

The first semester has come to a close, and the new calendar year will follow shortly thereafter. The short window between Thanksgiving and the Holiday Break has especially made the final semester push go extremely fast.

The Holiday Season reminds us to be thankful for many people around us. It is also a time to remember those in need. With any community and school year, tragedy and hardship unfortunately happens. In schools, there are always behind the scenes activities that not everyone is aware of that attempt to support our students and families during times of need. In December of 2015, a group that included myself, teachers, staff, and board members established the "Give Back Fund." This fund was created in cooperation with the Central City Education Association to provide support to our families and students when crisis occurred. We initially raised \$1,900 through staff donations. Since 2015, the "Give Back Fund" has provided support to twenty-one families and nineteen students and totaled nearly \$10,000 in support. Support has come through gas cards, gift cards, utility bills, food, maintenance costs, and other assistance. This assistance has helped families deal with serious medical conditions, house fires, financial hardship, and other difficult situations. To continue to raise funds for this program, teachers and staff support "Jeans Days" on in-service days, run concessions, and make donations. Revenue has also come from community donations, class reunions, and the leadership class has donated nearly \$1,100 through their community outreach. The "Give Back Fund" is sometimes an unnoticed, but very valuable program that has been created to support students and the community.

The first semester can be defined as "under construction." Phase I came to a close, and we are excited that we can now offer much more to students and this community. We have been able to add an additional all-day pre-school section that will also be providing after-school care in the very near future through collaboration with our community and the Merrick County Child Development Center. Phase I construction also included a major renovation of our Special Education Life Skills program in which students are now served locally over being contracted out of the District. Finally, our elementary entrance and office area has become a secure entrance.

Phase II construction is moving, and crews are working towards the August 19th, 2020 completion date. Construction never moves as fast as you would like it, nor does construction come without headaches, but Phase II will bring some very exciting educational outcomes for our students. Phase II includes completely revamping our industrial technology facility and expanding to update our welding, automotive, construction, woodworking, and manufacturing programs. In addition, this new facility will allow for future growth with modern equipment and technology. Another area of tremendous enhancement to our programs, through construction, is in the areas of science, health science, and agriculture science. A fully renovated and expanded science program will allow for cross-program collaboration while putting students in front of some of the latest technology. Our

science and agriculture programs will benefit from new equipment that is a rarity in Nebraska schools.

We hope that everyone enjoys this Holiday Season and looks forward to the upcoming New year! Hopefully, during this time, everyone has the opportunity to enjoy family and friends and reflect on a wonderful year. As the second semester draws near, we look forward to continuing to work extremely hard to provide all students with the very best possible education. Go Bison!!!