



The Good News Bulletin



Sharing the good news of South Dakota's schools

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



DR. WADE POGANY
ASBSD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When you look at the success of South Dakota schools you realize how much energy students, teachers administrators, staff and school board members put into making our public education system one of the best in the country.

Unfortunately, too often we take for granted the small success stories that happen each and every day in our communities.

The Good News Bulletin is our way of highlighting a few of those stories that characterize the achievement of our schools and a way of life in South Dakota. The Good News Bulletin is intended to give you a snap shot of just some of the many successes happening in South Dakota schools.

Educators across the state were asked to identify a good news story about their districts and share them with ASBSD.

The following stories are a culmination of these efforts from the fall of 2013 captured in the December publication titled *The Good News Bulletin*.

The Good News Bulletin was printed and distributed statewide to school districts, the public, and legislators to highlight stories produced by our public school districts.



25 GREAT REASONS

• DISTRICT BUILDS LIST OF BEST QUALITIES

There are 25 reasons that make the Aberdeen School District great.

The district developed the list as a way to promote the successes and strengths of its schools and continues to build on it each year.

“We found people who were considering moving to Aberdeen wanting to know more about our school systems,” Aberdeen Superintendent Gary Harms said. “We decided to list some of our accomplishments in academics, fine arts and athletics.”

The list of 25 reasons includes:

1. Aberdeen School District has a proud history, yet continues to be known throughout South Dakota and beyond for a student-centered philosophy, innovative programs, and the exemplary education it provides.
2. Seven District schools have met the Department of Education's criteria for being named NCLB Distinguished Schools.
3. ASD attracts outstanding teachers from all over the United States.
4. ASD teachers, coaches, and administrators have consistently received recognition at the State, Regional, and National levels.
5. ASD students and employees are actively involved throughout Aberdeen in volunteering and community service events.
6. Central High School seniors have earned over \$22 million in scholarships since 2001.
7. ASD Students are competitive academically.
8. Aberdeen School District students are scoring exceptionally well on NCLB tests.
9. ASD utilizes Foster Grandparents throughout the District to help promote community relations and cross-generational understanding and in 2008 created an English as a Second Language program to meet the needs of our growing diverse population.
10. Aberdeen Public Schools Foundation has forged partnerships among schools, community, and alumni.
11. As a result of prudent fiscal management, ASD has completed the past ten of the last 11 years “in the black.”
12. 153 students are enrolled in 13 Advanced Placement courses in 2013-14.
13. CHS's athletic teams consistently finish in the top three of the ESD Conference.



14. CHS's debate team consistently finishes at or near the top in upper Midwest competitions and ranks nationally in the top one percent.



15. ASD's outstanding music program offers many talented students the opportunity to learn and be recognized.
16. CHS's drama department is consistently one of the best in South Dakota.
17. The vision of the ASD School Board to update facilities has enabled our District to provide outstanding learning environments.
18. Hub Area Technical School provides vocational courses not available to most South Dakota high schools.
19. The third through fifth grades enjoy learning from members of the business and industry community through Junior Achievement.
20. ASD's Special Education Department has been an innovative leader in South Dakota.
21. School Safety and Drug/Alcohol Prevention are taken very seriously.
22. ASD started All-Day, Every-Day kindergarten at Lincoln Elementary in 2003. All elementary schools have had ADED kindergarten since 2007.
23. ASD's partnerships with Northern State University and Presentation College benefit our students.
24. ASD enjoys success due to dedicated parents' involvement in our schools.
25. “Students and their parents are viewed as customers--developing positive relationships with our patrons is a priority. John Wooden said it best: ‘Being a role model is the most powerful form of educating--youngsters need good role models more than they need critics.’ The Aberdeen School District takes this philosophy to heart when interacting with the incredible students we are privileged to serve.” – C.C. Lee Elementary School Principal Eric Kline.

Harms said the list sheds good light on facts those outside the district may be unaware of and the levels the district is motivated to reach.

“We wanted to share some facts that we might take for granted, but others may not know,” Harms said. “Collectively, (the reasons) represent the excellence for which we are striving.”

PROVEN EFFECTIVE

• ABO LIBRARY TABBED AS EFFECTIVE AWARD RECIPIENT

All the hard work of the Agar-Blunt-Onida School District's library staff proved to be effective.

The ABO school library was recently recognized as an Effective Award Recipient as part of the 21st Century School Library program. This is the first year for the recognition program for school libraries.

"I think that this award proves to our community that the library is a tool that is helping our students meet the needs in this ever changing world of technology," ABO Library Media Specialist Jackie Aspelin said.

Introduced to the award at the South Dakota Library Conference, Aspelin completed the online self-assessment tool and submitted examples which included a video, photo, link, website and lesson plan among other tools.

The program – established by the South Dakota State Library – identifies school li-

braries as "Effective", "Enhanced" or "Exemplary" based on learning environment, programming and professionalism.

"I think that this award proves to our community that the library is a tool that is helping our students meet the needs in this ever changing world of technology."

Jackie Aspelin
ABO Library Media Specialist

"Our library made the effective award because we have many of the needed traits," Aspelin said. "We provide technology and materials needed for students to engage in our global and digital world."

Aspelin, who teaches classes on information literacy, credited the district for its commitment to the library.

"Our school has provided this library with the space and technology needed to equip students for the 21st century," Aspelin said.

Happy with the district's status, Aspelin said they will take steps to progress to new levels.

"I am very proud of the staff and students that made this award possible for us," Aspelin said. "We are now striving to meet the Exemplary level of the award."



ABO students spend time reading and studying in the district's library. The district's library was named an Effective Award Recipient. (Photos courtesy of ABO School District)

ALECESTER-HUDSON SCHOOL DISTRICT

STUDENTS SUCCEED IN ALL AREAS

• ACADEMIC, ATHLETIC AND ARTS ACHIEVEMENT FOR A-H STUDENTS

The fall semester in the Alcester-Hudson School District has been filled with many positives for the students at Alcester-Hudson School District.

“The community has long held to high expectations from our students,” Alcester-Hudson Junior High and High School Principal LeeAnn Haisch said. “That, in turn, has helped us as a district in challenging ourselves and our students.”

athletics and fine arts programs, as their football team made the second round of the class 9A playoffs, the volleyball squad placed 4th at the state class B tournament and the oral interp readers theater troupe also made it to state.

All of the athletic teams and fine arts squads also received the Academic Achievement Team Award from the South Dakota High School Activity Association. The award



(Clockwise from top left) Members of the A-H HS volleyball team placed 4th in the Class B state tourney, the oral interp readers theater troupe qualified for state and the football team reached the the Class 9A playoffs. (Photos courtesy of Alcester-Hudson School District)

Alcester-Hudson students are truly challenging themselves in preparation for their post high school education.

This year has seen a record number of students (25) taking AP and Dual Credit courses, including Dual Credit American History, Math and College English and AP English; and Complete Computer Concepts, in the district.

The district is also piloting both the principal effectiveness and teacher effectiveness models and they are confident their work with SLO's and the Danielson Framework for Teaching will further add to the success rate of their students.

Alcester-Hudson has also had much to be proud in the



recognizes academic excellence of athletic teams and fine arts groups that carry a combined grade point average of 3.0 or higher.

Many of their efforts are paying off by way of the South Dakota Board of Regents' High School to College Transition report. The 2012 college freshmen from Alcester-Hudson, as a group, had a yearly GPA of 3.14. The district's Opportunity Scholarship recipi-

ents had a yearly GPA of 3.57.

“We have teachers who care about us and want us succeed in whatever life throws at us,” A-H Senior student Shenia Doering attributed student success to. “They challenge us.”

PURPLE PRIDE PRODUCED THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

• SCHOOL DISTRICT AND LOCAL BUSINESS WORK TOGETHER

The mission of the Belle Fourche Purple Pride is to promote the arts, academics, activities, and athletics that benefit the students of the Belle Fourche School District by raising funds through community partnerships.

In Belle Fourche, you can find a partnership that's producing a great deal of pride.

The Belle Fourche School District has partnered with Scott Peterson Motors and other Belle Fourche community businesses to form a service group known as "Purple Pride."

Through fund raising activities and community partnerships Purple Pride has made available to graduating seniors \$500 scholarships. On average the past two years 60 scholarships have been distributed.

"The high school seniors who are eligible for the Purple Pride Scholarship are very grateful," Belle Fourche Superintendent Steve Willard said.

Purple Pride sponsors coach buses for transporting students to high school sporting events and field trips.

The partnership also donated a new scoreboard for the high school gymnasium and is a major sponsor of Special Olympics activities.

Funding for K-12 classroom teachers is also provided through Purple Pride. Teachers have another funding avenue to purchase classroom equipment and activities

through the partnership.

Former School Board president and ASBSD president Bev Banks maintains the Purple Pride website – www.bellefourchepurplepride.com/ – to update community members on Purple Pride activities.

"The community businesses have been great," Willard said.



Susan and Scott Peterson of Scott Peterson Motors pose with a banner promoting the Purple Pride partnership. (Photo courtesy of Belle Fourche School District)

WATCHDOGS & WELLNESS

In October, the Beresford School District (BSD) was informed by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) that they were awarded a Carol M. White Physical Education Progress (PEP) grant.

The U.S. D.O.E. awarded 60 PEP grants for 2013-2014 totaling \$32 million. The Beresford School District was the only grant recipient in South Dakota. The three-year grant for BSD totals nearly \$800,000 in funding.

Grant funds will be utilized for the continued development, revision, and expansion of the Watchdogs and Wellness Initiative, which is a collaborative partnership between the BSD, Beresford Parks, Recreation and Community Education (PRCE), the City of Beresford, and Legends of Gold (LOG).

“We will work with our community partners to initiate, expand, or enhance our physical education and nutrition education programs, including after-school programs, for students in grades K-12,” Beresford Superintendent Brian Field said.

The overall Watchdogs and Wellness Initiative has six primary goals that have continued throughout the six years and will continue into the future.

In 2008, the BSD completed a comprehensive review of its Physical Education and Nutrition Education programming and developed a 5-year long range plan to improve the health, wellness, and opportunities for physical activity/fitness for our youth.

This plan culminated in the development of the Watchdogs and Wellness Initiative and specifically the “Watchdogs and Wellness: A Healthy Tomorrow” program. It was clear that in order to implement the program external funding was absolutely necessary.

Later that year the program received a significant boost when the BSD secured its first federal PEP Grant in the amount of \$250,000. The program was further enhanced in 2009 with a No Child Left Inside Grant and an ING Unsung Heroes Grant.

