

Aspen Families,

With the popularity of the Dual Language Immersion program, Alpine School District has been working to refine a K-12 Immersion program supporting different languages. Because program expansion for Chinese is not possible at this point, Alpine School District must look at some reorganization to create K-12 pathways for each of the languages taught. This reorganization requires each site to be evaluated and sites to be aligned so that students can receive target language instruction in the junior high and the high school.

As sites were examined, it was noted that Aspen Elementary has consistently operated at about 70% of the program's target number. Because of this low number and the need for sites in other areas of the district, The Dual Language Program at Aspen Elementary will be phased out over the next 6 years.

Alpine School District and Aspen Elementary are determined to minimize the negative effects on our students by maintaining the Aspen program until our 1st grade students naturally exit the elementary level. To maintain our program, we will not take a new cohort of first grade students for the 2017-2018 school year, but instead, will move our 1st grade team to the 4th grade position. The following year, we will phase out the 2nd grade program and start a 5th grade program, and so on until all Aspen students have been served and moved on to the junior high.

We regret the inconvenience that this will create for some of our families, but believe that this will ultimately provide a stronger, more sustainable Dual Language Immersion program for our students and all students in the Alpine School District.

On a more positive note, we are excited to announce another change for the coming year.

Over the last decade, we in the Alpine School District have wrestled with aligning our teaching with the needs of a new generation of learners. One of the most innovated philosophies has been the incorporation of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, or STEM. STEM education was seen as a positive step forward in giving students highly engaging and challenging learning experiences, but many experts believed that the eloquence of art as a design component was missing from the new philosophy. Art was soon added to STEM to create STEAM or Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics. Aspen Elementary is excited to begin a journey toward STEAM education in the upper grades for the 2017-2018 school year. This summer 4th, 5th, and 6th grade teams will spend 4 days with a cohort of teachers from 12 schools and support from BYU Engineering to create engaging lessons that integrate curriculum and engage students in real world skills.

I frequently brag about the great kids, families, and dedicated teachers at Aspen. As a matter of fact, I say that Aspen Elementary is one of the "Hidden Treasures" in the district. Aspen Elementary is a not too big and not too small to provide some great programs. Sure, we have things we would like to change and improve on, and will

continue to work to provide kids with the best possible education. I have set two areas of focus for the next three years. The first focus will be reading in the primary grades. Aspen has dropped in Language Arts over the past few years. While the expectation is higher now than just 5 years ago, I believe we can do better. Reading proficiency is a Kindergarten through 3rd grade focus of improvement. Superintendent Jarman has set a ASD goal of 93% of students reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade and we too will strive for that goal. In the 4th through 6th Grades, we will focus on creating meaningful learning experiences with real world applications. Aspen will focus on STEAM education in the upper grades. This will require an even higher level of collaboration from our art, technology, and classroom teachers, but will ultimately make learning more authentic and engaging.

It is my pleasure to work with the Aspen community and the Aspen Elementary staff as we strive to make Aspen Elementary a great community school. I hope that you will feel free to ask us question, volunteer in your school, and provide us with your constructive feedback as we move to align our energy with the needs of children.

Tommy D. Freeman

Principal, Aspen Elementary