to Morgan High School and Morgan Elementary School. The remaining debt was refinanced in 2015 at a lower interest rate saving thousands of dollars. The school district has an AAA Bond Rating and is working closely with Zions Bank Finance on new conservative bonding plans. The current district bonding capability, based on taxable valuation, is \$41 million dollars.

The Board seeks your participation in this important process. If you have interest or expertise in design, finance, bonding, advertising, public relations, web page design, or any other part of the design-build-bond process, and would like to volunteer, please let me know. We need your skills and enthusiasm. If you are not sure where you might fit, but would like to be involved in the process, please contact me and I will find a place for you to serve.

Thanks for your help!

Doug Jacobs, Superintendent

djacobs@morgansd.org

Parent Update November 2016



Concussions

Superintendent Doug Jacobs

Each month the Morgan School District Policy Committee meets to review and update policies developed by the Utah State School Board Association. These policies include new Legislative Statutes and State Board of Education Rules. The local review process includes the input of school, parent, and community stakeholders. When the process is complete, the policy is submitted to the Morgan Board of Education for consideration. This month, the Board will approve a new policy dealing with concussions.

A concussion can happen anywhere there is potential for bodily contact. A concussion occurs when the brain is rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull. What may appear to be only a mild jolt or blow to the head or body can result in a concussion. It can occur even if a player or student in an activity is not knocked out or loses consciousness.

While most students with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some students have symptoms that last for days, weeks, or even months. Signs and symptoms of concussions include: headache, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, confusion, double vision, forgetfulness, balance problems, sensitivity to light and noise. After a concussion, rest is critical to help the brain heal. During this time, not only physical activities but also common classroom activities that involve learning and concentration can cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse.

In the Morgan School District, students who exhibit signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion are immediately removed from the contest, game, practice, or activity and cannot return to activity until cleared by a physician. With an initial clearance, the student is progressed back to activity following a stepwise process limiting exercise, weight lifting, and running. These steps continue for a prescribed number of days. If post-concussion symptoms occur at any step, a student must stop the activity, the physician is contacted, and the process of recovery begins again. Final approval from the child's physician after the step-wise process had been successfully completed is required.

The health and safety of our students is a top priority, and we want to take every precaution when dealing with student injuries. We seek to provide a safe return to activity for all students following any injury, but particularly after a concussion. We also strive to educate all of our employees about the signs and symptoms of concussions and to encourage our students to self-report. In order to effectively and consistently manage these injuries, these new procedures will be helpful to aid in insuring that concussed students are identified, treated and referred appropriately, receive appropriate follow-up medical care during the school day, and are fully recovered prior to returning to activity.

Parent Update October 2016
The Importance of Confidentiality
Superintendent Doug Jacobs



Confidentiality is required when dealing with student information. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires that any information pertaining to any student remain private and not shared without a parent's consent. Every student should be confident that personal information and school happenings are kept in strict confidence and not repeated to anyone.

Sometimes parents, friends, and community members have sincere concerns about students and ask for information. While we do understand that there are those who are genuinely interested in a student's welfare, please remember that all inquiries should be directed to the Principal who will determine whether or not the information can be shared.

We hope that our employees and volunteers safeguard confidential information about our students and do not make comparisons in settings like parent-teacher conferences or other well-intentioned situations. We ask our employees to avoid sharing confidential information when talking to their own friends and families even when the information might be inspiring, anecdotal or humorous. We also ask them to not ever speak about students in open or common areas where others might hear. Just because someone works for the school does not mean they are entitled to all student information. When discussing a student's personal business with those who are directly involved in a student's education, confidential information can only be shared if it is relevant to the student's educational growth, safety, or well-being.

Confidentiality of student information protects personal information from being unintentionally disclosed. This is particularly important when the mistaken release of information about children and families might also lead to discrimination or cause prejudicial treatment. The confidential provision also protects family security. This might pertain to personal safety and job security where the release of specific information might lead to loss of employment. Confidentiality must be assured to families and students who seek needed services without fear of retaliation, discrimination, prejudicial treatment, or stigmatization. If students or families believe confidential information will not be maintained, they may be less likely to seek needed mental health services, free lunch, exceptional children services, or a host of other critical services.

We can all work together to remind each other of the importance of student privacy. We might also consider offering kind reproaches in situations where private information has been divulged.

Parent Update September 2016

How to File a Complaint

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



We have outstanding employees who do an excellent job each day working with the children in the Morgan School District. Even so, miscommunications and other issues may arise. When they happen, we encourage you to resolve them informally at the most direct level. If you can't inquire in person or by phone, email is also a great way. Complaints involving allegations of criminal activity are very serious and should always be reported to law enforcement and school administration.

If you have a concern with something in your child's classroom, please contact your child's teacher. If you have a concern about your child's sport or activity group, please contact the coach or advisor. Questions or concerns about your child's school should be directed to the principal. Questions or concerns about the school district can be directed to me. You can always talk to a member of the Morgan Board of Education about your concerns. When you use this approach remember you might be taking away somebody's due process rights and not giving the person who can solve the problem a chance to defend and correct the mistake or misunderstanding.

Using social media as a way to complain or to stir up controversy instead of communicating privately and directly with a person unfairly enlarges issues when they didn't really exist or could have been easily resolved before a character assassination occurs.

If an informal conversation regarding a complaint fails to reach a reasonable outcome, please submit a written complaint. It should always include your name and contact information and a description of the incident. Details including the when, where, and who was involved, are also very helpful. Names of any witnesses along with a description of what actions you have taken to resolve the issue go a long way in expediting the process. This information should be sent to the principal. We have developed a form for your use. The forms are available at each school, the district office, and on the school website at www.morgansd.org

Parent Update July 2016

Financial Transparency



You may be interested to know some of the things the Morgan Board of Education has been doing to increase financial viability and accountability. Three years ago the Board attempted to pass a levy which was rejected by the taxpayers of Morgan County. After the failure of the levy the Board enacted a variety of measures to bolster its financial outlook. Five focus groups were developed then and continue today to give a more in-depth look at finances, curriculum, policies, transportation, and technology and to solicit stakeholder input. Committees are chaired by individual members of the Board and membership includes teachers, parents, and other stakeholders.

The financial committee reviews financial procedures, audits, and budgets. In 2013 they supported the elimination of the district human resources department with a reallocation of duties to the superintendent, principals and district office staff. Though it put a significant strain on principals and district staff, it was a necessary sacrifice given the district's financial condition. The committee also oversaw the restructuring of district part-time employees by enacting policies that define part-time employment as 29 hours per week (or less) with limitations on health and other benefits. Additionally, the committee managed the refinancing of current capital bonds resulting in a reduction of total cost and annual payments. They also collaborated with Zion's Bank to restore the district bond rating (Moody's) to A1.

The financial committee has prompted district administrators to budget conservatively with enrollment growth. The committee members have also influenced an increase in district fund balances through limited spending and adjustments to local levies. They encouraged efficient hiring practices by increasing staff-student ratios along with moderate employee wage, salary, and cost-of-living increases. It is alarming to note that any employee increases given during the past three years have been overshadowed by an increase in health insurance costs passed directly on to employees. To avoid future extremes, district administrators, with input and support from teachers and staff, successfully negotiated a three year freeze on health insurance increases by adopting a new wellness plan offered by the insurance provider.

