Hello again and greetings from USD 467!

Last week the district leadership team met to continue their work on the KESA goals. This week I will review goal number one, Crisis Plan, and target number two, Social, Emotional, and Character Development. The goal statement is "USD 467 will provide a safe learning environment for all students."

The first work targeted is Crisis Plan. 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. Remember, the state is requiring each school building to have 16 emergency preparedness drills each year.

A second target is to develop and implement the Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development Standards through education activities. The purpose: Social, Emotional, and Character Development (SECD) Standards provide a framework to schools 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, career, and personal success.

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 definition: SECD standards encompass practicing good citizenship as respectful, responsible, empathetic and ethical individuals, through making healthy decisions, practicing personal safety, understanding risk prevention, promoting a positive school culture, problem solving effectively, and valuing excellence.

The Core Beliefs: SECD skills are teachable and measurable; SECD skills are essential for academic achievement; SECD skills are developed within a continuous growth process throughout life; SECD skills are acquired by students through intentional, integrated efforts of the entire school, family and community; and, SECD skills are best learned in a respectful, safe and civil school environment where adults are caring role models.

The first of these standards I will discuss is Character Development. The definition of Character Development is developing skills to help students identify, define and live in accordance with core principles that aid in effective problem solving and responsible decision-making. The rationale for teaching these skills is that our schools have the job of preparing our children for American citizenship and participation in an interdependent world.

Success in school and life is built upon the ability to make responsible decisions, solve problems effectively, and to identify and demonstrate core principles.

First, the Core Principals: recognize, select, and ascribe to a set of core ethical and performance principles as a foundation of good character and be able to define character comprehensively to include thinking, feeling and doing; develop, implement, promote and model core ethical and performance principles; and, create a caring community. To attain these principals the students must be taught responsible decision making and problem solving skills: develop, implement and model responsible decision making skills and develop, implement, and model effective problem solving skills.

More on these standards next week.

The third target is student engagement or trying to get more student involvement in extra-curricular activities, such as athletics, music, Scholar's Bowl, Forensics, etc. Statistics suggest the more students are involved in activities the more they will be engaged in classroom learning. More on this target in the future also.

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