

**September 2008**

## **NCS D staff gets first look at organizational assessment findings**

The Natrona County School District on Friday received the preliminary results of an organizational assessment completed this week by Krenek Consulting.

The results were reported to NCS D staff members during an informational session Friday morning. A video of the entire session will be available online as soon as possible this afternoon for employees who were unable to attend. A synopsis of the preliminary findings also is available at the end of this e-mail.

Mardi Krenek, the lead consultant from Krenek Consulting, explained that the organizational assessment looked for evidence of key elements of functional systems.

"When we're talking about systems, we're talking about aligning from the board room to the classroom, up and down the system, as well as across the system," she said. "It's about getting more efficient and effective so we can free people up to be instructional leaders, so we can free people up to manage their divisions, so we can free people up to be in their classrooms and offer students the very best there is to offer and do the innovative things.

"It's not about stifling people. It's an opportunity to get more efficient and effective for the students in this district."

The results of the assessment will be further explained and discussed during a series of dialogue sessions for employees and the community on Oct. 7, when Krenek and Superintendent Joel Dvorak will host a series of one-hour informational sessions. The sessions will be held every hour-and-a-half, with the first starting at 8 a.m. and the last starting at 6:30 p.m. Oct. 7 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Casper.

The results of the assessment also will immediately be put to work. An expanded version of the Compact Issues Committee is being created, including students, parents, and community members, as well as the employee groups and trustees already represented on CIC. This group will be responsible for beginning to develop and implement a strategic plan that addresses the opportunities for improvement identified by Krenek Consulting. That group will meet for the first time Oct. 6.

"The first thing I want to tell folks in the district and in the community is, 'We hear you,'" said Dr. Dvorak. "We hear you. This is a valid process of getting good feedback to us. ... what we've learned by this diagnoses of our systems and who we are, the work that we do to begin to build a prescription to help us increase the rate of continuous improvement of our systems, and therefore the results our students get, is going to be very, very transparent. It's going to be very, very open, and it will be very, very inclusive.

"Let me repeat," he said. "The new superintendent hears you. The district hears you. We have a lot of good, great work to do. We have just a wonderful opportunity to get dramatically better results than we currently are getting, and we have everything in this district we need to make that happen."

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## **Preliminary Results Overview**

Krenek Consulting undertook the organizational assessment to study the district's systems. Consultants spoke in small groups to about 315 employees from all sectors of the district, as well as students and community members. They also heard from additional individuals through e-mail and telephone calls. They sought evidence of key elements of an organization's systems, specifically in the areas of leadership, strategic planning, curriculum and teaching, stakeholder engagement, stellar people, effective and efficient processes, and accountability. They identified evidence of the existence of the key elements, as well as opportunities for improvement in each area. They reported findings that were shared throughout the organization, rather than those shared by individuals or single groups.

### **Leadership**

Krenek Consulting said that their interviews revealed that stakeholders are hopeful that the district will make some positive changes under new leadership, and that leaders are making an active effort to be more transparent. Opportunities for improvement, however, included the lack of a common vision to drive the district to excellence; a lack of trust; and a fragmented system that makes people feel as though their voices are not heard. They also found that leaders are pulled away from their responsibilities so often that it inhibits their effectiveness, and that visibility and accessibility of Central Services staff are limited.

### **Strategic Planning**

Interviews revealed that school improvement plans exist across the district and that schools have incorporated strategies based on scientifically based research. However, opportunities for improvement included a lack of a strategic plan to drive the work of the district, a lack of department plans, a lack of a district-wide focus which causes inefficiencies and affects staff morale; and a feeling of staff members being overwhelmed, rather than supported, by the number of initiatives in place.

### **Curriculum & Teaching**

Consultants found that NCS D employees are using data to inform their work. They also found that the district provides resources for schools to implement programs and opportunities for students, and that staff members across the board believe there is a concentrated effort to provide safe and nurturing environments for students. Opportunities for improvement included an inconsistent use of instructional facilitator positions and interventions, a concern that not all student populations – particularly those “in the middle” – are being served, and a feeling that new programs are implemented with a “flavor of the month” approach.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

Stakeholders showed a commitment to increase opportunities for all children, Krenek found. However, their interviews also revealed that mistrust of the district prohibits meaningful collaboration and that effective communication needs to be owned by all staff members.

### **Stellar People**

The interviews revealed that the system has many reward and recognitions in place and that employees value their colleagues. Opportunities for improvement included a need for more differentiated, meaningful professional development for all employees, consistent evaluation processes, and more efficient hiring practices. The consultants also said that employees said they felt overwhelmed and as if they were becoming “jacks of all trades and masters of none.”

### **Effective & Efficient Processes**

Krenek Consulting found that the district is financially sound and that stakeholders recognize a need for documented process throughout the organization. However, they also found widespread inefficiencies that cause dysfunction and a lack of meaningful measures that allow the district to assess its progress as a system.

### **Accountability**

The assessment found that data is being collected by some employees and groups and that the awareness of the benefits of collecting and analyzing data is increasing. Consultants also said, however, that a lack of accountability allows staff to function independently, instead of under common guidelines; that the district structure fosters competition and keeps staff from sharing successful practices; and that alignment of data to district goals could increase accountability.