This funding allowed for the implementation of the program and started the process of updating the student fitness center in the middle/high school building, beginning integration of the award-winning and research-based SPARK P.E. curriculum and introduc-

Watchdogs and Wellness Goals

1. To offer a sequential, content standards-based and research-based cohesive Physical Education and Nutrition Education K-12 Curriculum to 100% of students.
2. To increase student achievement of South Dakota Health and Physical Education Content Standards.
3. To increase staff capacity to enhance the health and wellness of youth through the integration of physical activity in the classroom, gym, and before-after school programming.
4. To implement ongoing evaluation and assessment system of Health and Physical Education programs and projects.
5. To increase youth levels of physical fitness.
6. To develop a community-wide shared mission for life-long health/physical activity.



A group of Beresford students train in the district's fitness center. (Photo courtesy of Beresford School District)

ing physical education technologies including heart rate monitors, pedometers, and POLAR fitness assessment systems.

More important than all the equipment and curriculum was starting the process of providing significant amounts of professional development to the health and physical education teachers on how to integrate the curriculum, equipment, and technologies.

In 2011, a review of the Watchdogs and Wellness Initiative took place again. Based on this review, it was determined to expand the initiative to include after-school and summer programming.

The integration of these areas became known as the Watchdogs and Wellness: Watchdogs of the Future program. This program currently includes youth fitness programming at LOG, expansion of youth physical activity programming through PRCE, an after-school activity program, and summer strength and conditioning.

Additionally, the SPARK PE has been expanded to include the SPARK After-School curriculum. Lastly, the professional development opportunities have continued for both BSD teachers and PRCE staff.

In 2013, the school district completed reevaluated the Watchdogs and Wellness Initiative. The review found that it was extremely important to continue the on-going professional development of BSD, LOG, and PRCE staff. It also noted it was time to update the cardio equipment in the student fitness center as warranties had run out and continue to expand physical activity and fitness programming.

“The grant has allowed our District expand our Physical Education curriculum and program offerings and develop a state-of-the-art fitness center and weight room,” Field said.

This review led to the creation of the Watchdogs and Wellness: Building on Success program, which will be funded with the new PEP Grant funds.

The district and its partners are excited about Building on Success.

“The grant will allow our District to offer comprehensive Physical Education and Nutrition programs that work in conjunction with our District Wellness Policy leading to significant changes in teaching, learning, physical fitness levels, and lifelong attitudes of students,” Field said.

BUILDING OPPORTUNITY

• BRITTON-HECLA PARTNERS WITH BUSINESSES FOR BUILDING PROJECT

The Britton-Hecla School District and three local businesses joined together to build a building, but more importantly to build an opportunity for students.

Both Horton and RPM donated CNC and mill machines that will be used by the district, as well.

B-H Industrial Technology teacher Travis Sanstevan will be trained in the area and both busi-



The Britton-Hecla School District partnered with the businesses to construct a new industrial technology building and curriculum designed to train our students. (Photos courtesy of Britton-Hecla School District)

The district partnered with the businesses to construct a new industrial technology building and curriculum designed to train our students for potential employment at the local companies

“This is a great example of schools working together with community to provide opportunities for our students,” Britton-Hecla Superintendent Kevin Coles said. “We hope it will end with graduates who make a decision to stay, live and work in our local community of Britton.”

One half of the building was funded by the district and through a donation from Britton Lumber with the other half of the building was funded by Horton, Inc. and Rapid Precision Manufacturing.



nesses will be using the facility for employee training.

The district met with the interested businesses this spring and a partnership developed from there. Construction on the new building began in May and was completed by August of this year.

Coles said the partnership has met the needs of the district and the businesses in more ways than one.

“Horton and RPM have a need to train employees and also to create an interest in our youth to remain in the community and hopefully choose to work for Horton or RPM,” Coles said. “Most importantly, it will provide a great learning opportunity for our students.”

STUDENTS TAKE ON NEW CURRICULUM CHOICES

• CANTON H.S. STUDENTS GET MORE OPTIONS IN CLASSROOM

One of the functions of public education should be to broaden and deepen the interests of our students.

The primary benefits of providing classes that are centered on student's interests is that it allows students to explore and discover what they're good at, it provides educators with an opportunity to help guide students down a potential career path, and it increases the likelihood that a student will continue his/her education well after graduating from high school.

The Canton School District is committed to providing students with classes that are relevant, interesting and engaging. To this end, they have focused their efforts on adding classes to their curriculum that are both interesting and engaging to students.

"The expanded course offerings have provided more hands-on learning opportunities for our students," Canton 6-12 Principal Russ Townsend said. "(The courses) have also helped demonstrate the relevant ties between the work we are doing in school and the outside world."

Project Lead the Way

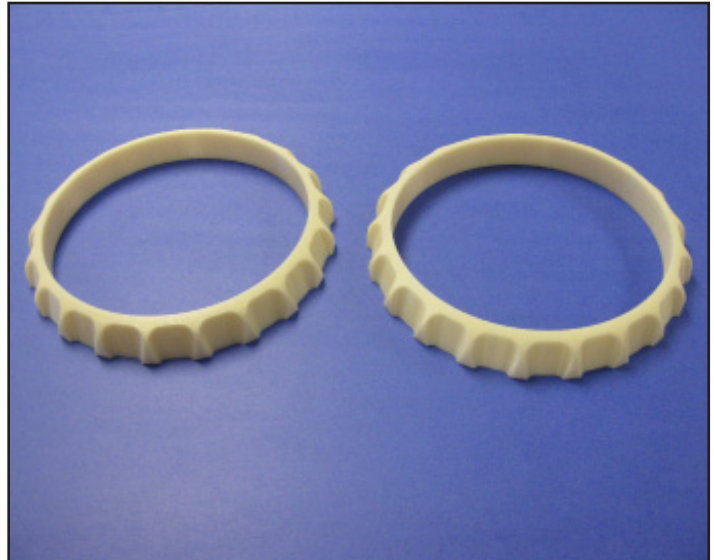
In 2008, the Canton School district became the first district in the state to implement the Project Lead The Way (PLTW) program.

PLTW is a hands-on, project-based curriculum that gives students real-world problem solving experiences in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The curriculum also exposes students to a variety of career opportunities in the area of STEM.

All of the PLTW classes are taught in a laboratory setting using state-of-the-art technology, equipment, and software. Instruction is generally one-third theory and two-thirds application, with involvement of mentors from industry and colleges.

Class activities focus on problem solving, requiring students to work in teams to generate solutions. PLTW classes being offered this year include Introduction to Engineering, Principles of Engineering, Civil Engineering and Computer Graphic Animation

The Canton School District is very excited to be collaborating with Terex Corporation, which is a global equipment manufacturer. Students have toured the Terex plant, heard about various engineering careers, and are currently working with the engineering department at Terex on the creation of various rapid prototypes.



Canton High School students designed and created a tapered end for a roller used on a powered cement screed as part of a PLTW course. (Photos courtesy of Canton School District)



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CANTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

CHOICES

>>> CONTINUED FROM [pg. 9]

Creating a rapid prototype requires students to use their three-dimensional computer program skills acquired in class to fabricate a scale model of a physical part or an assembly.

Once the part is designed, the students then create the product using a three-dimensional printer.

The most recent project required students to design and create a tapered end for a roller used on a powered cement screed.



Students completed a flight log book for hours spent practicing on a flight simulator for a Cub Cessna 172 and multi-engine aircrafts. (Photo courtesy of Canton School District)

Aviation Class

One of the newest and most exciting classes being offered at Canton High School is our Aviation Class.

This course provides students with an understanding of the science of flight. The class includes the history, regulations, and possible careers within the aviation industry.

Students cover the physics of flight, weight and balance, principles of navigation and flight control, ground and airport operations and services, and FAA regulations. The class participates in relevant field trips, activities and class projects.

Using flight simulators and radio-controlled model

airplanes, students have the opportunity to learn piloting skills.

They also receive experience completing a flight log book as they record their hours in the simulator behind the yoke of a Cub, Cessna 172 and multi-engine aircrafts.

Experimental Science

Modeled after the TV series Myth Busters, the experimental science course is a project-based learning science class that explores many different areas of science.

The course emphasizes the use of the scientific method to investigate and research scientific laws and myths. Students are expected to research, collect data, construct an end product and present it to the class.

A group of students from this class, who are currently exploring a potential solution to the pine beetle epidemic in the Black Hills, reached the State Semifinals in the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow contest.

Their project was selected from more than 2300 applications. To honor their achievement, Samsung is giving this class two Samsung Galaxy tablets to use in the classroom. If their project is selected as a State Winner, the school will be given a \$20,000 technology package to assist in creating a video about their proposal.

The Canton School District continues to expand the interests of students and provide cutting edge courses. Townsend said students have flocked to the new courses.

“Once in the courses (students) learn it is challenging, but very enjoyable to apply these concepts,” Townsend said.

“The expanded course offerings have provided more hands-on learning opportunities for our students. (The courses) have also helped demonstrate the relevant ties between the work we are doing in school and the outside world.”

*Russ Townsend
Canton 6-12 Principal*

NOT YOUR ORDINARY PTO

“This is Not Your Ordinary Parent/Teacher Organization”... this statement has been heard by many in the district and community since a new board of directors (parents) has taken over the leadership of the Chamberlain Parent/Teacher Organization.

PTO President Kim Gullickson, Vice President Melissa Chmela, Secretary Sundee Mayer, Treasurer Becky Larsen and group members truly live by their energized purpose statement demonstrated through their actions and support of the Chamberlain Elementary School.

The PTO was recently recognized for their dedication to making a difference at Chamberlain Elementary during the district’s 2013-School Board Recognition night by the Chamberlain Education Association with the “Community Partner Award.”



The Chamberlain PTO purchased playground equipment for the elementary. Photos courtesy of Chamberlain School District)

“This organization has financially supported programs and has provided classroom supplies and playground equipment that may not have been purchased by the district,” Chamberlain Superintendent Deb Johnson said.

The purposes of the PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) are to enhance and support the educational experience at Chamberlain Elementary, to develop a closer connection between school and home by encouraging parental involvement and to improve the environment at Chamberlain Elementary through volunteer and financial support.

The PTO meets monthly at the elementary school and publicizes their meetings through several different avenues including, the CES weekly “For Your Information” bulletin, Facebook, the school web-site and the local newspaper.

All parents are invited and encouraged to attend the meetings where planning takes place for events and activities the PTO is sponsoring. Speakers are invited and speak on topics that are important to elementary school parents.

Parents of elementary students comprise the PTO’s Board of Directors. They are active members in the community, and

have shown a deep commitment to the education of not only their children, but all children in the elementary school. They volunteer time each week to assist teachers with all kinds of “jobs,” they work with their spouses to coach youth sports teams, and are present at school activity events to offer support and assistance.

The board of directors has been instrumental in developing positive school and public relations through their involvement with the PTO.