These efforts, along with gentle increases in local tax levies, have steadied fund balances resulting in a more secure outlook. As the district continues to grow, more resources will be needed. Additional funds will help the Board continue to reduce staff-student ratios and increase wages for employees and add additional counselors and assistant principals. New boilers and buses are also a priority. The Board has determined to hold Truth in Taxation on an annual basis to examine levies and tax rates and demonstrate accountability and transparency to the taxpayers.

The Board is also planning to present a capital building bond (25-35 million dollars) to the voters in 2017 for the construction of a new middle school in Mt. Green along with additional classroom space at Morgan High School.

Parent Update May 2016



Federal Letter Regarding Transgendered Students

Superintendent Doug Jacobs

You have probably heard recent reports in the media regarding Common Core Standards, SAGE Testing, and news of the U.S. Department of Education issuing a guidance letter on discrimination (including transgender students). Here is some clarification as it relates to our school district.

Our local school board – not the State School Board – is responsible for curriculum, textbooks, and instructional methods used in our schools. Teachers in the Morgan School District have always used standards to guide instruction. We began using the new Utah Standards (derived from the Common Core) in 2012 in Mathematics and English Language Arts. Teachers in the district meet regularly with the Board of Education to review each standard. Our district curriculum committee also reviews the standards. The committee consists of teachers, parents from the school community councils, administrators, and is chaired by a member of the Morgan Board of Education.

Standards are used to guide instruction. A part of that instruction includes assessment. In Utah, testing mandates are legislative in nature and used to grade schools. We will be interested to see what the Utah State Board of Education and the Utah Legislature do in response to recent concerns and how they will seek accountability - before we change or alter any of our standards and instructional methods.

The letter we received from the U.S. Department of Education was a reminder that all students, including transgender students, should attend school in an environment free from discrimination. It is a guidance letter, not a new rule or statute. The letter reminds schools to provide additional privacy options to any student for any reason. The letter does not require any student to use shared bathrooms or shared changing spaces. Our local schools already provide accommodations that further privacy for students when needed.

The Morgan School District will continue to protect all students from discrimination. We respond to all reports of sex-based harassment. We also guard and protect students' privacy. The implementation of any new practice or policy would be the result of the actions of the Morgan Board of Education based on legislation and legal counsel in conjunction with input from our educators and parent- community councils. We will not circumvent that process.

Again, our local school board – not the Utah State School Board – is responsible for curriculum, textbooks, and instructional methods used in our schools. While we follow federal and state laws, it is our local school board that is responsible for policies and practices that protect students from sex-based harassment – not guidance letters from the U.S. Department of Education.

I am always eager to hear your feedback regarding these issues or any other concerns and solutions you have regarding the education of our students.

Parent Update February 2016

Keeping Up With Growth

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



The Morgan Board of Education is grappling with increasing enrollment figures across the district. All of the schools in the district are nearing capacity and the growth in the community is projected to add 60-100 students or more each year for the foreseeable future. To solicit stakeholder involvement, the Board invited a group of community and school members to participate on a district growth committee in 2014. These volunteers met for a year and analyzed many different ways to handle the increasing enrollment.

To address immediate crowding issues, the Board will relocate seven existing classroom portables at Morgan Elementary School and remodel them for use as needed at Morgan Middle School and Mountain Green Elementary School. Additional portable classrooms will be purchased and added as needed.

The Board has two financing options for major capital projects. One is through a general obligation bond election that requires voter approval. Another is through a municipal building authority process which does not require voter approval. After lengthy discussion in many planning meetings and work sessions, the Board has determined to work toward a bond election likely to take place in November of 2017, for the purpose of financing two major capital projects: A new two-story classroom addition to Morgan High School (projected cost of \$10-12 million) and a new two-story middle school (projected cost of \$15-20 million) on property the district owns on Trapper's Loop Road. Both projects would be scheduled to be available in the 2020-21 school year. Increased growth in the county year-to-year should ease the effect of increases for county taxpayers.

There are two major building issues at Morgan High School. First, the old 16-classroom wing is deteriorating and needs to be completely remodeled or replaced. Remodeling costs would be expensive and would not result in additional space. Second, additional classroom space is needed. The Board feels that the most economical course of action would be to add a two-story, 24 classroom addition to be located in the front of the current facility. When the new classroom wing is complete, the old 16-classroom wing would be demolished to create additional parking. Due to changes in building codes, the 16-classroom wing cannot be maintained beyond the completion of the addition without costly renovations.

A new middle school at Trapper's Loop would solve overcrowding at Mountain Green Elementary School, Morgan Elementary School and Morgan Middle School. It would also afford students living in Mountain Green the opportunity of attending a neighborhood school from kindergarten through the 8th grade. Both the new and existing middle schools would house grades 5 through 8. Moving grade 5 into the middle schools would free up significant space at both elementary schools and the new school would significantly decrease the overcrowding at Morgan Middle School.

The Board is committed to a cost-effective construction process, resulting in economical buildings with few frills to minimize the cost increases to taxpayers. They are also evaluating other cost-saving

measures including the consolidation of food production. Traffic congestion on Young Street is also a concern that is being addressed by the district transportation committee with one possibility being the reconfiguration of current bus loading and unloading. The Board is also committed to the purchase of at least one new school bus each year and additional maintenance equipment in the bus garage. The Board has also commissioned an engineering report on the old boilers at Morgan Middle School and Morgan High School for repair and replacement. They also anticipate the need for a new elementary school in the next few years, likely located in the Enterprise-Peterson area.

Parent Update December 2015

Your Invitation to Serve

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



It is difficult to imagine a position in the public sector that has a more profound impact on the future, or that is a better example of true volunteer citizen service, than that of a school board member. Serving on a school board provides a unique opportunity to make a real difference – not only for the students now in school but also for many others who will follow.

A school board is made up of individual citizens just like you. Members serve four-year terms that are staggered so seats don't become open all at once. School board elections are nonpartisan. To run you have to be at least 18 years old, a citizen of the state, a resident of the district, a registered voter, and be eligible under the state constitution to be elected to public office. The Board meets once a month, usually on Tuesday evenings, in meetings that are open to the public. Individual board members also engage on district committees, participate in board member trainings, and visit schools and classrooms.

School board members are involved in policy making. They are the public overseers responsible for fiscal accountability. Somewhere in between the agendas, public comment sessions and resolutions, school boards make many important decisions. They guide an effective and efficient organizational structure that allows administrators to manage the schools so that teachers can teach and students can learn.

Three of the five positions on the Morgan County School District Board of Education will be open in 2016. Filing dates begin on Monday, January 4, 2016 until March 17, 2016. Applications are available at the county clerk's office.

