

## Welcome Back

A new school year lies before us. In many ways, we may expect it to be much like any other. For that reason, it is important to consider expectations. If we expect the same, we most likely will get our wish. On the other hand, if we consider one of the many past years we might be somewhat surprised. I checked out a year on the internet: 1809.

A look at the headlines for that year would have found many columns of space given over to the exploits of Napoleon and his many conquests. As one might expect the year, the year is part of the Napoleonic Era, yet in the background other events were taking place of far greater importance. For one thing, a great many babies were born, most of whom we have not heard of. That does not detract from their importance to the proud parents. Some of them we have heard of because they grew up to be as great and significant as Napoleon.

While everyone's attention was focused on the headlines, little notice was given to the infant son of Mr. & Mrs. Poe, named Edgar Allen. During the same year in England William Gladstone and Fredrick Chopin were born. In the United States, a country not yet thirty-five years old, we find other notable births. Oliver Wendall was born into the home of Mr. & Mrs. Holmes who were living in Massachusetts. In Kentucky, two children were born within miles of each other to poor families. The Davis family took their son Jefferson and moved to the south where they flourished, raising cotton with slave labor. The neighboring Lincoln family took their son Abraham and moved north. Meanwhile, back in England, Rev. & Mrs. Darwin welcomed into the world their son Charles on the same day that Abraham Lincoln was born. All of these children grew up to make a place in the history of literature, politics, music, science, and law.

Why make note of this trivia in a welcome-back article? I want to make a point that the future is being shaped by the present and for that reason, every year has purpose. Little children grow up year by year, not only to become adults but to take their places in the history of literature, politics, music, science, and law. Their education falls to homes, churches, schools, communities but most importantly to parents.

I am grateful that all of you are part of the community in which the Fairview Area Schools resides. I am grateful that all of you will be contributing to the fabric of the future and I am sure that this year will be as significant as the year 1809. Finally, I am grateful that I have been entrusted with the leadership of this school as your superintendent. Welcome back!

Respectfully,  
Bruce Nelson, Fairview Superintendent

## Words of Introduction

As the new superintendent, a few words of introduction are in order. The problem lies in where to begin. A factual recounting of events and achievements seems so dry while an outline of my philosophy of education seems to be too much. Perhaps the solution lies in a combination of the two.

I was born in Paterson, New Jersey to parents of Dutch descent. My mother's name was Nell, so I am truly Nelson. My father emigrated in 1929, and had his name changed at Immigration from Ypma to Nelson.

I attended Christian schools as a child and later taught in the systems that I had attended. As a graduate of Trinity Christian College in 1973, I began my education career in the Eastern Christian High School where I taught social studies. A year later, I married a girl that I had met at college. During that time, I earned an MA in political science. I earned an MA in educational leadership after taking a position as principal of the Sussex Christian School. Kathy and I became parents three times during these years. We have two sons and a daughter. Their names are Matthew, Melissa, and Jeremy.

My family and I served schools in Iowa and Ohio before moving to Michigan in 1990, when I accepted the superintendent/principal position at the Nottowa Community Schools. Nottowa is a K-8<sup>th</sup> grade district in St. Joseph County. Before coming to Fairview Area Schools, I served as principal of a K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade building that was part of the Constantine Public Schools.

At this time, my wife is still living in Constantine until we are able to sell our home. Jeremy is attending Dordt College in northwest Iowa as a sophomore but Melissa and Matt are living on their own in Battle Creek and Grand Rapids.

Education has been the focus of my life's work. It is a task that is never complete, always in a state of change, and always a challenge. Education is a shared task that is done in partnership with parents and their children, schools and their communities, staff members and their students. To me, the work of education is a calling, not a job or a vocation. If I am successful as the Fairview Superintendent, it will be because the community, students, and staff have worked together to provide quality programs and a caring environment. I believe that all of us make a contribution to the processes that we call education. Bus drivers and secretaries are often the first line of contact children and adults have with the school. The appearance of our building and grounds is the result of hard work by the custodial staff. Teaching is not done in a vacuum but is the culmination of years of training and hours of work planning and implementing a curriculum. Behind the scenes, one finds a host of other people from school board members to community volunteers. A school is made up of the sum of its parts. Our school would not be complete without athletics, music, libraries, computers, restrooms and corridors. These are places and things that take on meaning through the work of the people who use them.

In short, I am joining an organization that has a life and history of its own. I need to get to know who you are as much as you need to get to know me.