The five PTO Directors faithfully attend their monthly meetings and even though some parents are not able to attend the meetings, through the inspiration of the directors the parents support fund-raisers, volunteer to work on projects, and support



classroom educational efforts.

One of their major projects has been the purchase of playground equipment at a cost of \$15,000. They partnered with local businesses, community members, and school suppliers to make this dream a reality.

With the combination of service work, fund-raisers, and educational experiences that have been accomplished this past school year, the purposes of the group have certainly being met.

Whenever the PTO is involved in a project, it is a positive experience for everyone!

The PTO has shown the school and community that participating in PTO activities/projects brings with it the satisfaction of positively influencing the life of a child.

The Chamberlain Elementary PTO advocates, supports, and promotes quality education. Whenever there is an opportunity to recognize accomplishments, they are sure to give the credit to educators, staff, and students.

The PTO members could be pursuing other interests with their time, but their commitment to helping students succeed is more than they can put aside.

ICU MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Chamberlain School District knew it had to do something!

For years, students were not turning in their assignments on time and various strategies and techniques had been tried to remedy the problem. The urgency to solve this problem was that it was holding back the achievement of our students.

The district asked: "How could we assure that students were meeting academic standards and gaining a strong knowledge base of the classes they were taking when they weren't even turning in their assignments?"

District administrators knew the key to having something work in their schools would mean that all staff members had to be on the "same page." They also knew it would take four to five years to engrain a process of successful change. Once they discovered a program that may possibly work, they knew they had to stick with it for the long haul.

Keeping those things in mind the district decided to check out the book, *The Power of ICU*, which that was being promoted by the South Dakota Association of Middle Level Education (SDAMLE.).

In the winter of 2011, the district superintendent attended a workshop in Belle Fourche, SD entitled, "The Power of ICU" and left believing this might be the "program" answer to the missing assignments issue.

The superintendent was sold, but in reality, that didn't matter. A plan needed to be put together to inspire staff members and let them decide if the program was something they wanted to implement. After all, the teaching staff was going to do the hard work of running the program every single day of the school year.

Administrators sat down and decided that a book study would be the first step in promoting staff buy-in. They introduced *The Power of ICU* to staff members at the April 2011 early dismissal in-service and offered SD Continuing Education hours for reading the book and participating in a blog over the summer: <http://the-poweroficu.blogspot.com/>.

District administrators knew that staff members would most



"The biggest benefit to our district is that the (ICU) program promotes a culture of learning. Staff, students, and parents know what is expected and we are going to hold students accountable for their work and their learning."

Chamberlain Superintendent Deb Johnson

likely come back in the fall enthused, but hesitant about how it might work. They decided to extend an invitation to their fall pre-service to one of the author of the *Power of ICU*, Danny Hill. He accepted and presented to our staff.

After hearing him, the staff members were sold! They were then encouraged to discuss ICU with their principal and determine how it might work in the middle school and high school. A plan was developed and the district was all in.

In his presentation and in the book, Danny Hill explained that once the process gets started, it will get "messy" and the entire staff has to work through this in order for it to get better. And messy it got!

The effectiveness of the program revolves around "the list" which teachers use to keep track of missing assignments and if which they all have access. The high school principal and data coordinator worked together to submit a proposal to Campus to add an ICU tab. This was helpful to both staff members and parents as Campus was now there "one stop shop" for student academic information.

The Campus ICU tab has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of "the list." A side benefit that came about because of "the list" was that it has caused teachers to review the quality of assignments they are expecting students to complete.

Chamberlain is now on their third year of implementing ICU and the numbers say it all in terms of missing assignments and one of our measures of student achievement-the Honor Roll.

Chamberlain's administrators know ICU has brought many changes and with those changes an additional workload for staff members.

However, they are continuing to see positive results that translate into increased achievement for our students. Staff members are expected to hold students to high academic standards, contact parents on a regular basis, and communicate with students to help continue the ICU efforts.

CHS-(Enrollment 281):

173 students had no missing assignments
47 students had two or less missing assignments
220 Students with 0-2 missing assignments – 83% of students

CMS (Enrollment 130):

51 students with no missing assignments
36 students with two or less missing assignments
87 students with 0-2 missing assignments – 64% of students

2013-14 honor roll for the 1st quarter:

7th Grade-45 students (76 students in 7th grade)
8th Grade-37 students (37 students in 8th grade)
9th grade-31 students (69 total freshmen)
10th Grade-45 students (75 total sophomores)
11th Grade-31 students (58 total juniors)
12th Grade-39 students (66 total seniors)
Total: 228 students

INSPIRING A COMMUNITY

• COLMAN-EGAN STUDENTS RALLY BEHIND STUDENT BATTLING CANCER

Think about all the things you did when you were eight years old. It's a safe bet that 99 percent of the people answering that question didn't have to remember the time they battled cancer.

That, however, is what Colman-Egan second grader Auston Ehrmantraut and his family are dealing with now.

Auston has three tumors in his head, one on his neck, one at the back of his head and the most troublesome one, is what they call the optic glioma, a tumor on his eye nerves. He has recently started Chemotherapy; something the doctors and his mother had hoped would never be the case.

"Auston is the kid that knows everybody," Kay Ehrmantraut, Auston's mother, said. "He loves to visit and make friends."

She recalls one time when they were sitting in the waiting room at the Mayo Clinic, and a young girl with no arms or legs came out in a wheelchair pushed by her father. Auston walked right up next to her and said, "I like your shirt."

While everyone else noticed her condition, Auston noticed her shirt.

Kay knows Auston doesn't fully grasp that there is something different about him. He thinks he is the same as everybody else, but that is where Auston would be incorrect, he is not the same as everybody else.

Auston is special, and because of that the Colman-Egan School District created a movement called "Team Auston" in an effort to try and repay him for all the amazing things he has done for them.



Auston flew in to the final home football game in a helicopter. (Photo courtesy of Colman-Egan School District)



Auston had the opportunity to deliver the game ball to the football team. (Photo courtesy of Colman-Egan School District)

The Colman-Egan football team had the second grader lead them on the field for their Homecoming game as well as deliver the game ball to the referees and each game they dedicate their huddle breakdowns to him by yelling, "Team Auston," as they take the field.

Auston also brought in the game ball for the team's season finale in style. Auston flew in on an Avera Hospital Helicopter. The helicopter ride was a once in a lifetime thing and Auston loved it. He got the chance to ride the helicopter to the football field where he stared in amazement at the entire city until they touched at midfield. The helicopter ride was organized by Colman-Egan Superintendent Darold Rounds and Jen Hiller, who works for Avera Hospital.

Auston sees people wearing their "Team Auston" T-shirts around school, which makes him feel like the king of the school. He constantly reminds Hailey Harms, this year's Homecoming Queen, how good of a job she is doing as Queen.

"Auston is the strongest little boy that I've ever met. By having a conversation with him, you would never know what he's going through," Harms said about the eight year old. "He is always happy and can bring a smile to anyone's face. He is unbelievably kind to everyone he meets no matter how his own day is going."

The Colman-Egan School District even made him a video of encouraging words that he watches daily.

"I feel so blessed to live in this community and I am forever in debt to the school for their role," Kay said.

CONNECTING A COMMUNITY

• SCHOOL DISTRICT FOCUSES ON FINDING RESOURCES FOR TEENS

The Dell Rapids Community has dealt with ramifications from suicide too often.

Last spring, the Dell Rapids School District decided to do more to combat this devastating issue, but knew they couldn't do it alone. The result of this lofty goal was the formation of a community coalition group named, Connections.

Connections is a group of community partners who seek to connect students and families to community resources.

"They understand this is not just a school issue," Dell Rapids Superintendent Summer Schultz said. "We must work together to protect our kids."

The group strives to foster healthy relationships between students and families, build resiliency in the students, and create a community where support and resources are readily available to anyone in need.

Ultimately, Dell Rapids Connections seeks to:

- Empower families to make healthy decisions.
- Enhance awareness of community resources.
- Provide education and support to families.
- Provide opportunities to improve and foster healthy relationships.

Members of the group include, area health professionals, administrators and counselors from the Dell Rapids Public School and Dell Rapids St. Mary's Catholic School, members of the Dell Rapids Ministerial Association, and youth group leaders.

The Dell Rapids Connections group held a kick-off event in September at the Dell Rapids High School. The event was an assembly for students in grades 7 through 12 from Dell Rapids public and Dell Rapids St Mary.

Tom Henderson with Restoration Generation was the guest speaker at the assembly. Also joining Henderson was

"We've seen too much loss and I hope we are able to make the right connections to avoid any more hurt of this kind."

*Summer Schultz
Dell Rapids Superintendent*



Members of the Connections team. (Photo courtesy of Dell Rapids School District)

hip-hop band F.O.G.

Henderson and the duo put on a free concert in the City Park that evening.

Other activities have included a homecoming kickball tournament and movie viewing which brought in over 120 students to a local restaurant for food and discussion surrounding teen issues.

"Youth in Dell Rapids are provided activities that are entertaining, but that also encourage healthy lifestyle choices," Schultz said. "This allows our youth to know there are many people in the community who care about them and who support our efforts to keep them safe and healthy."

The group continues to plan monthly activities for students, staff, and adults. Each month resources are posted and distributed to allow interested adults a chance to be connected with current information regarding issues that affect our children and young adults.

"Community members are always asking what they can do to help our students," Schultz said. "This group provides an opportunity for adults to do something good for kids outside of the normal school environment."

The generosity shown includes financial donations, facility usage, and assistance with the web site and logo.

Parents of youth who have lost their lives to suicide have also shown their support in unique and meaningful ways. It's the group's hope that together, the community will get at the root of suicide.

"We've seen too much loss and I hope we are able to make the right connections to avoid any more hurt of this kind," Schultz said.

A VARIETY OF GOOD NEWS

• THE BEST STORIES FROM THE DOUGLAS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Education is more than what is taught and learned in the classroom of a bricks and mortar building.

When a child's heart is touched, an impression for life is made; and when a child touches a veteran's heart, it is memorable.

That's what happened when Douglas School District elementary students from Badger Clark, Francis Case and Vandenberg schools made over 800 cards for our local veterans.

The City of Box Elder then distributed the cards to 540 local retired Air Force and other military veterans in the city. Some veterans were so grateful, they stopped in and told their stories with tears in their eyes, which made for an amazing experience for everyone involved.

The Douglas High School photography students practiced their photography skills while increasing pet adoption at our local Humane Society of the Black Hills. Adorable pet photographs were the heart of their community outreach project.

"The students could tell that the dogs' lives were made better by the human interaction. The cat photographers said the same thing," Douglas High School teacher Vickie Vogel said. "It was harder to photograph the dogs than they thought yet they were successful in getting great photos."