Local school board elections are nonpartisan. If a position on the school board doesn't appeal to you, there are other ways to serve. If you are interested in running for partisan positions in local and state government, the lieutenant governor's office will hold information sessions to help candidates and parties understand the new primary process in the following locations:

December 9 – Ogden

5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Weber County Government Building

2380 Washington Blvd.

Ogden, UT 84401

December 10 - Salt Lake City

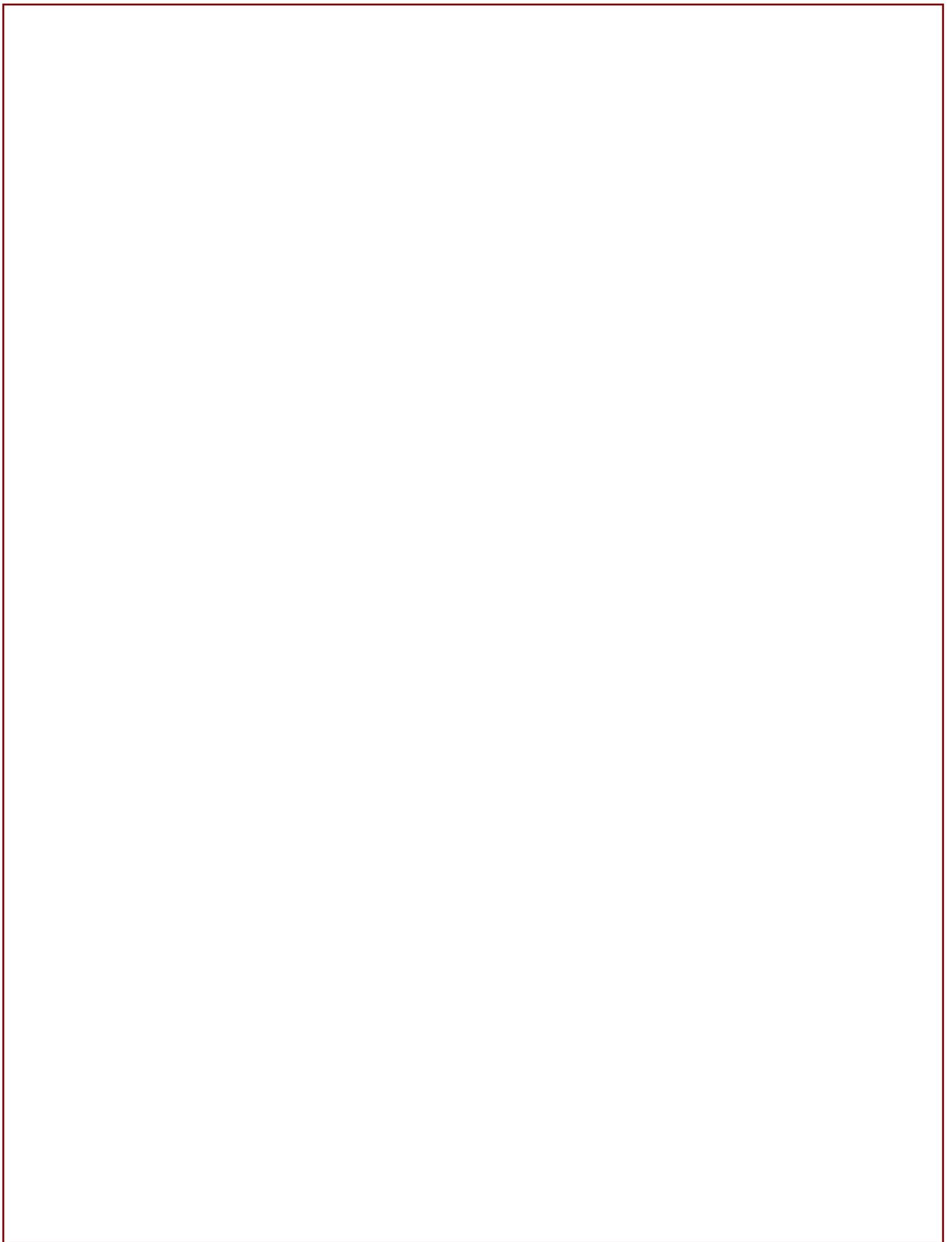
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

State Capitol Building

350 N. State Street, Suite 240

Salt Lake City, UT 84103

There is a time and season for everything and maybe your time is now. Make public service a part of your resolution for 2016.



Parent Update November 2015
Civics Assessment Required for High School Diploma
Superintendent Doug Jacobs



The American Civics Education Initiative, S.B. 60, was passed in the Utah Legislative Session of 2015. This law requires the successful passage of a basic civics test or an alternate assessment as a condition of graduation. This requirement applies to any public school student who graduates after January 1, 2016, as well as any student enrolled in an adult education program. If a student desires to obtain a diploma, he or she must take the test.

The bill's sponsor believes that the legislation will create a sense of pride in every student who graduates and will ensure that he or she will be a more involved citizen and a more informed voter.

The basic civics test will be created using questions from the United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) Civics Test. This is the same one taken by immigrants seeking United States naturalization. The Morgan School District will be using a sample multiple choice test compiled by the Utah State Office of Education.

Students must pass the test by answering 35 or more questions correctly from the 50-question test. Legislative sponsors did not intend for the assessment to take excessive classroom instructional time and there was no specific method of administration mandated. The Morgan District will make the administration of this assessment as efficient as possible.

An alternative assessment is available for a student with a disability or a student who is within six months of intended graduation and has not passed. It is administered as an oral exam which can be modified in accordance with the student's IEP. The alternate assessment follows the same guidelines set forth by USCIS. In the alternate assessment, ten questions are selected and the test-taker must answer six correctly.

The legislation was purposely written so that a student at any grade level can take the assessment. In Morgan, this may be in the eighth grade where the history curriculum contains much of the content or later when enrolled in high civics courses. A student can take the assessment as many times as necessary for passage and a record will kept of those students who successfully pass.

You may be interested to know that graduation requirements for the graduating class of 2019 will require 3.0 units of social studies credit. The Morgan District, in collaboration with parents, teachers, and administrators will determine where the additional .5 requirement will be allocated by making an existing half-year course a full-year course or requiring an additional one.

Parent Update October 2015

District Update

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



Our enrollment is up again this year with 65 new students in the district. We welcome them and their families to Morgan County and know they will like our excellent schools. Our district growth plan predicts the addition of up to 75-100 new students each year for the foreseeable future.

We are reaching capacity in all of our buildings. We have plans to use portable classrooms at each campus as needed during the next few years until we run out of space. We will also do some remodeling of some of our older buildings and add additional classroom space in the Trojan Center. Our capital building budget is sufficient to make these additions and renovations. But as we continue to grow, the district will need to construct buildings to accommodate the growth. The Board anticipates needing to bond or seek capital leases in the next few years. The District Growth Committee Plan is available for viewing on the district website at www.morgansd.org.

Our transportation department added two additional routes this year. A new bus should arrive in the next few weeks. The board is considering purchasing an additional bus to help with our aging fleet. A new bus purchase will be part of the ongoing budgets every year.

The Board is also concerned about the traffic congestion on Young Street during student pick up and drop off. They are considering construction of a private roadway along the west side of the middle school campus for busses. Another idea is to reroute the middle school busses to 100 North for loading and unloading. Either of these solutions would reduce the bottleneck in front of the school and increase the traffic flow.

The Board wants the public to be informed about district finances and projections and has determined to hold a Truth in Taxation hearing every year for that purpose. The Board members are concerned about any tax increases and are looking for creative and reasonable solutions to the financial restrictions and limitations they face. As you know, the burden of taxes in Morgan falls upon the backs of the property owners because of limited business tax revenues.

