

Looking at the 17-18 School Year

The first school bells of the 2017-2018 school year are scheduled to ring next week. School personnel are arriving back to work this week to put the final touches on their preparation for the new school year. I would like to applaud our district for continuously looking for ways to improve, motivate, and provide the very best education and opportunities for our students. As a district and community, we must demand excellence and be a progressive, forward-thinking district and community that strives to provide our students with an education that is second to none.

As the new school year begins, we would like to share some of the progress our district is making. Official NeSA test results will be released by the Nebraska Department of Education to the public in the fall, but our preliminary test data shows that the district has scored at record levels in nearly every sub-category in reading, math, and science. The NeSA exam will be taking on a new look in 2017-2018, as the Department of Education has agreed to a new contract with a different vendor. For the second consecutive year, all juniors will be required by the Nebraska Department of Education to take the ACT exam. Similar to the Spring NeSA scores, we are awaiting the official release of ACT scores, but we are very pleased with our preliminary scores and how we compare to other districts.

As this new school year begins, the district has made another strong investment in classroom technology. Every elementary classroom has been outfitted with the latest Promethean Panel. Last year, additional iPad carts were purchased to make a cart available to every elementary grade level. Additional laptop carts have been purchased for the high school and middle school to continue to meet student-use demands and evaluate moving towards a one to one device initiative.

Two years ago, the district adopted a curriculum rotation in which all curriculum areas are evaluated, along with the teaching resources throughout a five-year cycle. Language Arts and Math have completed their cycle, and Vocational and Science will be completing their cycle in upcoming years. Throughout this cycle, the district will be implementing the My Math and Big Ideas math series in the elementary, middle, and high school. The district will no longer be working with the Saxon Math series. The curriculum rotation has been a great way for teachers and administrators to work together to evaluate curriculum, resources, and standards to meet the needs of our students.

The Board of Education meets annually in the summer in a retreat setting to work with the administration to establish goals and priorities for the district. A Career Pathways initiative was established two years ago, and many foundational steps were established. The district will continue the steps toward a full Career Pathway initiative by continuing to define the academic focus, establishing additional dual credit opportunities, evaluating facilities, and establishing relationships with local and regional businesses. The district also received the ReVISION grant to help work with local entities to establish economic development through the Career Pathways.

Providing leadership opportunities for students and staff will continue to be a priority for the district in this new school year. Our Leadership class began establishing several great links with the community during the previous year, and we will be looking to expand those opportunities in the future. The district would also like to enhance communication amongst staff, students, parents, community, and stakeholders. In a district of our size, there are always a considerable amount of activities and events taking place, and communication amongst those involved can always improve.

In addition to priority goals, there are a number of items that the district is looking at in the future. Last year, we began utilizing locally produced items from the garden, when possible. The district is looking at expanding this type of practice by utilizing locally raised beef to support the local economy while also increasing the amount of beef offered at the lunch table per week. We are hoping this will be something that we can move towards during the second semester. The district is also looking into an after-school program for possibly the 18-19 school year to continue to meet the needs of our community.

There are a lot of great things going on at Central City Public Schools and the Community of Central City. The district is developing a very positive culture, and there is great excitement for the future and what this district and community can provide to students. Our staff has the opportunity to shape, motivate, and inspire young people every day, and there is nothing more rewarding than that. I truly believe we are doing the right thing here in Central City. When you believe in what you are doing, great things happen. Go Bison!!!