Students hope that one picture might save a life of the dogs and cats awaiting their forever home. In addition, students made nearly 100 hand-tied dog blankets to make the animals' shelter stay more comfortable and to provide a take-home gift for their new home.

The Douglas Middle School Library is being recognized and honored with the Enhanced Award by the South Dakota State Library for their efforts in support of 21st Century Learning.

Douglas Middle School Librarian Mavis Schipmann attributed the award to high circulation numbers, a connection to curriculum lessons, a thorough collection in the library and

great interaction with students among other factors.

Schipman was recognized at the annual System Change Conference in Chamberlain on October 16-18. The award status is valid for a two-year period.

Douglas School District has received two separate grants from the Department of Defense for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). The first was at the elementary level, and the second was at the middle school and high school levels.



Students from a third grade class at Francis Case Elementary

make the Veterans Day cards. (Photo courtesy of Douglas School District)

In its second year of implementation, the elementary grant primarily supports: the purchase of mathematics curriculum materials, math professional development, and iPads to support instruction. In its first year, the secondary grant focuses on: professional development in mathematics, English/Language Arts, reading and technology, and will support all students in grades 6-12 to have access to 1:1 technology.

Not only are there many exciting things happening at each grade level in all Douglas School District buildings; but the facilities are being upgraded.

The new LED lighting will save the district in energy costs and is funded through the Energy Efficiency School Loan Program from the South Dakota State Energy Office.

In addition, Douglas School District has received an emergency construction grant from the Impact Aid program. Those funds will be used to fund approximately a third of the cost of a new elementary building that will replace our current Vandenberg school that houses fourth and fifth graders. That project is in the beginning stages, but is scheduled for completion by the beginning of the 2015-16 school year.

Douglas Superintendent Loreen Scheer praised the staff for the many good news items coming from the district.

"Our dedicated and hardworking staff takes pride in doing what is best for kids," Scheer said.

STEM PROGRAM GROWS

• FREEMAN SCHOOL DISTRICT NOMINATED FOR GRANT

A nomination went a long way for the Freeman School District recently.

The district was named a \$10,000 winner of this year's America's Farmers Grow Rural Education program after a local farmer nominated the district for the program.

Freeman Technology Coordinator and Science Teacher Seth Loofbourrow said the district was nominated by farmers in the school district, which allowed the district to complete application information for the grant. He added that several other farmers in the community added their support.

Freeman School District faculty, local farmers and Monsanto representatives participated in a check presentation ceremony during halftime of a high school football game.

America's Farmers Grow Rural Education, sponsored by the Monsanto Fund, offers farmers the chance to nominate a local public school district. The program helps farmers support math and science education in local rural school districts. More than 1,150 nominated school districts submitted applications.

"We were able to purchase the hardware and software required to integrate robotics education

"The overall goal of incorporating this type of instruction and hands-on learning is to increase student interest in STEM and improve performance on related math and science assessments."

Seth Loofbourrow

Freeman Tech Coordinator and Science Teacher



Freeman Technology Coordinator and Science Teacher Seth Loofbourrow poses with the grant check received from the America's Farmers Grow Rural Education program. (Photo courtesy of Freeman School District)

into our curriculum in multiple classes," Loofbourrow said.

Loofbourrow said the grant allowed the district to purchase a variety of Lego Mindstorms equipment and programming, design, and training software to support the Lego Mindstorms equipment.

"(Students) will use the design challenge curriculum in class to help prepare for the robotics challenge at the Engineering Expo," Loofbourrow said. "Once we are more familiar with the hardware and associated programming, we will begin to offer three to five class period units to other classes and grades in the school."

The equipment and software is designed to help improve math and science test scores, said Loofbourrow.

"The overall goal of incorporating this type of instruction and hands-on learning is to increase student interest in STEM and improve performance on related math and science assessments," Loofbourrow said.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, IMPACT

• HANSON H.S. CLASS HAVING BIG INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS

Last year, Hanson Middle and High School Principal Ray Slaba, approached Middle School Math and Computers teacher Jessi Kampshoff with an idea that's made a big impact on the school district's student body.

They film live events such as ball games and concerts. The students create commercials with different events going on throughout the school.

"The students work hard and put in extra hours before and



Hanson H.S. students have had the opportunity to enroll in an A/V program this fall. (Photos courtesy of Hanson School District)

This fall Hanson High School added an A/V program to their CTE class offerings with the help of grant money from the state and donations from local businesses.

Its effect has been widespread among students.

"The program has had a huge impact on our student body," Kampshoff said. "We have kids that are active in other extracurricular that participate in the program along with those students who really were not active outside their normal studies."

"We have really seen some student's enthusiasm and hard work carry over into other subject areas. It is really eye opening to watch students take off and claim their work with such pride and enthusiasm."

This semester students are focusing on Audio Visual Productions and Intro to Arts A/V Tech. Next semester they will be switching over to broadcast technology and computer graphics.

The students have been creating public service announcements and commercials for our local television station, Beaver Nation Network. While creating commercials, the students are working on the film production steps, such as storyboards, lighting, green screen effect, editing with premier and iMovie all while working on their individual creativity.



after school to complete projects," Kampshoff said. "It is fun and rewarding as a teacher (to watch) the students shine and develop in this learning environment."

Hanson Superintendent Jim Bridge echoed Kampshoff's sentiment about the class.

"I've been at our district for 29-years and I don't know that I've seen something with this

much of an impact on students," Bridge said.

Kampshoff, who traveled to Hollywood in June for a week to work with movie producer, directors and film editors, said it's not just students who are reveling in the experience.

"The community is loving the access they have to all the local events taking place," Kampshoff said. "It is another avenue to send information out to the public."

The class not only has further connected the district to the community, but also students to the school.

"The opportunity our students are receiving is phenomenal," Kampshoff said. "I have students who came to school just to go through the motions, who are now actively involved in their studies because they are working with something that interests them and it really does carry over to their other subjects."

THE VALUE OF SERVICE

• JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS FOCUS ON SERVICE PROJECTS

For the past couple of years, Highmore-Harrold Junior High teacher Jennifer Mason has been able to explore and teach S.L.I.C.E. (Service Learning and Integrated Current Events).

The class focuses on giving young people a mechanism to see the value of service to their community and the surrounding area, while developing tangible connections to classroom learning.

Unlike community service, which is often unrelated to academic content, service-learning is seen as an instructional strategy that inspires young people to learn about and serve through experiences directly tied to their school curriculum.

A service-learning experience during school hours (and often outside of school hours) is an opportunity to provide service in our school and community. Through Service Learning, students recognize and accept diversity, generate school pride, and infuse self-esteem as we become better citizens prepared for a 21st Century world.

“For every class, I encourage students to choose service learning projects that are based in Highmore or projects that have a direct connection to an individual(s) in the community,” Mason said.

“We are continuously working towards bettering the lives of others who may be in difficult situations, are less fortunate or just need a hand.”

The class provides the opportunity for students to reach out and gain experience of working with various businesses and organizations.

“I am so grateful for this community, continuing to support this class and its various causes,” Mason said. “I am also appreciative that I have the opportunity to teach in such a wonderful school district that allows me to introduce these students to various situations and how to make a difference.”

The first quarter the 8th grade class chose Missouri Shores Domestic Violence Shelter, based out of Pierre, to support for their project, which proved to be beneficial for the students and the shelter.

The class gathered donations, sorted, and organized at the shelter. It was an experience like none other.

“I am so proud of this group of students and everything that they accomplished,” Mason said about the class.

In the second quarter, another group of 8th graders have chosen their service learning projects and they’re going big-



Students from the Highmore-Harrold 8th grade class are part of the S.L.I.C.E. which focuses on service learning projects. (Photos courtesy of Highmore-Harrold School District)

ger than ever before with plans to serve a supper meal at the Ronald McDonald House in Sioux Falls and make fleece tie blankets for the guests that are staying there.

“It seems that my students wouldn’t want to add anything else to their crazy schedules. However, they wanted to branch out even more, and support Project-Warm Up for the 2nd year in a row,” Mason said. “Are they done? Nope. (Highmore-Harrold Principal) Mr. Quniton Cermak also proposed doing a Santa’s Secret Service, a gift donation program for the school and community.”

“We are continuously working towards bettering the lives of others who may be in difficult situations, are less fortunate or just need a hand.”

*Jennifer Mason
Highmore-Harrold JH Teacher*

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

• SCHOOL DISTRICT AND COMMUNITY PARTNER TO OBTAIN GRANT

Increased collaboration of school and community has been a goal of the Leola School District.

That goal was accomplished recently. Through collaborative efforts of school and community, the Leola School District was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Monsanto Company to purchase technological devices and provide professional development to the teachers involved in the project.

“Working hand-in-hand with the community led us to being privileged to receive this grant,” Leola Superintendent Julie Nikolas said. “We could not have received this grant without the support of our community. It means the world to us that the community is willing to support us!”

The process began with about 18 area farmers nominating the Leola School District for the opportunity to write the grant. Next, an invitation was extended from Monsanto to write the grant, which High School Principal & Technology Coordinator Cynthia Rall completed. Middle School teacher Anita Malsam and High School teacher Pam Fauth both stepped up to the plate as well, willing to break new barriers and try new teaching methods in their classrooms through this project.

The Leola School District is interested in utilizing flipped instructional techniques and technology to deepen middle and high school students’ understanding in the areas of math and science.

“Through the usage of technology as a tool, teachers can move more sedentary activities to homework and utilize classroom time to focus on engaging student activities,” Nikolas said.

This, in theory, “flips” what was often done in classrooms of former years and provides the teacher more time with the student to coach and guide the learning.

“Due to being awarded these grant monies, students will be able to learn at a higher level while engaging in projects that directly connect to our community’s agricultural base as well as connect instructional concepts to real world applications,” Nikolas said.

A goal of the project is to get technology into the hands

of students, throughout their school day and beyond, to utilize and deepen their educational experiences. The pilot will include having each teacher implement three projects, one each quarter, that utilize the alternative instructional technique of flipped instruction.

Flipped instruction moves the passive learning components to homework. This then provides more time for active engagement of real world problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration in the classroom to guide learning to a deeper level. All classrooms will benefit from this instructional model and the focus for this project will be on mathematics and science curricular areas.



Students from the Leola-Frederick School District pose for a photo during the presentation of the grant fund. (Photo courtesy of Leola-Frederick School District)

Students will utilize technology to gain instruction, do research, develop plans, make predictions, record and analyze data, draw conclusions, and present their findings.

“The award of the grant provides our district the opportunity to provide staff development to the teachers involved, purchase iPads, Apple Tv’s and applications,” Nikolas said.

