



# Iowa Valley Tiger Tracks

Education: A Community Partnership

www.iowa-valley.k12.ia.us

December 2016

Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, Iowa students will soon be assessed using a new statewide tool called Smarter Balanced. It is a new name and new future assessment; who can argue with the name, as we all want to be smarter and live a more balanced life, right? Let's hope this is the outcome for the students of Iowa.

Most of us probably grew up taking Iowa Assessments, ITEDs, or Basic Skills. Most of the test questions were simply multiple choice-type questions, selecting one of four responses listed. Smarter Balanced assessments will be formatted differently for a variety of reasons. Smarter Balanced assessment will hopefully do the following:

- Better reflect what is taught in the classroom

- Showcase mastery of skills in a more detailed manner with immediate results
- Challenge the thinking process for solving real-life problems
- Require deeper thinking and responses
- Provide accurate information about whether students are on track
- Assure that students are more "future ready"

Because Iowa raised the expectation bar, Smarter Balanced will be added beginning next year if legislators work through the funding issues, as they are more costly than previous types of assessments. Parents are encouraged to take the Smarter Balanced practice tests by visit-

ing: [www.smarterbalanced.org/assessments/practice-and-training-tests](http://www.smarterbalanced.org/assessments/practice-and-training-tests).

As we all know, Smarter Balanced should be used in combination with teacher observations, grades, ability to problem solve, skills to work with others, and creative thinking strategies to develop a true picture of a student's progress. We hope the state's new assessment tool will boost student achievement and give us a better "picture" of what students know and are able to do.

Have a happy holiday season, spending time with family and friends. We look forward to 2017.



Mrs. Donita Joens, Superintendent of Schools

## Jr.-Sr. High News

Time once again has flown by and, believe it or not, we're about ready to close out 2016! Doesn't seem that long ago that our 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 2016-17 school year was here and we were thinking about how many days of school before Christmas break and "boom" here we are! Now, as we look forward to holiday festivities and a short break from school, let's remember to be thankful for the year we've had and look forward to 2017 whether we're ready or not!

This year has seemed to fly by so quickly and I'm not sure of the reason. One of my goals again this year was to get to know the incoming 7<sup>th</sup> grade class and, at this point, I've about accomplished that goal. It's always amazing to me how our 7<sup>th</sup> graders always seem to "stick out" each year in a dif-

ferent way, being excited to be in a new building, but also to "reconnect" with their former buddies, the now 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

I continued with one of my goals from last year, and that was to make sure all students at Iowa Valley felt safe and part of our culture at school. Bullying and harassment issues are continually monitored and I believe it's an attitude, I know many students have heard me say, "attitude is everything" and that is true for the most part. The reason for saying this is if we make our jobs work, that's what it becomes, work. But when we enjoy what we do, and feel that it's important to us, it becomes a career! I enjoy being at school, around students and staff, the connections that are made and the opportunities that await me at the door each and every day.

In closing, I remind our parents that all students will be involved in semester tests the last full week before Christmas break and finish on Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup>. It is hoped that this testing period successfully evaluates our understanding and learning from the 1<sup>st</sup> semester and is used as a "measuring stick" for what we need to do for second semester. In education, tests are called assessments for a reason, because they are "tools" to help us understand if what we are teaching is being understood. If not, we need to make adjustments to the process to help all students be more successful. Until next year, 2017 that is, or January, have a great break and until then GO TIGERS!

Shawn Kreman, Principal

### Special points of interest:

- Dec. 5 Pre-K-1st Grade Concert 6:30 pm @ HS Auditorium
- Dec. 8 Grades 2-3 Vocal & 5-6 Band Concert 6:30 pm @ HS Auditorium
- Dec. 14 1 pm early dismissal
- Dec. 15 Winter Concert 6:30 pm @ HS Auditorium
- Dec. 22 1 pm early dismissal
- Dec. 22 End 2nd quarter & 1st Semester
- Dec. 23-Jan. 2 No School Winter Break

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## Third Grade C.A.K.E. Partner

Mrs. Henry's Class and Mrs. Jordan, the Marengo Public Librarian, have joined forces as C.A.K.E. Partners. C.A.K.E. Partners stands for Community and Kids in Education. The goal of this program is to improve relationships within the Community as well as for the Community and School to work and grow together.

Mrs. Jordan, Marengo Public Library, visits and completes activities with the residents of Rose Haven a couple times a month. As C.A.K.E. Partners, Mrs. Henry's third grade class joins Mrs.

