

Dear Verdigris Community,

We want to first thank you for the incredible outpouring of support you have given us during this walkout. We have been in constant discussion as a teacher group regarding what is best for our students and community. We feel a deep conviction to advocate for our students at the capitol as well as locally. So many of our teachers have been to the capitol day in and day out, as well as holding signs here at home, to remind our legislators and our community members that the purpose of this walkout is for our students. Teaching is more than a job to all of us. We recognized that we needed to support the momentum in our state and to pressure our legislators to fund our students and our schools. We have had some success but we expect more from them. We have had many discussions with the legislators and will continue to have more in the weeks to come. However, without your support we would not have been able to do this. You are the reason we have been able to keep our motivation and to continue to fight. We cannot thank you enough.

How Has Decreased Funding Impacted Us?

Our school system and teachers have managed to work through these budget cuts to ensure our students get a sound education. Often these budget cuts have happened silently as we continued to forge ahead for the benefit of our students. However, in our school system we have lost both certified and support staff. In addition, our student population has grown by over one hundred students over the past ten years. Due to continued funding cuts and student population growth, our system has struggled to add much needed certified and support personnel.

We are very fortunate to have such a positive community that has supported our school in so many ways, including the passage of many bond issues over the past few years. These bond issues have freed up funds for our school system, allowing more staff to be hired in recent years. Verdigris Schools plans to add an Elementary Counselor, STEM Teacher (Secondary Science/Math), two Secondary ELA Teachers, and an Elementary Special Education Teacher next year. These are positions that we could not add or had lost due to budget cuts. More state funding will allow us to continue to hire more teachers for various subjects, across all grade levels, which will allow us to keep up with our increasing student population and academic rigor needs.

In the years to come, we hope to lessen our class sizes as well as offer more system wide electives in the areas of STEM, the Arts, AP courses, and upper level core courses, to name a few. If the legislature would secure a perpetual funding increase for the next few years, these areas and more could be expanded.

Classes Resume on Monday April 16th

As stated in the call or email sent on Tuesday, the teachers voted to return to school Monday, April 16th. However, **THE FIGHT IS NOT OVER!** We will be sending a delegation of teachers and staff on a regular basis to develop long lasting relationships with our legislators and to continue to advocate for adequate educational funding. Thereon, we will be developing the *Verdigris Cardinals at the Capitol* group to continue education funding efforts. We would love your support in this process as well. Our goal is to continue to show our legislators that we expect them to make education a priority and to do more this session and all sessions moving forward. We would love for you to join us and be a part of this group. We will have more information on how you can do that in the days to come.

School Calendar

On Monday, April 9, 2018 the Verdigris School Board approved an updated calendar for the days missed prior to April 11th. Those four days will be made up on the Fridays of April 27th, May 4th, and May 11th, and Wednesday, May 23rd. The Verdigris School Board will have a Special Meeting to address the two additional days that need to be made up.

Testing Will Resume the Week of April 16th

Testing will resume the week of April 16th and no earlier than Tuesday, April 17th as we feel our students need at least one day back in class to prepare them for testing. Students and Parents/Guardians will be notified of the new testing dates.

Thank You!

We deeply appreciate the Verdigris community and all of your support during this process. This walkout was never intended to negatively impact our students nor our community. We did not enjoy walking out of our classrooms and leaving our students and our community in a lurch. However, we knew that something needed to happen to make education a priority to our legislators. Without your support we would not have been able to persuade our legislators to make the changes they have thus far. With your continued support we are hopeful for more positive changes to occur as we continue to apply pressure on our representatives.

The board and administration has supported us as a teacher group and has let us take the lead on how we have addressed the walkout. We appreciate their support as well in making this happen and their continued support as we continue to advocate for our students. We know that we are all in this together, fighting for the education our students deserve.

Thank you!

Verdigris Teachers & Staff