“In addition to the active learning the students will engage in, they will also educate elementary students, communi-

ty members, and senior citizens about what they are learning. This collaboration of both younger students and community broadens their audience and validates their work.”

The result of the Leola School District receiving the grant is a great example of school and community working together, side-by-side to educate the children, have proven that teamwork takes organizations to the next level of excellence.

“The Leola School District extends sincere appreciation to Monsanto and all of the area farmers that nominated the school for the opportunity to write the grant, Mrs. Cynthia Rall for making time to write the grant, and the teachers involved that are willing to attempt a new approach to learning,” Nikolas said.

“Once again, the school and community working together, side-by-side to educate the children, have proven that teamwork takes organizations to the next level of excellence.”

MADISON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

AMAZING CHANGE IN MADISON

A project five-years in the making came to fruition this fall in the Madison Central School District.

Renovations and additions were recently completed at Madison High School. Plans for the renovations began in 2008 with ground breaking getting underway in the summer of 2012 and the dedication ceremony in November 2013 concluded the project.

“It has really moved the quality of the high school building to meet the needs of 21st century instruction,” School Board President Tom Farrell said of the project.

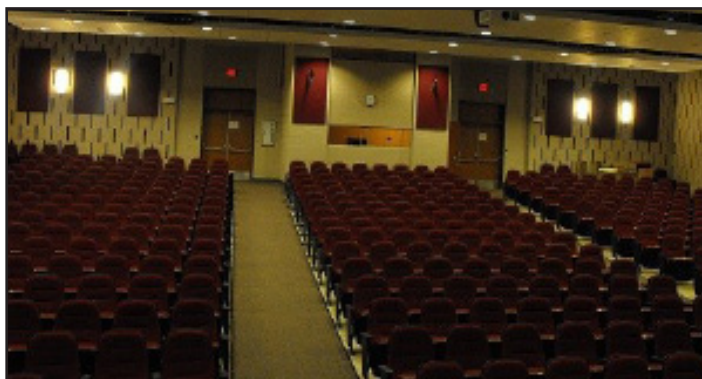
The building addition included the addition of approximately 66,000 square feet including space for new science classrooms

classroom areas as well as the district’s first life skills area.

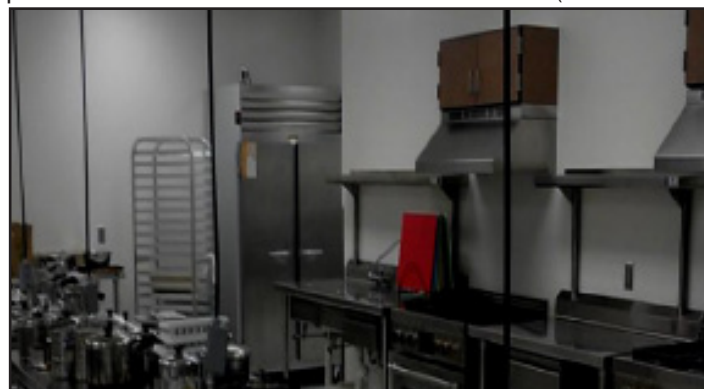
All classroom areas were updated to include the latest in teaching and learning tools. Farrell said the people of Madison have been impressed with the upgrades and additions.

“The community’s reaction has been almost universally a ‘Wow,’” Farrell said. “That applies to whether they view the Pro-Start kitchen, the new science labs, library, the new band and chorus areas, the new art room, the refurbished classroom or the gymnasium and fitness center.”

The project also included the removal of the old heating, lighting and limited cooling systems that were in place and the replacement of exterior windows with energy efficient windows.



(Clockwise from left) Madison’s gymnasium, auditorium, chemistry room and culinary arts kitchen were all updated as part of the district’s renovations and additions. (Photos courtesy of Madison Central School District)



and labs, a ProStart kitchen for the family and consumer science area, new library space, a new and expanded fitness center as well as a 2,250 seat spectator gymnasium and locker rooms.

Updated areas to the high school included a total renovation of the existing auditorium including expansion of the stage area and creation of a wooden stage, new seating, lighting and sound system.

The vocal and instrumental areas are housed in the old gymnasium area giving those programs easy access to the auditorium and stage as well as increased area for large and small group practices. The special education area was updated to include larger

The school now uses the latest in geothermal systems for the heating, ventilation and air conditioning of the building, which will help the district save on energy costs.

The completion of the project was originally planned for December 31, 2013, but the Madison Central School District took final occupancy of all areas more than a month before.

Farrell said the district is excited about the changes because it can now hold large school related gatherings on campus without crowding and is looking forward to hosting graduation in a district owned building for the first time ever.

“The change this fall was amazing,” Farrell said. “It has meant so much to the district.”

AN ECOSYSTEM EDUCATION

• BROWN H.S. STUDENTS LEARN EFFECTS OF NOXIOUS WEEDS

Sturgis Brown High School biology teacher Kristin Wheaton knows the importance of experiential learning.

That's why, for the second year in a row, she's taken her Biology and Honors Biology students out of the classroom and into the field for some hands-on education. Her students had the opportunity to work outdoors alongside U.S. Forest Service personnel learning how they can play a role in maintaining biodiversity while observing the destruction that invasive species, otherwise known as noxious weeds, cause to the ecosystem.

With the guidance of U.S. Forest Service Botanist Ryan Sprague, students were taught data collection methods, which included how to use GPS and transect lines.

Sprague also taught students about the different species of noxious weeds they would be targeting once they got to the site: yellow toadflax, Canada thistle, mullein and common tansy.

The experience was made possible because of a \$2,700 grant Wheaton received last year from Toshiba America Foundation that she used to purchase GPS units, transport students to the site, and rent a porta potty.

Once the students had been trained on the GPS units and instructed on data collection and weed types by Sprague, they headed south of Sturgis to Vanocker Canyon to put their new knowledge to use.



Left: JJ Voigt, left, takes a compass reading while Savannah Shelly writes down the information for placement of the transect line. **Right:** Teacher Kristin Wheaton demonstrates for Dalton Harrington proper placement of the 'U' along the transect line. (Photos by Kristine Hubbard/Meade School District)

Upon reaching the Meadow Creek Site, Sprague talked about some hazards the students might encounter and what they could do to minimize them. He then demonstrated how to 'free pull' weeds.

The students found that pulling weeds by hand is time consuming, but that it's the safest way to eliminate weeds without risking injury to desirable plants that may be growing nearby.

After GPS marking the location of the noxious weeds within transects, the high school students, who are predominately sophomores, used Forest Service guidelines to collect plant data. Once recorded, the students removed the noxious weeds and planted natural grass seed in their place.

"It was character building, fun, and encouraged teamwork," and, "It was great to learn in an outdoor setting and do something good for the environment," are just some of the comments from the students about this noxious weed removal project.

"One of my desired outcomes of this project," said Wheaton, "is to improve student graphing and data collection skills. I also want the students to learn that math, an integral aspect of science, has connections to everyday life and is used in many career fields, including the Forest Service."

>>> SEE **ECOSYSTEM** [PAGE 22]



Chelsea Bates, left, and Marysa Sundberg count the noxious weeds located within the 'U'. (Photo by Kristine Hubbard/Meade School District)

MEADE SCHOOL DISTRICT

ECOSYSTEM

>>> *CONTINUED FROM [pg. 21]*

After completion of the field work, students compared data from last fall's visit to that of this fall, and found the number of noxious weeds had increased.

"In the long term, the number of weeds will decrease," said Wheaton, "but because of the extremely wet year, the millions of seeds laying dormant in the soil seed bank were germinated. We also can accidentally distribute the seeds when pulling up the weeds."

While last year's grant from Toshiba America Foundation got the noxious weed project off the ground, this year the generous donations of other organizations will enable future biology students to take part as well.

A reduction in transportation costs combined with a donated porta potty from Buffalo Chip Campground have helped stretch the money Wheaton received from the Sturgis Rally Charities Foundation, thus guaranteeing the sustainability of the project for another two years.

And an unanticipated benefit of the program?

As one student put it, "Vanocker Canyon has no cellular service. We found out that we can survive for one day without our cell phones."



U.S. Forest Service Botanist Ryan Sprague and Colton Tschakert work to identify noxious weeds. (Photos by Kristine Hubbard/Meade School District)

GROUP JOINS TOGETHER TO "MOVE" SCHOOL

Meade School District staff moved contents of lockers, classrooms and offices out of Sturgis Williams Middle School and into other buildings after the October snowstorm caused the school's roof to collapse, which closed the school building for the remainder of the school year.

"Our staff worked really, really hard during the relocation of the middle school," said Meade Superintendent Don Kirkegaard. "One day we had an empty room and the next day it was a computer lab. The library took only three days to set up; it is amazing how quickly the staff made that happen. Everyone – staff, parents, patrons, contractors and students – have been phenomenal."

"The cooperation and offers of help we have received are amazing."

Even though no books or personal property was damaged, donations of supplies and money were received from individuals, businesses and even students from other school districts.



Staff members help move contents from the damaged middle school building to the district's temporary building. (Photo by Kristine Hubbard/Meade School District)

BLUE RIBBON STATUS

• MITCHELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TABBED WITH HIGH HONOR

Consistent persistence of high achievement resulted in the highest honor for Gertie Belle Rogers Elementary and the Mitchell School District.

The elementary school was tabbed a 2013 Blue Ribbon School.

“Our hard work has not gone unnoticed,” Mitchell Superintendent Joseph Graves said. “The GBR teachers have focused strongly on enhancing the educational opportunities of their students over the last years and have done so with a clear, consistent plan.”

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students perform at very high levels or where significant improvements are being made in students’ academic achievement.

Gertie Belle Rogers Elementary – home of 438 students in kindergarten through fifth grade – was one of four schools in South Dakota that were part of 286 public and private schools across the U.S. to receive the award from the U.S. Department of Education.

Graves noted five initiatives that helped the school attain the Blue Ribbon status, they included:

1. The allocation of sufficient instructional time for reading/English and mathematics.
2. The active intervention of all of our staff with students who had not yet achieved proficiency in math and/or reading. Along with this was the assumption that every student could meet proficiency if we simply worked hard enough and gave them a genuine opportunity to do so with extra time and extra interventions.
3. Boost-Up
4. A building-wide commitment on the part of everyone working in the school, not just the classroom teachers, to helping every student attain proficiency.
5. Putting the best teachers in front of our students.

A community-wide celebration was held for all the students and staff and was attended by area legislators, Secretary of Education Melody Schopp, Governor Dugaard’s Chief of Staff Dusty Johnson, Mitchell City Councilman Jeff Smith and the GBR PTA Organization.

The school proudly hangs flags and other recognitions of the Blue Ribbon School designation all around the building.