Even amid the challenges we face in the district, our schools continue to perform well. Standardized tests scores are higher than the state average and each school received a high letter grade for overall performance. Our schools rank in the top half of all schools in the state. This is a direct result of excellent teachers and supportive parents and community members. Our continued success will require a continuation of the positive relationship we now enjoy.

Parent Update for September 2015

Professional Teaching Standards

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



Some teachers make teaching look so easy – but teaching is not easy. There are many critical elements that are important in educating students. This year, the Morgan School District is focusing on the Utah Effective Teaching Standards adopted by the Utah State Board of Education. These standards articulate what effective teaching and learning looks like in the classroom. The standards provide a resource for teachers to analyze and prioritize expectations for high quality instruction. We have organized the standards by month to allow a more specific focus for professional teacher development.

In August, Standard 10, Professional and Ethical Behavior, was the focus. This standard requires teachers to demonstrate the highest standard of legal, moral, and ethical conduct as specified in Utah State Board Rule R277-515. The Director of Communications from the Granite School District, Ben Horsley, shared insights and advice with the teachers and staff of the district during the teacher opening institute.

This month we have focused on Standard 6, Instructional Planning. This standard asks teachers to plan instruction that is rigorous and based upon content areas in the Utah Core. Effective lesson planning is also an important part which includes goals and objectives. Good lesson planning leads to measurable student learning.

In October, Standard 4 Content Knowledge will be stressed. It is important for teachers to understand central concepts, the tools of inquiry, and the structures of discipline.

November and December bring Standard 7, Instructional Strategies, and Standard 1, Learner Development. These standards focus on the importance of various instructional strategies to ensure that all learners develop a deep understanding of content areas, connections, and build skills to apply and extend knowledge in meaningful ways.

The understanding of cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas of student development (Standard 2) will be the focus in January 2016 along with the understanding of individual learner differences and cultural and linguistic diversity. Creating learning environments that support collaborative learning, positive social interactions, active engagement in learning and self-motivation will be covered in February (Standard 2).

We will conclude the year with Standards 5, 8, and 9 covering multiple methods of assessment, reflection and continuous growth and collaboration. It is our desire to make our teaching effective and productive and to provide learning opportunities and professional development for our teachers and staff.

As you can see, there is a lot that goes into good instruction and learning. Effective instruction requires in depth knowledge, extensive planning, steadfast lesson delivery, a lot of patience, and a desire to keep improving.

Parent Update August 2015

Truth in Taxation: Friend or Foe

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



Truth in Taxation is a process established by the Utah State Legislature for governmental taxing entities to hold public hearings to address possible changes in property taxes. Property tax rates automatically decrease when property values increase so revenues generated are the same from year to year (with adjustments for growth).

As one of those taxing entities, the Morgan School District is considering maintaining last year's tax rate and has scheduled a Truth in Taxation public hearing on Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2015, 6:00 p.m. in the Morgan District Office Board Room. The format of the Truth in Taxation meeting is essentially an extended public comment period where attendees can voice their support or objections over the proposed action. Following the comments, the Board sets the tax rate at any level - up to the level put forth in the published notice.

The *Certified Tax Rate* is set by the State and allows the district to collect only as much in taxes as was budgeted to collect the previous year. The *Proposed Tax Rate* allows the Board to recapture redemption penalties, to capture the taxes generated by the reevaluation of property values, and to collect what was budgeted the previous year. The notice states the impact of the proposed increase on an average home or property in the district.

Taxpayers this year are facing tax increases due to multiple factors including valuation changes and potential sales tax hikes for transportation funding. Recent legislation in Senate Bill 97 also increases the basic levy (assessed to all counties to equalize property tax revenue for school districts) to generate \$75,000,000. In Morgan County the amount of taxes generated through this increase is \$295,906. The amount the Morgan School District will receive through the reallocation for FY16 is \$184,515. This funding was factored into the current district budget.

Three different levies controlled by the Board currently roll up into the "School District" line item in the individual taxpayer notices – the debt levy, the capital levy, and the local board levy. The debt levy is automatically assessed based on the payment required to meet the district's outstanding debt burden. The successful refinance of bonds completed earlier this year provides for a reduction in payments through the life of the bonds. The capital levy can be adjusted by board action with revenues restricted to capital budget items. The maximum capital rate is .003000 and the new rate set by the state is .001333.

The local board levy is set by the Board with proceeds allocated to general budget items. The maximum local board levy is .002500. The rate being considered by the board is .002349 which would maintain last year's rate.

Multiple media outlets and the Utah Taxpayer Association have commented about proposed tax increases in various districts due to charter school replacement funding. The Morgan School District will not be affected by the change because the district is already meeting the required 25% allocation.

The Board, under careful stewardship and fiscal conservatism, has been increasing its “fund balances” which result from an excess of actual revenues over actual expenses. These balances are primarily due to enrollment levels above those conservatively budgeted by the Board (increased balances at the expense of larger-than-expected class sizes).

The Board has been playing “catch-up” during the past few years due to cut backs in state funding that has only partially been restored. At some point in the not-to-distant future, the Board will need to fund significant capital projects. Some feel that maintaining a tax rate each and every year can greatly enhance the school district’s financial condition and aid future needs. Others feel that any increase in taxes is undesirable for any reason and not needed at the present time.

You have an opportunity to be a part of the discussion at the upcoming Truth in Taxation hearing. If you can’t attend the meeting, please email me your comments and I will share them with each board member.

Transportation services are provided to the following:

- a. Elementary: Students residing 1.5 miles or more from home to school.
- b. Secondary: Students residing 2.0 miles or more from home to school.
- c. Students with disabilities as per the I.E.P.
- d. Students qualifying for hazardous stops (hazardous stops are evaluated and changed annually).
- e. Students riding busses to a childcare provider on an existing route on a consistent basis.
 - i. Requests for transportation for childcare must be made before September 1st of each school year. Parents of new students enrolling after Sept. 1st will have 10 days to request a childcare exemption. Request forms are available in the school office.
 - ii. If overcrowding becomes an issue, parents of children riding to a childcare provider will be given a 30 day notice of a discontinuation of service.

Examples: If students are riding their qualifying bus and they have their stop at a childcare provider instead of their home that is ok, as long as it is consistent for the year. If students are riding a bus that they would not normally ride then they would only be allowed to ride the bus for childcare as long as there was room and the stop was consistent throughout the year.
- f. Students who live outside of the district/county boundaries who were allowed to ride during the 2014-15 school year may continue to ride until the board decides otherwise as long as:
 - i. There is enough room on the bus.
 - ii. They fill out an annual request.
 - iii. They use designated routes for pick-up and drop-off.

• **Transportation services cannot not be provided to the following:**

- a. Students who do not meet the distance requirements.
- b. Students who live outside of the district/county boundaries.
- c. Students who want to ride busses outside of their designated or exempted route.
- d. Temporary childcare or transportation of a student to more than one childcare provider.

Parent Update June 2015

Make Reading a Part of Your Summer

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



We all have memories of summer-time fun. I remember exciting things happening during the summer including church and scout camps, activities with friends, neighborhood events, night games, and vacations with my family. I also remember getting my first real summer job. I have not-so-fond memories of mowing the lawn, weeding the garden, milking the cow, and hauling hay along with my desire to avoid anything “educational.” My wise mother always encouraged me to keep my mind engaged by having a good book to read. I think it is advice worth sharing. Dr. Seuss reminded us, “The more you read the more things you know. The more that you learn the more places you’ll go.”

