

Hello again and greetings from USD 467!

In a joint project with the City of Leoti and the Sheriff's Office, I want to bring your attention to a change that will be coming soon. The alley between Wyoming and Genesee Streets in the block between Broadway/K-96 and J Street will become a one-way going from east to west. It will no longer allow two-way travel. The purpose of the change is to eliminate the traffic down the alley after school. So please pay attention to the signs, especially at the school side of the alley that will have a Do Not Enter sign; if you chose to not obey the signs and drive east down the alley, you could be liable for a \$75.00 fine plus court costs.

Earlier this month several teachers and the administration met as the District Leadership Team and started the process of updating our annual KESA plan. KESA stands for Kansas Education Systems Accreditation. We will have a resource person from the service center in Sublette work with the staff three more times. This person will help develop the plan we began last school year and set goals and the steps to attain them. Each year the district (system) has a team of three trained people come to the district to review the plan and evidence we have to show that we are making gains in reaching our goals. When the visiting team determines that we are successful, they will recommend to accredit the system.

The leadership team has chosen two goals: Relationships-Students, Planning for a safe learning environment; and, Responsive Culture-Leadership, Developing a strategic plan.

Three areas made the leadership team decide the first goal was important. Through discussions, the biggest concerns come from the fact that students overall appear to be less engaged in their learning. The District Leadership Team sees the need for staff to change what and how they teach to better connect with students. They also see the need to build better relationships with their students.

The second goal of the committee is to specifically develop a strategic plan forward and to communicate the goal to all constituents (staff, parents, board, and students). Currently the board has identified goal areas and the KESA process has identified goal areas. The team hopes to merge goals and to have a coordinated set of activities for all staff to support. I will periodically note the progress the leadership team makes on the plan as we work toward the accreditation visit in March.

The KESA plan has a rubric designed to help systems determine their level of accomplishment by using descriptors at each of the three levels: Implementing, Transitioning, and Modeling.

Descriptors for the Relationships goal at the Implementing level are: Adopts and implements Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards.

The Transitioning level are: Adopts and implements Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards; Shows evidence of Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards in long-range planning goals.

And the Modeling descriptors are: Adopts and implements Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards; Shows evidence of Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Model Standards in long-range planning goals; Collects and evaluates data on impact across district.

As you see, each level has more difficult requirements to reach to show success. The USD 467 district leadership team determined that our system is at the Implementing level. We will begin working on building the standards into a long-range goal and determine how to evaluate our success in achieving that goal. Even though we don't need to move from Implementing directly to the Modeling stage, if we have the evaluation method in place, it will be easier to complete the process.

This week I will begin with goal number one, Relationships-Students, Planning for a safe learning environment. The goal statement is "USD 467 will provide a safe learning environment for all students." The purpose of the Social, Emotional, and Character Development Standards is to provide schools a framework for integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) with character development so that students will learn, practice and model essential personal life habits that contribute to academic, vocational, and personal success. It is about learning to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to problem solve effectively, to value excellence, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens and to be empathic and ethical individuals. So, you see how this goal ties directly with the board goal of Civic Engagement. For several years, both WCES and WCJSHS incorporated the Character Counts program and now the elementary uses the character development as the basis for the teachers to select the classroom student of the month.

The leadership committee has expanded this goal to include a safe learning environment for all students. As you may already know from your students, the district is now required to have a minimum of 16 emergency preparedness drills each year; there must be 4 fire drills, 3 tornado drills and 9 crisis drills. Each building will determine what each crisis drill will prepare for-gas leak in building, strange vehicle around school while children are on the playground, intruder, etc. Having a viable crisis plan is the first targeted work area. Actions steps to achieve that plan include: evaluate current plans; research other district plans; develop our plan; communicate the plan and train students and staff; implement and document crisis drills; review and revise the plans as necessary; and, communicate to the Board of Education and patrons on the process and preparedness of the students and staff to implement the crisis plan.

Last school year the board approved a Safe Routes to School plan which routes in town that have been determined safer for those students who bike and walk to school. Also, the first Wednesday of each month, except for January which will be the second Wednesday, weather permitting, is an AIM sponsored Bike to School Day that has adult supervision start to finish

Next week I will review the first target and discuss the second targeted area-a secure and clean learning environment.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. If you have specific questions or want more information about what's happening in the buildings or district, don't hesitate to contact Lori Maxwell, WCES Principal, at 375-2314, Delbert Schmidt, WCJSHS Principal, at 375-2213, or me at 375-4677. Thanks!

Keith Higgins