“The reaction across the board—(school) board, admin,



Staff members of Gertie Belle Rogers Elementary pose along with Mitchell Superintendent Joseph Graves (holding plaque) under the school’s Blue Ribbon School banner. (Photo courtesy of Mitchell School District)

teachers, parents, students—was positive and enthusiastic,” Graves said. “The discussions in schools seemed to revolve around it for weeks after the formal announcement.”

Graves said GBR would continue the steady pursuit of proficiency that has helped the school achieve the high level of success that is the Blue Ribbon School status.

“It was, very simply, a cause for great celebration and reaffirmation of the hard work so many people have put in at Mitchell and GBR to enhance student achievement,” Graves said.

“Our hard work has not gone unnoticed. The GBR teachers have focused strongly on enhancing the educational opportunities of their students over the last years and have done so with a clear, consistent plan.”

*Joseph Graves
Mitchell Superintendent*

FLINGING THINGS

• PLATTE-GEDDES HOSTS “FALL FLING” EVENT



Above: Students prep their trebuchets. **Right:** Two students pose during their Globe Performance. (Photos courtesy of Platte-Geddes School District)

On a sunny Wednesday in October, students from Platte-Geddes, Armour, and Wessington Springs joined together to fling things.

Students from the three districts competed in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education challenge called the “Fall Fling” at South Park in Platte.

“We wanted to offer our students a collaborative activity that was based around STEM education while expanding their creativity,” Platte-Geddes Superintendent Joel Bailey said.

Over 350 students participated in five different challenges: trebuchets, catapults, Globe Performance (modernizing a Shakespeare play), Heraldic Banners, and Table Top Siege Games.

The idea came from the PAST (Partnering Anthropology with Science and Technology) Foundation out of Columbus, Ohio. The challenges and criteria for each challenge were developed by the PAST Foundation.

“We work with them as part of the South Dakota Innovation Lab,” Bailey said. “The PAST Foundation had the same design challenges in Ohio, but they have never done one on this large of scale.”

Bailey said the main goal for the trebuchet and catapult challenges were to build a siege machine that includes accuracy and creativity, the Heraldic banner was an opportunity



for artistic students to showcase their skills while adhering to the set criteria, the table top siege game offered the students the opportunity to create their own board game and compete against students from other schools, the Globe performance required students to modernize a Shakespearean play and there was a mini-catapult challenge for the young kids where they had to build a catapult using popsicle sticks and rubber bands that could launch marshmallows.

The trebuchets were geared toward high school students and catapults were for middle school students. The Heraldic Banner competition was open to all students, grades K-12 and the table top games were designed for all students.

“It was a hit with teachers and students alike,” Bailey said. “We saw students that do not necessarily excel in the classroom take major leadership roles when being able to use mechanical skills. The collaboration piece allowed students from different grade levels and teachers to work together.”

Bailey said the day was such a success they were looking to build on it for next year.

“The weather was perfect and everybody had a great time,” Bailey said. “It would be a shame if we didn’t see if we can make it better next year!”

REAL WORLD CONNECTION

• PARTNERSHIP PROVIDES STUDENTS CHANCE TO APPLY SKILLS TO REAL WORLD

Connecting the community to the classroom and giving students real world opportunities, that's the focus of Partnership Rapid City.

PRC was created by the Rapid City Area School District (RCAS) and its mission is to give students opportunities to see the relevance of their school work by applying their knowledge and skills in the community and to develop a workforce that will grow the regional economy and enhance the quality of life in the area.

"Our community has opened their doors to our students," PRC Executive Director Liz Hamburg said. They are sharing their expertise and resources."

Established in 2007, the program meets several needs and opportunities:

- Businesses and community leaders were demanding a high school graduate who was more college and career ready.
- Students needed more opportunities to develop their 'soft skills'; communication, leadership, teamwork, personal initiative and work ethic.
- Students needed opportunities to see first-hand the types of employment opportunities that may become their futures, within our region and beyond.
- Young people were disconnected from the many needs within our community and did not feel valued by the adult world.

High School programs include Beyond the Books Internships (Career Exploration and Service Learning), Teen Up youth engagement opportunities, and the Cobbler 2 Cobbler peer leadership program. Middle School programs include the Career Cruising Expo for eighth graders, Camp Med for seventh graders and Reality Check, a financial literacy event for 8th graders. At the elementary level there is the Treasure Chest incentive program.

The programs have served more than 1,000 students already this fall, said Hamburg.

"Students enjoy the opportunity to learn outside of the traditional classroom," PRC Executive Director Liz Hamburg said. "Our programs help them to understand the connection between school and the real-world and help them to plan for their future."

PRC provides a central point of contact, which enables community resources to improve student academic achievement, workforce development, higher education readiness, community awareness and engagement.

Students learn basic work readiness skills from community partners and become aware of workforce needs of our region



Rapid City Students participating in Partnership Rapid City are able to apply knowledge and skills in real world situations. (Photos courtesy of Partnership Rapid City)



and beyond.

PRC students learn that their efforts can make a difference in the lives of others as they volunteer their time and energy with our local non-profit partners and service agencies. In turn, the contributions of our young people as volunteers help to expand the capacity of our local service providers.

All PRC projects and programs focus on learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom.

Every program relies upon community based resources and collaborations, from the placement of a high school intern within an individual business, to the 44 speakers who present to over 1000 eighth graders at the Career Cruising Expo, to the sponsorship of a single Treasure Chest filled with school supplies and incentives for an elementary teacher.

PRC works to offer opportunities which enhance the education of our students as well as sharing the needs of our community's workforce and service organizations with our students.

"As our students change, so does our community and our opportunities," Hamburg said. "We connect the community to the classroom, expanding our district's resources and learning opportunities."

THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

• *RUTLAND STUDENT AND TEACHER TRAVEL TO NORMANDY*

It was the trip of a lifetime for a student/teacher team from Rutland High School.

RHS junior, Karee Wicks, and RHS Social Studies teacher Lauren Olson, joined 15 other student/teacher teams from across the United States to attend the Normandy Institute this summer.



Above: Wicks (left) and Olson stand at Omaha Beach. **Below:** Olson (left) and Wicks at Utah Beach in France. (Photos courtesy of Rutland School District)



Olson's history class participates in National History Day (<http://www.nhd.org>) and last fall the group sent her an email about the Normandy Institute trip. Olson discussed the project with Wicks and the duo applied for the trip.

Both Olson and Wicks had to write essays of interest in the program, receive a letter of support from the district's Superintendent Carl Fahrenwald and Olson had to write a letter recommending Wicks.

The pair was one of 15 groups picked to go on the trip.

Olson and Wicks spent five days in Washington, DC doing research at the National Archives and taking part in lectures given by World War II experts at George Washington University. Wicks researched a South Dakota soldier, Cpl. Thomas Reed Smith Jr., who is buried at the Normandy American Cemetery.

They then traveled to France, where they spent a week visiting landmarks of the D-Day invasion as well as other locations pertinent to the Normandy Campaign.

Students visited the cemetery, where Wicks read a eulogy she had written for South Dakota's fallen soldier.

"Sharing the memories of our soldiers was an important part of the trip," Wicks said.

Wicks is continuing to do research on this South Dakota soldier and is currently working on a website (<http://reedsmithmemorial.weebly.com>) on Cpl. Smith, as well as a more permanent memorial that she hopes to have displayed in Smith's hometown of Madison.

Wicks said her favorite memory of the trip was the students reading their eulogies while for Olson it will be watching students from different parts of the country writing the names of their soldiers and the phrase "WE REMEMBER" in the sand at Omaha Beach.



"Traveling and experiencing things outside of the classroom is an important part of the learning process for students," Olson said of the trip. "We were very lucky to be chosen."

EMBRACING THE MODEL

• RURAL EDUCATION MODEL GRABS STUDENTS ATTENTION

Embracing community and geography is the rural education model of the South Dakota Innovation Lab (SDIL).

The model employs known strategies and delivery systems creating an innovative replicable process that is flexible enough to take on differing community worldviews, agile enough to inspire teachers, and powerful enough to deliver rigorous education in a holistic and customized way.

“The work of South Dakota Innovation Lab provides schools with the opportunity to move from being good schools to being great schools,” Mid-Central Co-op Superintendent Dan Guericke said. “SDIL asks educators to stand on the shoulders of the good practice of the past and challenges them to reach higher.”

SDIL schools employ transdisciplinary problem based learning (TPBL) as the instructional strategy grounded in STEM. The program worked with more than 6,000 students from 20 school districts last year alone, said SDIL STEM Coordinator Mari Biehl.

Through TPBL, students explore real world questions and problems, learn to collaborate, as well as critically and creatively design solutions. This process pivots on community issues and relies on community involvement and industry experts for deep content understanding.

“I like our PBL projects because it makes me feel like I am doing the same work that adults do,” Platte-Geddes sixth grade student Torre Qualm said of the program.

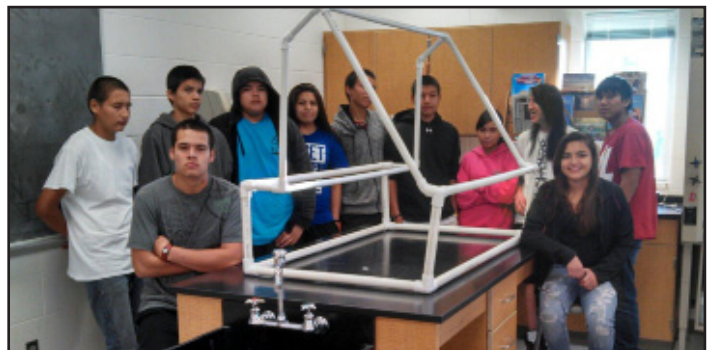
SDIL students are fully engaged in their learning following a consistent pattern beginning with brainstorming the problem, researching and constructing a solution, testing the solution and modifying it where needed, then sharing what they designed. Learning is not something that happens to them, they are active participants in the entire process.

SDIL kids are making a big impact on their schools and communities:

- Platte has a butterfly garden.
- Armour has birdhouses set up in the park.
- Armour and Platte have recycling for the first time.
- Crow Creek has a new home to offer its residents.
- Marty students are planning a Design Challenge to showcase their culture.
- Cedar Grove Colony students are planning a new playground for the school that utilizes recycled materials.
- Wessington Springs students are designing a Health Awareness Week for the community.
- Lower Brule students are applying Lakota Values to make their community a better place, by creating gift baskets full of hand-made food and craft items for the elders.
- Wolsey/Wessington sophomores in an effort to make students aware of the community’s emergency services



Above: Second Grade students at Platte-Geddes collaborate with sophomore students to discover different frog species and the continents where they live. **Below:** Marty students show off the design of classroom greenhouse frames they built in their science lab. (Photos courtesy of South Dakota Innovation Lab)



and need for volunteers brought in local EMS and law enforcement to demonstrate their expertise in a mock accident.