I admire my adult friends who read and make reading an important part of their everyday life. I know they are setting a very good example for their children. I believe that children of regular readers become active readers themselves. My mother always kept lots of books around the house. My wife and I have a tradition of collecting children’s picture books and look forward to sharing them with our grandchildren.

Many books are available electronically. I frequently download books on my iPad. Many classics are available free of charge. I prefer reading a bound book, but I am learning to accept new technology. I especially like how technology has lightened by scripture bag on Sunday!

We can help kids retain educational skills during the summer if we just encourage them to read. It might be helpful to keep lots of books around and make regular trips to the library. We can also participate in reading activities and events offered at the local library. You might consider reading a book aloud together with your children. Think about what your kids may be learning next year when you plan the family vacation. Find interesting books about the sites you might be visiting. If you are visiting grandparents and other extended family members, expose your children to journals and family histories of your ancestors. There are many types of genealogical resources available on line.

It is important that children continue to learn and grow during the summer months. All young people can experience learning losses if they do not take part in educational activities during the summer. Commit to finding productive things for your children to do this summer and have a great time doing them together.

Parent Update April 2015

Financial News



Superintendent Doug Jacobs

The yearly bond payment on the district debt has been reduced through a highly successful refinancing effort. The yearly payments on the debt will go down about \$90,000 annually until the bonds are retired in 2027. The savings may be used towards remodeling, building, or other projects needed to meet the necessities of our growing district. We anticipate enrolling 65 - 100 new students next year. The preliminary numbers from Kindergarten registration are 10% higher than last year.

Board Vice Chair Mark Farmer presented the final report of the community Growth Task Force during the March meeting of the Morgan Board of Education. Many of the findings were also detailed in the March 13th edition of the *Morgan County News*. The final report recommends that triggers for projects be based on hitting enrollment milestones as opposed to dates on the calendar. Some of the questions the Board will now consider are whether to maintain older buildings or to replace them with new structures large enough to accommodate future growth. The report also recommends the use of portable classrooms as a short-term solution. Our buildings can accommodate enrollment growth through next year but the following year will require the use of additional space which may require portables being relocated to Mt. Green Elementary School and the possible addition of classroom space in the Trojan Center. The Board will update its planning lists to incorporate the Growth Task Force's suggestions.

The Board has been conservative with district funds by keeping operational costs low -resulting in larger class sizes. There will be some relief next year due to an increase given by the Legislature on the weighted pupil unit (WPU). This will allow the hiring of a few additional teachers and will also provide a modest increase in wages for teachers and staff. The Board has also budgeted for a new school bus this year and hopes to increase accessibility in the football stadium and to resurface the deteriorating track.

The Board expects to see a slight increase in revenues due to the equalization efforts by the Utah Legislature with Senate Bill 97. The Board considers current taxable rates on an annual basis. Any changes are presented in a Truth in Taxation meeting held in August.

The Board appreciates the creative ideas, contributions, and time given by the members of the Growth Task Force and invites input and involvement from all of their constituents as they move forward and meet new challenges.

Parental Assessment Release

Student Name _____

will be released from the following SAGE formative, interim, summative, and practice assessments based on the Utah Core Standards.

Grades K-2 No SAGE testing in these grades

Grades 3-5 Elementary SAGE

- 3rd Math, Language Arts, Writing
- 4th Math, Language Arts, Science, Writing
- 5th Math, Language Arts, Science, Writing

Grades 6-12 Secondary SAGE

- Grade 6 Math, Science, Language Arts, Writing
- Grade 7 Math, Science, Language Arts, Writing
- Grade 8 Math, Science, Language Arts, Writing
- Math Level I
- Math Level II
- Math Level III
- Language Arts 9
- Language Arts 10
- Language Arts 11
- Earth Science
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics

Other Secondary Assessments

These are not a part of SAGE but they do have reportable data that is not controlled by the district or state.

- Grade 8 ACT Explore
- Grade 10 ACT Plan
- ACT
- ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery)

1. Parents have the right to opt their children out of any testing required by or facilitated through the Utah State Board of Education.
2. There is no requirement for an optional or alternative test to be given.
3. If teachers/schools use any of these tests for grading/promotion decisions, some alternative assessment will need to be provided.
4. Opting-out of end-of-level testing results in de-identified and aggregated individual student data reported to the federal government. The difference in the data shared on all public school students as required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is that the proficiency level for a student who opts out will not be reported while a tested student's proficiency level will be reported.
5. Students not participating in any testing will not be singled out in any negative way nor punished.
6. A student who opts-out of testing will not receive a proficiency score, and for State purposes will not be counted against participation rates. These students will be reported as non-participants on federal reports and accountability and this may impact an LEA's qualification for and the receiving of certain federal dollars.
7. A student who has not opted-out and is absent from school, and therefore does not participate in testing, is counted as a non-participant (both State and federal reporting) and may impact the school's participation score which is included in the calculation for the school's letter grade. An absent student is not included in calculating proficiency for a class, grade, or school.

Parent/Guardian

Date

Principal

Date

School

The Morgan Board of Education supports the use of methods established by the Utah State Board of Education to assess student learning.

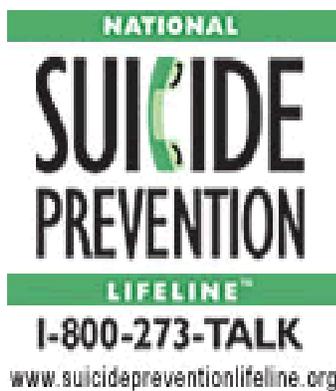
Let's Talk About Suicide



Superintendent Doug Jacobs

Suicide is a serious public health problem that takes an enormous toll on families, friends, classmates, co-workers, communities, military personnel and veterans. We don't want suicide to continue to be a leading cause of death among anyone - especially adolescents. We should all be committed to do all we can to prevent it.

Uncovering the reason for an individual suicide is complex and challenging. We know that many people who die by suicide have potentially treatable mental issues at the time of their death – issues that have gone unrecognized and untreated.



We are concerned about the safety and well-being of each of our students and know that there are warning signs and observable behaviors that may signal the presence of suicidal thinking. Some of the signs to watch may include extreme changes in behavior, appearance, oversleeping or not sleeping, severe mood swings, trouble with the law, stealing, fighting, bullying, vandalism, and substance abuse. Sometimes teens can be overly sad, cranky and have poor attitudes. It is important to be involved enough to recognize potential life-threatening issues.

Be attentive when a child seems depressed, hopeless, trapped or in seemingly unbearable pain. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Asking for help is a skill that may best protect your child. Reach out to your doctor, religious leaders, school counselor, teacher, or other trusted professionals to get the help you need for your child.

You can also call the following helplines to get immediate assistance: **911**, Weber Human Services **1-801-625-3700**, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) **1-877-230-6264**, National Suicide Prevention Hotline **1-800-273-TALK** and on line at www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Parent Update February 2015



District Update

Superintendent Doug Jacobs

Thanks for your feedback regarding our recent district transportation policy change. Our new guidelines went into place on Feb. 2nd and we are pleased to report that many of the problems we were having with the abundance of daily notes and requests have diminished.

