Dear Parents,

January 2018

I hope that you and your family had a wonderful Christmas break and a happy New Year. The first semester at Shepard went extremely fast. I want to take a few minutes and recap the semester and let you know about what will be occurring second semester.

During the first semester, our teachers began implementing Everyday Math. This is the math series that the district piloted last year and purchased to begin using this year. The teachers and students both agree that the materials and methodology is better meeting the needs of the students. We are confident that with continued use, fidelity, and professional development, our students’ math skills will continue to improve.

Our teachers have also been using a variety of assessments in reading to determine the areas in reading in which our students are successful and need help. We have been using Aims Web to assess oral reading fluency, letter identification, and letter sound. If the child is struggling in phonics we are using a phonics screener that identifies the area of phonics that needs to be improved. With the knowledge of the struggling areas we are able to determine what intervention needs to be put in place. We will begin a building wide RTi (response to invention) time in late January through the rest of the school year. RTi will be 4 days a week (Tuesday - Friday) from 8:30 – 9:00. Students will be in small groups and receive intensive training in the areas that have been identified as a struggle in reading and for the students who are not struggling, we will challenge them with greater comprehension skills and math. If you have questions about your child’s intervention, please feel free to contact their teacher. Additional information will be provided for you at conferences in February.

Beginning this past October, our teachers began using a system to improve the social and emotional skills of our students. It is call Second Steps. Shepard has partnered with MU for this intervention. All students K-5 are involved in Second Steps the first day of the week for thirty minutes. For our students who need more help in learning how to regulate their social and emotional state, we place these students in small groups and use Cool School.

As many of you are aware, last year Shepard began the process of PBIS (Positive Behavior Invention Support). We have three expectations at Shepard: Be Peaceful, Be Respectful, and Be Responsible. Our students go through systematic trainings in the areas of the school in how to meet the expectations. Last year we saw a dramatic decrease in the number of major referrals. We are continuing to see improved behavior and decreases in students receiving major referrals.

It is imperative that our students be at school on time. The doors open at 8:00 and school begins at 8:20. Shepard ends the day at 3:20.

We want to say thank you to all our parents for supporting Shepard. We appreciate all of the help from the volunteers, PTO, and community members. With a partnership between home and school, your child has the best opportunity to be a success in school but more importantly in life.

John Elliston and Dave Stallo