These are just a few examples of the rigorous and relevant learning that is happening in SDIL schools.

SDIL teachers receive ongoing professional development throughout the year, continuously planning and implementing these exciting projects.

Working with SDIL grants teachers can access to the state-wide network and ongoing virtual brainstorming. In addition, SDIL offers intensive PD workshops, bootcamps, school visits, and hybrid courses from teams of master teachers.

“We have seen projects in SDIL schools that engage both the students and community members,” Wessington Springs Superintendent Lance Witte said. “These projects break down the walls of our schools and allow learning to happen anywhere.”

THE FIRST ANNUAL FLING

• AREA STUDENTS COME TOGETHER FOR STEM EDUCATION EVENT

The First Annual Fall Fling Design Challenge, took place in October in Platte, SD.

Platte-Geddes School, in conjunction with South Dakota Innovation Lab, hosted nearly 350 students grades K-12 at South Park for competitions in catapult and trebuchet design, heraldic banner design, globe performance, and castle siege game design and play.

“Our kids were all over this,” Wessington-Springs Superintendent Lance Witte said.



(Clockwise from left) Community volunteers judged the events. Mini catapult were a hit with these 4th grade students. Siege machines line the competition field at South Park in Platte. (Photos courtesy of SDIL)

“They were excited and engaged. Instead of doing something traditional like a chapter review, their demonstration of learning was a completed catapult or trebuchet.”

The idea came from the PAST (Partnering Anthropology with Science and Technology) Foundation out of Columbus, Ohio. The challenges and criteria for each challenge were developed by the PAST Foundation.

Globe performers had 10 minutes to perform a Shakespearean play that they had modernized and prepared in advance. Heraldic Banners emphasizing positive habits or character traits were created in their home schools and displayed and judged at the competition. Castle Siege Game creators brought their game boards and challenged other game designers to play their game of strategy.

The youngest participants got to build mini-catapults and fling marshmallows at different targets. Of course the favorite target was their friend’s mouth.

The highlight of the day was the catapult and trebuchet competition for kids in grades 5-12. The students designed their siege machines in advance of the competition that focused heavily on math and physics.

Over 40 machines lined the field to throw water balloons at varied targets—including school administrators wearing tar-



get shirts. The machines were judged on design, accuracy, and distance.

The event went beyond just fun and learning for some students.

“At the beginning of the year, I had a student come to my classroom and tell me that he wasn’t smart. He just wanted me to know that right from

the start,” Armour/Wessington Springs Science Teacher Jeff Schneider said.

“We started to build our trebuchets and he came in one day with a scaled model of his. I asked what he was up to and he said ‘My group couldn’t understand my Google SketchUp of our trebuchet so I built a scaled model to explain it to them.’”

“He has a different perspective on smart now.”

BACK TO THE FUTURE

• *SIoux VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT MAKES USE OF PAST BUILDING*

Transforming the past into the future is taking place in the Sioux Valley School District.

The district is converting a 1925 school building that had been abandoned on the school grounds, and was almost torn down, into a 400 seat school performance theater, as well as, new Instrumental and vocal music classroom.

“It was more cost effective to renovate the old building than to build from scratch and in the process we were able to save a landmark of the school district and community,” Sioux Valley Superintendent Tom Oster said.

The building was set to be demolished and the district plan was to build a new PAC where this 1925 building was currently standing. The district did not have the funds to build a PAC from scratch and likely would not have until at least 2019, said Oster.

Oster requested an architectural and engineering study be done of the 1925 building to see if it was structurally sound.

“We found out that it was indeed sound,” Oster said. “Once we knew the building was in good fundamental shape, we proceeded to see if it was both possible and feasible to convert the two-story building into a 400 seat theater as well as classroom space and offices on the upper floor.”

“After several design concepts and changes, we were able to accomplish our original goals.”

“I think there are lots of folks who were very aware of what the old building looked like and they are anxious to see how this transformation could be possible.”

*Tom Oster
Sioux Valley Superintendent*



Above: An architectural rendering of Sioux Valley’s PAC building scheduled for completion in 2014. **Below:** A photo of the current building which will be transformed into the new PAC building. (Photos courtesy of Sioux Valley School District)



Construction started in mid-September and will be completed by November 2014.

The building will include 11,000 square feet of the original structure and an additional 7,000 square feet of new construction. It will feature a state of the art theater with a full production stage with a large lobby that will double as an internet hot spot open to the community.

The second floor is being renovated into vocal and instrumental classrooms with practice rooms and offices for the instructors. There will also be rooms for music, instrument and uniform storage.

“The reaction has been very positive as this project is being done within the current budget and will not raise taxes,” Oster said.

“I think there are lots of folks who were very aware of what the old building looked like and they are anxious to see how this transformation could be possible.”

BUILDING A FOUNDATION

• *SPEARFISH FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF*

Tough times brought out the best in the community of Spearfish.

The Spearfish Foundation for Public Education was formed in 2005 following the second defeat of an opt-out and with the voting headed in the wrong direction.

The district had gone through cuts in their General Fund budget over a five-year period, due mostly to declining enrollment.

Two School Board members decided to take a different tact, and the Foundation was the result.

Spearfish Superintendent Dave Peters said the Foundation is made up of community members concerned about the loss of educational programs in the district and who are dedicated to the education of the community's youth.

New ideas and enthusiasm took hold with people who just wouldn't take "no" for an answer.

"Cuts in programs and staff members, and two failed opt out votes over three years negatively impacted us all," Peters said. "(The Foundation) has positively transformed the morale of staff in amazing ways."

Over \$50,000 will be contributed this year by the Foundation, funded entirely from donations, to special programs in the Spearfish School District.

"It provides academic programming and opportunities that would not otherwise be available," Peters said.

Several programs are "permanent" and are funded every school year. Permanent programs include the Elementary Christmas Program, and a pair of reading programs at the K-2 level; after school assistance, Elder's Wisdom and gifted programming at the 3-5 level; Middle School drama and Science Olympiad programs; and at the High School, We the People, Science Olympiad and a summer science program.

Other programs are supported as money allows and teachers request funding in the form of "Fish Grants." Twice a year the foundation distributes \$50 mini-grants for twenty teachers to use in supplying their classrooms.

The foundation also organizes a community-provided picnic for the district's 300 staff members at the onset of



A Spearfish student looks on in amazement during an experiment at the Spearfish Science Camp. The camp is funded through donations from the Spearfish Foundation for Public Education. (Photo courtesy of Spearfish School District)

the school year.

Foundation members are ambassadors in the community on behalf of the schools, provide programs and opportunities for our students they wouldn't otherwise have and have made a significant difference in staff morale through their support and encouragement.

"The Foundation has served as our hope in our community, and has had an incredibly powerful and positive impact on how our system is perceived and supported," Peters said.

"The Foundation has served as our hope in our community, and has had an incredibly powerful and positive impact on how our system is perceived and supported."

*Dave Peters
Spearfish Superintendent*

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

- *STUDENTS SPREAD RACHEL'S CHALLENGE MESSAGE TO COMMUNITY*



Wagner Community High School students sign the Rachel's Challenge banner. (Photo courtesy of Wagner School District)

After hearing Darrell Scott of Rachel's Challenge at the ASBSD & SASD Joint Convention, Wagner Community School had Rochelle Graham one of the presenters who travel around the country present the story of Rachel Joy Scott and the Rachel's Challenge message to the student body. And the movement began.

All around town the community has banded together.

"I accept Rachel's Challenge," has been posted on multiple business bulletin boards. High school members of the Friends of Rachel (FOR) club suggested the saying be posted and the community, eager to pitch in, jumped on board with the idea.

"You wouldn't believe the acts of kindness that have taken place because of Rachel's Challenge," Wagner Superintendent Linda Foos said. "It has created an atmosphere where it is 'cool to care.'"

Changes after the Rachel's Challenge event on September 13th, have been continually surfacing. FOR club members are eager to do something.

In September, FOR members met before school to discuss what they wanted to do as a club. It was a productive and encouraging meeting, where the group decided to welcome Parkston, their football opponents in Friday's game, with handmade signs and banners.

Their message is that community can stretch beyond city-limits.

After that initial meeting, FOR members spontaneously decided to stand at the doors of the school and welcome everyone walking in. FOR member, Hannah Fleming remembers making elementary children smile with well-placed compliments.

"As one of the leaders it has been great to see the ideas pour out of the students and the excitement that they have," Tera Koupal, one of the adult leaders of the FOR club, said. "The atmosphere in our school will not change overnight but with persistence and planning we hope to see changes happen!"

Rachel Scott left these words for the world: "I have this theory that if one person can go out of their way to show compassion, then it will start a chain reaction of the same. People will never know how far a little kindness can go."

"A community member who recently lost her husband came to my office to tell me she received a phone call from a high school student telling her to call anytime she needed help," Foos said. "You never know how far a little kindness will go."

A little kindness, like greeting classmates at the door, is where the Wagner FOR club has started their chain reaction.

Great things are happening at the school and pouring into the community.



Students participate in a Rachel's Challenge event. (Photo courtesy of Wagner School District)

DEVELOPING A NEW APPROACH

It has been a tradition in Wall and in many other schools to plan and carry-out professional development activities each year. Each spring staff members complete surveys and attend planning meetings in preparation for the following year's professional development activities.

Professional development funds are allocated and presenters are booked with the hope that a new year will bring fresh and new activities for the sake of higher student achievement.

Staff in-service brings new and interesting insights into student learning, with corresponding activities that are sure to energize any classroom.

During the pre-school in-service days the staff is abuzz with fresh new approaches that are sure to excite the student body's biggest skeptic. Everything is set for the new school year.

So, what happens when the students walk through the doors? How often are the new insights and activities implemented into the classroom? How effectively are they implemented?

The answers to these questions are too difficult to find. Too often the planned activities aren't what all of the teachers and administrators want and/or need. Thus, the school year begins and a most of the staff goes back to what is most comfortable, things they've done for years and leaving most or all of the new approaches back in August never to be acted upon.

For years this was the case in Wall. This year, however, a new approach to professional development is in the works. We are taking some initial steps to customize professional development. With assistance from TIE, each teacher has developed customized professional development plans for the year.

The plan began with a discussion of how the undertaking will be approached. Many questions were asked in preparation of the new school year.

How will the staff come up with professional development activities? Which activities will they choose, and why? Has this approach to professional development been done before? Finally, how will we be accountable for what we get done?

"Like all new processes, there have been some hiccups with the implementation of customized professional development," Wall K-6 Principal Charles Sykora said. "As problems come up, we work collaboratively with TIE to find solutions."