We appreciate those patrons who called, sent emails, and attended the January meeting of the Morgan Board of Education and offered personal perspectives on the changes. As a result of the input, the Board made an exception for those students who access district transportation for childcare. A provision will be in place through the remainder of the school year. We are in the process of collecting data to share with the Board in their June meeting when they will decide whether to continue the exception or to modify it.

Refinance of Bonds

With interest rates at record lows, the Morgan Board of Education is in the process of refinancing their currently held bonds. This refinance will save the taxpayers of Morgan County over \$1,000,000. The Board adopted a resolution and set parameters for the sale in their February 10th meeting. You will see a "Notice of Bonds to be Issued" in upcoming editions of the *Morgan County News*.

Legislative Session Update

You may be interested to know that each Friday during the legislative session, superintendents and district business administrators have the opportunity to attend meetings with legislators at the capitol to consider bills dealing with education. We also participate in rural caucus meetings. We track public education bills and the positions taken by our representatives. We are in support of Governor Herbert's Education Budget of funding growth with 6.5 % on the WPU. We are lobbying to have it adopted by the House and Senate.

We are in regular contact with our new senator, Ann Millner, and our representative in the House, Mel Brown. Both have recently attended meetings of the Morgan Board of Education where we have shared the unique funding challenges facing our district. We are also in regular contact with our representative on the State Board of Education, Terry Warner, who attends many of our Board's meetings. The Northeast Utah Educational Services (NUES) has also been working on legislation for increased funding for technology which we hope will be funded.

Looking for Land for Future Schools

The Morgan Board of Education is looking to purchase large (12-50) acre parcels in Morgan County for future schools. They will work realtors/brokers and individual land owners and are open to unique, long-term financing/purchase options.

Parent Update December 2014

Positive Things

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



Public education seems to get a lot of negative press these days – especially in social media. There is much said about common core, the new math, dropout numbers, college readiness and the use of technology and privacy of data. While these are all legitimate concerns that need attention, there are many things that are going well. In this season of gratitude and reflection, perhaps we should pause and focus on the many positive things happening in public education.

Our founding fathers understood that a government for the people, of the people and by the people required a literate, well-informed citizenry. The students in Morgan County are informed, happy and successful. I see evidence of their growth constantly. Did you know that 93% of our students earn a high school diploma? This percentage exceeds the state average. When it comes to the state average, students in Morgan also outperform their peers on the ACT and SAGE Testing. Our students have many opportunities to excel and do so at every level. This was evident last spring when our Sterling Scholars were named as the winners or runners-up in nearly every category.

Our schools are governed by an informed board of education and run by competent and caring administrators. Our teachers are well-qualified and understanding. Our support staff members are knowledgeable and dedicated. We have the greatest volunteers around. In fact, those sponsored by Holcim through the United Way and AmeriCorps offer a noteworthy and unparalleled level of assistance.

I am confident that our children are greeted each day by professional bus drivers who safely take them to warm, clean school buildings. I am also grateful that nutritious meals are provided to those who need them.

So when I read or hear that we don't measure up, or that math is too hard, or when they tell us that our students will not be prepared to transition into the future, I choose to look on the bright side. When I see the good work being done in our community by the many good people and support groups that work tirelessly to provide the help we need I know we are on the right track. The public education system is far from perfect. But our students are doing better every year. We are not broken. We are a bit overwhelmed and underfunded but we are still moving forward. We will continue to work every day, in strong partnerships with you, to create the best possible outcomes for all.

Parent Update December 2014

Data Security

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



Each time I go shopping and use a bank card for payment, I have concerns about the security of my personal information. We frequently hear about serious data breaches and I hope that my accounts are safe. Do I stop using them? Each time one of my children drives away I remind them to buckle up. I have uneasiness about their safety on the roads because I know about terrible accidents that happen every day. Do I stop letting them drive? When my children played high school sports, I was apprehensive about them getting hurt. I know a lot of adults that are still suffering from injuries they suffered in high school. We live in a day and age of great risk but I have to remind myself that there are also great rewards. Mark Zuckerberg of Face Book fame has said "The biggest risk is not taking any risk. In a world that is changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks."

Like you, I am also concerned about the security risks involved in the collection of data in our schools but I am also confident that the appropriate steps are being taken to protect and limit the data. Performance data and personally identifiable student information data needs to be kept safe, private, and follow federal and state standards and laws, including FERPA, to maintain security and privacy. Many of our Utah legislators are concerned with data collection and looking for ways to limit the amount of data that is retrieved and stored.

When a student enrolls in any Morgan public school, parents are asked to fill out an enrollment form. The information is entered into a state database. Parents are asked to supply the age of the student, gender, home language, primary language, ethnicity, and race. The school secretary also enters contact information, health related needs, and special placements. Students are assigned a number (which, by law, cannot be their social security number). Technology has made data collection much easier and more efficient.

The Utah State Office of Education has been mandated by the Utah State Legislature to provide parental access to all data stored and tracked. In the not too distant future, parents should be able to log on and see everything about their child in a "backpack." Right now, a parent has to rely on printed information provided by the school much like the SAGE testing results that were recently sent home.

I regularly visit and monitor a federal website called the *National Center for Education Statistics* <http://nces.ed.gov> that supplies data about our schools. I also regularly visit the Utah State Office of Education website to monitor the information they make available. In all my searching, I have never seen any personally identifiable student data. But don't take my word for it. The *Utah Educational Data Gateway* is a resource provided by the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) that allows you to access education-related data. I recommend visiting their website and reviewing the information they provide at www.schools.utah.gov. I also invite you to visit the *Privacy Technical Assistance Center* (PTAC) at <https://ptac.ed.gov> and the *Office of Civil Rights Data Collection* at <https://ocrdata.ed.gov>. The Utah State School Board website <https://schoolboard.utah.gov> also has good information along with resolutions that have been passed regarding data collection. Please see for yourself.

Parent Update November 2014

The Results Are In

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



Tests are an important part of education. In the Morgan School District, we use the data from testing to support instructional decisions and to identify what students have learned. While testing is important, we also know that tests can be over used. Too much testing can take away from a students' time to learn.

Many of us also have concerns about the safeguarding of student information. Our school district is part of a state system that contracts with outside vendors to create tests and manage data. The Utah State Office of Education has assured us that they know how our data is used, stored, and who has access to it. They are taking steps to increase protection of the data. We have confidence in their efforts but we are cautious. You might be relieved to know that we are looking for ways to limit the number of tests given and ways to protect the data retrieved in the Morgan School District.

We are eager to analyze the results from the important year-end SAGE assessments we gave last spring in mathematics, language arts, and science. The new Utah tests were "adaptive" and designed to match and challenge each individual student. The tests were taken on computers and the students adapted quickly. Technology has given us the ability to administer tests in a more efficient way.

The results are lower than previous scores because the tests were different and more challenging. We are pleased that the new results exceed the state average in most areas. The results are not a reflection of decreased student achievement but a reflection of increased expectations. If you find that your child is not yet proficient on one or more of the assessments, please talk to his or her teacher about a plan to get there. It is important to remember that year-end assessments are just one indicator of student performance. Each of our school principals is planning to make available individual student reports for parents. The information will be challenging to interpret and they will do all they can to explain the results.