Jordan once a month to visit the residents of Rose Haven. During this time, the students communicate with the residents while they complete an activity together. During the month of December the students will be decorating Christmas cookies with the residents and reciting Christmas poetry. This has been a very positive experience and interaction for the students as well as the residents of Rose Haven.

Mrs. Deb Henry, Third Grade Teacher

## Agriculture Education News

Each Agricultural Education program in the United States is unique in its own way, the program at Iowa Valley isn't any different. The importance of our curricula spreads further than the classroom—we need agriculture to survive. One of the mission of the program is to help students understand the importance of what they are learning in authentic, meaningful ways. One of the ways to accomplish this mission is to spark new learning interests in students. Area and community professionals are invited into the classroom allowing students to make career connections. These interactive presentations and discussions with professionals open the door for students

to discover potential future careers. Another way is to accomplish our departmental mission is to encourage students to share their learning experiences with others. Students are encourage to share their knowledge of agriculture with their peers. Students research agricultural topics that they choose and present their findings to the classroom. The Iowa Valley Agriculture Department fosters genuine, lifelong learning for all students, regardless of their background or future goals. There is something in Agricultural Education and FFA for everyone. My students learn valuable life skills through hands-on

projects in our school and community. Our goal is to empower and life-long learners, capable of success in this ever-changing world and its emerging challenges.

Mrs. Marcia Kilgard,

Agriculture Education/FFA Teacher

## The Study of Iowa High Schools is coming to Our School

The Study of Iowa High Schools researchers will be working in our school this year (one of 45 schools around the state) to learn about the

impact of school improvement efforts on instruction and student outcomes. They will be inviting selected 9th and 10th grade core subject

classes soon. Please ask your student if he/she has a packet for you with more information about the study. We are hoping to get a high participation rate!



## Collaboration is Essential in a Small School Environment

Iowa Valley educators are a community of caring individuals who are all working towards one common goal. This goal is to increase student's positive outcomes to give them success in school, at home, in the community and out in the world as they go to college or prepare for careers. Collaboration is an integral part of this process.

In a small school environment where there are only one or two teachers that share the same common content or grade level area, it is very easy to slip into the classroom and be isolated from others. Teachers at Iowa Valley know that teaching in isolation does not help students succeed. They share resources, work together with lesson planning and discuss successes and challenges in their instruction. During professional development days and on a daily basis, teachers are looking at student needs and working together to figure out what works and what does not. Through professional learning communities (PLC) and just day-to-day conversations,

teachers collaborate to become better teachers and role models to their students.

Through collaboration, teachers have the opportunity to grow, refine, and share their expertise with other staff and with their students. This collaborative environment produces outcomes that promote student achievement and innovative instructional design, strengthen critical thinking and problem solving skills, provide opportunities for interaction between teachers, enhance relevant use and sharing of resources, and provide opportunities for teachers to be aware of available resources and knowledge from other colleagues.

*"The most valuable resource that all teachers have is each other. Without collaboration our growth is limited to our own perspectives." Robert John Meehan*

*"We have had more time to ask questions and talk about how others are implementing things in their class-*

*rooms. It has given us time to look at data more closely." Iowa Valley Elementary Teacher*

*"We're starting to see more connections across grade levels instead of just in our own common areas." Iowa Valley High School Teacher*

Through the Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) grant work, teachers have a voice in the instruction process and they know that collaboration may be a requirement, but it is also a valuable tool that helps them refine their instructional craft. They connect with colleagues to make their instruction better, which in turn helps student achievement and success.

Mrs. Patty Miles

## Inclement Weather Information

In the event of a weather or mechanical problems that would require a delay in bus routes and school starting times, every effort will be made to notify the public as soon as possible. These announcements will be made on **KGRN-1401 AM, KHAK-98.1 FM, KDAT-104.5 FM, KRNA-94.1 FM, KZIA-102.9 FM, KCCK-88.3, KGAN-TV (channel 2), KWWL-TV (channel 7), and KCRG-TV (channel 9)**. ICEIS (Iowa County Emergency Information System), you will need to register at [http://entry.inspironlogistics.com/iowaco\\_ia/wens.cfm](http://entry.inspironlogistics.com/iowaco_ia/wens.cfm) to receive any notices for Iowa County. **Alert Solutions 2.0** uses your email address and sends texts to your

cellphone from the information you provide to PowerSchools.

Once the superintendent makes a decision it will be entered and an alert will be sent out to you.