Because of the close relationship between customized

professional development and Mass Customized Learning, the August In-Service began with a review of Mass Customized Learning.

A key to customizing learning for any learner, child or adult, hinges on the idea that the learner should have some control over the time, place, path, and pace of their learning.

The first step to customizing professional development was to have the teachers identify goals to drive their learning. Teachers were first asked to identify an instructional goal, based on a self-assessment of their teaching. This self-assessment focused on six of the 22 components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which the district had prioritized last year.

Those district priorities included: 2a- Creating An Environment of Respect and Rapport, 2b-Establishing a Culture for Learning, 2c-Managing Classroom Procedures, 3a-Communicating With Students, 3c-Engaging Students in Learning, and 4c-Communicating With Families.

Teachers were also asked to identify an exploratory goal. To develop an exploratory goal, the teachers were free to choose an area of education in which they were interested, such as increasing technology use in the classroom, developing higher order questions during reading comprehension lessons, or learning

something new about the Common Core State Standards.

Both the teachers' instructional and exploratory goal needed to focus on new learning which related to their teaching assignments.

Accountability was a big concern as the district began the process. Mainly, how would the staff and administration be able to proceed through the school year?

Additionally, how would the teachers be able to document the activities that indicated they were working on their goals for the year?

TIE helped us to address this concern by providing training on the use of LiveBinders and GoogleDocs so that teachers could log their activities easily and administrators could see up-to-date versions of the teachers' plans as they progressed. LiveBinders serve this process well as a kind of teacher portfolio.

"Although we are early in the process, our staff is excited about this opportunity and we will keep evaluating it as we go," Sykora said.



A group of Wall teachers take part in a professional development session. (Photo courtesy of Wall School District)

REBUILT BY A COMMUNITY

- *DONATIONS HELP WILMOT SCHOOL DISTRICT REFURBISH GYM FLOOR*



In the summer of 2012 the community of Wilmot banded together to raise over \$25,000 to redo the school's gym floor.

The school's wood floor was built in 1986 and was in need of being refinished. With the budget cuts of the last few years it was almost impossible for the school to come up with the money for the project.

The drive was spearheaded by local businessman and Wilmot School Board member Jeff Jurgens.

The fund drive was so successful it surpassed the amount needed for the floor and some of the excess funds were also used to help replace the gym curtains. While the drive was going on, the community's local bank, First State Bank also pitched in and replaced the scoreboards at a cost to them of over \$15,000.

In the end the school district was able to update

the gym – that will hopefully last for another 30 years – with the help and contributions of the community members.

Wilmot Superintendent Larry Hulscher said without the community's support he didn't believe the district would have been able to do the project and praised community members for their support. "It is so very important," Hulscher said.

The community of Wilmot banded together to raise over \$25,000 to redo the school's gym floor.

WINNER SCHOOL DISTRICT

GOOD NEWS OUT OF WINNER

• DISTRICT ACHIEVES SUCCESS IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

There is plenty of good news to share out of the Winner School District.

The Winner School District has created and implemented an Early Warning System (EWS) in which teachers meet monthly and use data to monitor student attendance, behavior, and academic credit.

“Through our EWS meetings, teachers are able to meet as grade level teams to help students in academics, behavior, and attendance,” Winner Title I/Curriculum Director Kimberly Demers said. “The reaction has been positive. Teachers have the time and power to affect change.”

The teachers have lists of strategies and interventions to use with different students and situations. The WSD collaborates with parents and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe Education Department to help students be successful in school.

The district implemented a student intervention known as Student Fridays. Two Fridays a month, students are invited in to make up work, catch up on work, or receive extra help from teachers.

Kris Brockhoff and Cyndy DeMers were both given “2012 Teacher of the Year” honors in a contest sponsored by Harry K Ford, which included several schools within the area Harry K services.

They were nominated by the public and were chosen from 30 finalists. They each received a cash prize and the school received a cash prize.

To help improve attendance and academics, students are given incentives for the best classroom attendance each quarter and for the class with the most parent participation in parent-teacher conferences.

Students are given incentives for perfect and good attendance each quarter.

“The focus on student achievement is high in Winner.”

*Kimberly DeMers
Winner Title I/Curriculum Director*



Winner School District teachers Cyndy DeMers (left) and Kris Brockhoff receive their Teacher of the Year honors. (Photo courtesy of Winner School District)

“Students enjoy the incentives,” DeMers said. “The strive for perfect attendance at the elementary is a hot topic.”

The Winner School District has worked hard to improve the facilities. The students have a cleaner, brighter learning environment.

The district repainted all buildings, the locker rooms in the armory were redone, improvements to the heating and cooling systems were made, carpet has been installed in some high school classrooms, the FFA building has been completely redone and a classroom was added among other things.

In addition to the many Good News pieces from the district:

- Winner Elementary School is re-defining the way they teach reading. They have implemented a reading training, established reading blocks, and have given teachers common planning time to collaborate.
- Rona Volmer, Winner Middle School language arts teacher, has started a middle school newspaper. Students work on the paper during Friday school.
- The WHS football team under coach Dan Aaker won the 2012 state 11B football championship.
- The WHS volleyball team placed second in the 2013 Class A state volleyball tournament.

“The focus on student achievement is high in Winner,” DeMers said.

JOSEY'S HOME

• STUDENTS HELP TEEN FIND HIS PLACE AT YSD

The following story appeared in the Oct. 12, 2013 edition of the Yankton Press & Dakotan paper.

In the morning, Josey Kaiser walks down the halls at Yankton High School with his head held high.

At lunch, he sits and talks with other students.

After school, he helps out at football practice as the team's student manager.

For many high school students, it's just another ordinary day.

But for YHS senior Kaiser, it's a dream come true.

It wasn't long ago that life was very different for the 18-year-old, who has high-functioning autism. In other towns and at other schools, Kaiser felt like an outsider and was constantly bullied. He spent much of his time by himself and struggled with his classes.

"I was picked on a lot," Kaiser said. "I don't think any of the students really understood who I was and that I have this high-functioning form of autism. The funny thing is, they behaved themselves better around the kids that were more severely autistic. But with me, they didn't quite put two and two together."

"They just knew what triggered him," added his mother, Mindy Giziewski. "They constantly did things to get him to overreact. So in turn, Josey was always getting in trouble — always getting detentions and suspensions."

She said those problems also carried over into the classroom, as some teachers, and in many cases the schools, failed to make modifications to help Kaiser succeed.

"They didn't have a system or anything in place to handle someone who has high-functioning autism who mainstreams. It was frustrating," Giziewski said. "He was severely failing every single class. He just walked down the hallways with his head down so he wouldn't get harassed."

But that all changed last year when the family moved to Yankton before the student's junior year to be closer to relatives.

"It was like a breath of fresh air," Kaiser said. "It was starting over with a clean slate."

One of Giziewski's first phone calls was to the high school, hoping that YHS could accommodate Kaiser's needs.

While the teen is considered high-functioning, his



Josey Kaiser has found a home in Yankton. Coming to YHS, he said, was "like a breath of fresh air. It was starting over with a clean slate." (Kelly Hertz/Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan)

mother said his autism can affect his social adeptness. He often misses social cues and is not good with names. He can also succeed in some subjects, such as chemistry, but struggle greatly with others, such as math.

"I went in and visited with (YHS Resource Room Aide) Angie Luken. She is amazing and just made it sound like a piece of cake," Giziewski said. "I've heard that before, but then gotten calls later that there was a problem. But with Angie, she could handle anything."

Thanks to some slight modifications to Kaiser's schedule, such as classes in resource rooms or classes with paraprofessionals, the student has flourished, Giziewski said.

"There have been a few issues, but we've gotten them resolved," she said. "Josey's worked really hard, and he's even been on the honor roll."

While Kaiser's increased performance in the classroom is impressive, even more remarkable is the treatment he has received from other students, according to his family. Instead of being bullied and pushed away, the teen has found acceptance and understanding.

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YANKTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOME

>>> CONTINUED FROM [pg. 35]

“The kids are so good to him,” said his grandmother, Sue Joynt. “He used to just play video games and do other things by himself, and he didn’t really socialize with others. Now, he’s gotten to know the other kids. He sits with them at lunch time, and they’re always giving him high-fives. It’s amazing what this school has done for this boy. He’s really come out of his shell.”

“I’m so proud of the kids at Yankton High School and how they can welcome someone different and make him feel so at home and comfortable. Josey usually has to work so hard at fitting in. But the kids here in Yankton like him for who he is.”

*Mindy Giziewski
Josey’s mother*

“It’s just awesome,” added Giziewski. “I’m so proud of the kids at Yankton High School and how they can welcome someone different and make him feel so at home and comfortable. Josey usually has to work so hard at fitting in. But the kids here in Yankton like him for who he is. He doesn’t have to be someone else.”

Giziewski said the other students became so fond of her son during his first year that the football players asked him to be the team’s student manager this season. It was the first time he had been invited by his peers to join a group, she said.

“That’s never happened before, and he took a lot of pride in that,” she said.

Kaiser has used his new job as another opportunity to become more outgoing, his mother said, as he enjoys being part of the team and getting to know the players. He also takes his job seriously — that is, when he isn’t being hounded by his fans.

“He came out of the locker room one game carrying the water, and there were so many kids, he could barely get past them,” Giziewski said. “They kept stopping him and wanted to talk to him and high-five him. For me to see that, it was just incredible.”

In addition to making friends at school, Kaiser also has a new best friend at home — a yellow lab named Doug that the family adopted from the Yankton Police Department after they arrived in town.



Josey Kaiser is shown his best friend, a yellow lab named Doug. Kaiser, who has high-functioning autism, is a senior at YHS. (Derek Bartos/Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan)

Giziewski said the pet has helped her son not only by helping him learn more responsibility, as the teen takes care of the dog, but also by giving him a loyal companion. The two are often inseparable when Kaiser is at the house.

“Doug is the only one that doesn’t like it that Josey is more involved in school,” she said with a laugh.

Kaiser said his dog also has fueled his love for animals, which in turn has inspired a new career path.

“We brought him to the vet, and I was really impressed with the vet techs. I thought Doug would be scared, but he was very calm,” he said. “I knew I wanted to do something like that.”

After graduation, Kaiser plans to attend college to be a veterinary technician. While he would like to stay close to family, he said he still hasn’t decided on a specific school.

One thing that is for certain, Kaiser said, is that he never would have found the inspiration for his dream, or the tools to realize it, had he not come to Yankton.

“I still would be going to school just to go to school. I wouldn’t know what to do with my life, and I wouldn’t have my friends or be respected by anybody,” he said. “I can’t believe how much I’ve turned it around.”