We also plan to use this new data to improve our teaching practices, align our curriculum, provide special instruction for students who need it, and to determine professional development for our teachers. It will help us to create goals and strategies for change and improvement in areas that need it.

Parent Update October 2014

Bullying Prevention

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



Everyone has a role in preventing bullying. Talking about it is an important step. Kids who know what bullying is can better identify it and stop it. Kids need to know ways to safely stand up to bullying and how to get help. Here are some suggestions from the website stopbullying.gov:

- Encourage children to report bullying if it happens, including cyberbullying.
- Encourage kids to speak to a trusted adult if they are bullied or see others being bullied. The adult can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can't solve the problem.
- Talk about how to stand up to kids who bully. Give tips, like using humor and saying "stop" directly and confidently, walking away, turning off the computer, unfriending.
- Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other kids.
- Urge them to help kids who are bullied by showing kindness and getting help.

Parents must keep the lines of communication open. Some ideas might include checking in with kids often, listening to them, knowing their friends, asking about school, church and other activities. Parents can encourage their children to do what they love. Special interests, activities, and hobbies can boost confidence. Most importantly, parents should model how to treat others with kindness and respect. Research tells us that children really do look to parents for advice and help on tough decisions. Here are some conversation starters:

- What was one good thing that happened today? Any bad things?
- What is lunch time like at school? Who do you sit with? What do you talk about?
- What is it like to ride the bus?
- What is your favorite class? Worst class? Why?

Bullying can happen in many places. If you suspect that your child is being bullied at school, please contact your child's teacher and the school principal. If the bullying is happening in other places, please talk to the people in charge. They can't do anything if they don't know about it.



The Morgan School District supports the Utah Anti-Bullying Coalition. Visit their website at utahantibullying.org for more helpful information.

Members of this coalition believe that everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect by his or her peers – regardless of race, religion, physical appearance, academic or athletic abilities, sexual orientation, or any other number of other factors.

Parent Update September 2014

Parental Rights (FERPA)

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



We live in a day and age where information is readily available at our fingertips. New technologies have permitted us to do many things quickly and efficiently. Public schools gather student information from enrollment forms and store it in a secure manner. Unfortunately, we hear daily of breaches in the data held by large companies and there is always a risk of any data being compromised. Data from Utah's schools are entered into a district and state data base maintained and secured by the Utah State Office of Education.

The Utah State Board of Education and Utah State Office of Education have rules and policies that protect the security of individual student data and do not allow for the release of identifiable student data. They, along with the Morgan School District Board of Education, have policies requiring extreme caution and a high level of security with student and teacher data. Together they insist on proper care and vigilance in the effort to secure and protect the sensitive personal data of students and teachers. They also recognize the delicate balance of that privacy with the proper transparency and availability of aggregated, non-identifiable data necessary to provide accountability.

With so much data collected, you might be happy to know there are additional protections. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student educational records. Parents may inspect and review their child's education records maintained by the Morgan School District and may have a copy of the records upon request for a nominal fee. Parents have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading and have a responsibility to notify the school when changes in residence and telephone number take place.

Schools must also have written permission from the parent in order to release any information from a student's education record (e.g., address, schedule, phone number, grades) unless the information has been designated as "directory information" but still must allow parents the opportunity to opt out. FERPA does allow schools to disclose student records, without consent, to appropriate parties with legitimate educational or judicial interests.

You might also be interested to know that the *Protection of Pupil Rights Act* requires schools to make instructional materials available for inspection by parents if those materials will be used in connection with an education-funded survey, analysis, or evaluation which their children may participate. It also ensures that schools obtain written parental consent before students participate in any education-funded survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning: political affiliations, mental and psychological problems, sex behavior and attitudes, illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating behavior, critical appraisals of close family relationships, legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, e.g., lawyers, physicians, and ministers, income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for financial assistance), and religious affiliations or beliefs.

I hope this information has been helpful and provided some clarity. The Morgan School District recognizes that a parent has the primary responsibility for the education of his/her child and that the district is in a secondary and supportive role to parents. Please contact me if you would like more information or explanation.

Parent Update July 2014

The Whole Truth and Nothing But the Truth in Taxation

Doug Jacobs, Superintendent, djacobs@morgansd.org



“Death, taxes and childbirth! There's never any convenient time for any of them.”

Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*

“In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.”

Benjamin Franklin

You have probably seen the “Notice of Proposed Tax Increase” in today’s edition of the *Morgan County News* stating that the Morgan School District would like to increase its property tax budgeted revenue. Anytime a taxing entity changes a tax rate, a *Truth in Taxation* notice and hearing is required by state law to inform the local tax payers. While this action does not require a vote of the public, the Board wants your support on behalf of the public school students in Morgan County.

Due to increased county assessed values, the Utah State Tax Commission is actually lowering the current certified tax rate which may lower your tax bill. Rather than letting the rate drop, the Morgan Board of Education has the authority to maintain the previous rate or to adjust it. New growth has produced some needs for the school district above what the current budget allows. The Board believes it is practical to add a new school bus to the district fleet annually. They would also like to make technology more available in the classroom. The school buildings in the district are deteriorating and need some mechanical controls. Modification of the forthcoming certified tax rate could provide financial solutions while allowing the district the ability to improve district funds. This is important money that can be used to acquire land for future district building needs.

This effort would also allow the Board to recapture funds deducted from district revenues resulting from a settlement between the Utah State Tax Commission and the Union Pacific Railroad in the amount of \$79,346 on centrally assessed property taxes collected and distributed during 2007- 2013. This is referred to as a Judgment Recovery and would require the Board to impose a Judgment Levy if they do not increase the forthcoming tax rate.

The members of the Morgan School District Board of Education have worked diligently to “tighten the belt” to insure that district revenues cover expenditures. They are conscious of their stewardship and the sacred trust placed upon them as elected officials. As a board, they are tasked with providing the best opportunities for children in the most efficient manner possible and they need your help to do it.

A hearing is scheduled for August 12th at 6:00 p.m. in the Morgan High School Auditorium and you’re invited. Attendees are invited to share brief comments. Please look at the school district assessments on your current tax notice before you come to the hearing and see what this proposal does to the amount of taxes you are projected to pay. The amount may be lower that you had anticipated.

Parent Update June 2014

What You May Not Know About the Utah Common Core



Superintendent Doug Jacobs

You've probably heard a lot about the Common Core — good and bad. Most parents and educators don't actually oppose the standards, but there are some who do not like the process in which they were adopted and see them as a federal intrusion into local governance. In Utah, we refer to them as the "Utah Standards."

The Utah State Board of Education began to establish more rigorous standards in all academic subject areas in the mid-1980s to establish basic benchmarks that students are expected to be able to reach. Common Core Standards are not a curriculum. The standards include appendices with research, guides, and samples for teachers, but do not prescribe curriculum or materials for students.

The Utah Core Standards are periodically reviewed and updated when necessary. The standards were developed in math and English/language arts, and adopted by the Utah State Board of Education in 2010 for use in all Utah public schools, replacing previous standards in these areas. Morgan teachers have been implementing the standards for the past three years.

According to the Utah State Board of Education, the Utah Standards are not connected to any federal funding or directive. The state neither gains nor loses money based on its adoption of the standards. Utah voluntarily chose to adopt the standards and can change its standards at any time without penalty. New legislation requires the participation of more parents in the process.

In Morgan, the local school district (school board, principals, teachers, school community council members) select and direct the curriculum used in the classroom, including the selection of textbooks and other support materials.

When school resumes in the fall, teachers in the Morgan District will provide information to parents detailing the standards, objectives, curriculum and the textbooks they will use in their instruction. If parents do not receive this information, they are invited to make an appointment with each teacher and request it. This information will also be reviewed by each school's community council.

Parent Update May 2014

New Student Testing System

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



Students in the Morgan School District have been taking end-of-level tests. In the past, these tests have been referred to as Criterion Reference Tests (CRT) or CORE tests. This year, a new system of testing was adopted for all public schools in Utah called **SAGE** (Student Assessment for Growth and Excellence), using a computer adaptive test.

The State Board of Education established a committee consisting of 15 parents of Utah public education students to review all of the computer adaptive test questions. The committee met the week of November 4-8, 2013 and reviewed all 11,783 questions. Any question that was flagged was reviewed and either removed, edited, or flagged for further review.

You might wonder who has access to the testing results. Specific student assessment results will be available in the future to students, parents and the appropriate educators working with that student. The aggregate or a combination of all the data results will be provided to the public through a gateway located at the Utah State Office of Education Website.

The test results are very important to the teachers in the Morgan School District. Teachers can measure a child's learning and gain insight as to whether learning needs are being met. The aggregate or a combination of all the data is also used by the State to determine school performance.

The Morgan School District Board of Education, superintendent, principals, and teachers strongly encourage participation in SAGE testing. Students are allowed to be opted out of testing by their parents. Opt out forms are available at each school.

For more information please visit the USOE Website at www.schools.utah.gov/main and follow the links under *Departments, Assessment and Accountability*.

Parent Update April 2014

How Do Schools Select Curriculum and Textbooks?

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



As you know, core objectives are established by the Utah State Board of Education and generally adopted by local boards to govern instruction. Local boards can change core objectives if they desire. Curriculum is largely determined at schools by teachers with direction from the principal and input from the school community council. Local boards are vested with curriculum decisions but most boards leave those decisions up to individual schools.

School community councils are legislatively mandated and vitally important. The SCC is a mini-school board. They are elected by parents and represent all of the parents in all aspects of school business.

Textbooks are selected by teachers (grade levels and departments) with input from the school community council and then approved by the board of education. Teachers, working in grade levels with community council members, start to review possible texts. Sometimes individual SCC members are invited to grade-level or department meetings. Other times they may discuss the texts at the monthly meeting. Copies of selected textbooks are available for review at each school. By the time a textbook reaches the Board for approval, it should have been totally vetted by teachers and parents.

Morgan High School has been looking for a new math textbook to support their curriculum. Department Chair Jeremy Floyd made an impressive presentation to the Board in March 2014 and explained the rationale for their selection. The change in the math core has made finding a book very difficult. The lack of a textbook has been very frustrating to teachers, parents and students alike. The teachers at Morgan Middle School have selected language arts books they would like to adopt. Those books were introduced to the Board for approval in April 2014. Our elementary school teachers are currently reviewing texts for possible use. All of our teachers are trained professionals and know what works best for the children.

Please participate in your school community council meetings. That is where very important decisions are being made.

Parent Update April 2014

Parent Involvement on District Committees

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



In an effort to get parents and community members more involved in the education of students, the Morgan Board of Education has created special purpose committees. The board members have been reporting the actions of the committees in board meetings for the past several months.

Growth Task Force and Finance Advisory Committee: Membership includes: Board Member and Chair Mark Farmer, Community Members Jennie Earl, Brent Campbell, Ryan Windley, Greg Richens, Brenda Crossley, John Barber, Ted Taylor, Natalie Sill, Kera Birkeland, Courtney Wallin, Ryan Hoffmann, Raelene Blocker, Kris-e Snyder; Teachers Courtney Dougall, Lanette Jensen, Jared Barlow; MHS Principal Wade Murdock and district administration. This group meets on the first Thursday of the month at 7:00 a.m. You are invited to attend the next meeting on May 8, 2014.

Transportation and Safety: Members include parents from each school community council, principals, teachers, Board President Bruce Galbraith, district administration, a representative from UDOT, Morgan City, and Morgan County. This committee meets quarterly. You are invited to attend the next meeting on August, 6, 2014 at 1:00 p.m.

Technology: Members include parents from each school community council, principals, teachers, two members of the Morgan Education Foundation, district administration, technology staff members, a representative from Northeastern Utah Education Services, and Board Member Neil Carrigan. The committee meets every two months. You are invited to attend the next meeting on May 7, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.

District Policies: Principals, Board Member Ken Durrant, and district administration meet at 9:00 a.m. on the first Wednesday of each month to review and adapt policies developed by the USOE and Utah State School Board of Education. Policies are sent by email to all district employees and community councils for input; then reviewed by the Board in a two-month procedure at board meeting. You are invited to attend the next meeting on May 7, 2014 at 9:00 a.m.

The **Curriculum and Instruction Committee** is under development with Board Member Jody Hipwell. She also serves on the **MHS Scholarship Committee**. Other committees include the **Morgan Foundation** and **Morgan Empowered** whose meetings are held monthly and open to the public and a **Wellness Committee** will be formed in the fall.

Other district committees are also in the process of being developed, stay tuned. Most of the meetings are held in the Morgan School District Board Room. Please call Superintendent Jacobs at the district office at **801-829-3411** or email djacobs@morgansd.org for more information and meeting times.

Parent Update August 2013

Let's Get Started!

Superintendent Doug Jacobs



It is great to be a part of the Morgan School District. It is a real treat to live in such a beautiful area surrounded by spectacular scenery and good people. Everyone has been very welcoming, and I thank you for your kindness. I look forward to being a part of your successful academic and extra-curricular traditions and having some fun along the way.

Many of you give so much of your time and money in supporting the needs of students. Your help is appreciated. If you would like to make any donation, please consider giving to the Morgan Foundation for Students or your local school PTSO. All donations given to these organizations have a direct impact on our students and are tax deductible. We also encourage you to become a member of your school's Community Council. Your school principal can give you more information.

I have been impressed with the administrators, teachers and staff in the Morgan School District. They are dedicated professionals. Please afford them every courtesy and communicate with them as often as you can about your child's progress this year. They are constantly looking for ways to enhance their teaching and your child's educational experience. As such, they will be a part of the USOE Teacher Effective Teaching Standards Pilot Program this year. There will also be additional time dedicated to teacher development.

We currently face some significant financial challenges. The members of the Board of Education have made some difficult and painful decisions. A few retiring teachers have not been replaced which means larger class sizes in our schools. There have also been reductions in our transportation department. This means that some students who have been accustomed to riding the bus to school may be left off this year if they live closer than 1.5 miles (elementary) or 2.0 miles (secondary). We ask for your help and cooperation as we look at other cost saving measures in the future.

The first day of school is Monday, Aug, 19, 2013. The teachers and staff have been working diligently to make your child's school experience this year a positive one. Please remember that we are all on the same team and have the same common goal – a rigorous, competitive, and excellent education for our children – in the most economical manner possible.