

NCS D

News Zone



VOLUME VI

ISSUE IV

Nov. 21, 2011

MILEPOST TRAININGS REMIN D US WHAT WE'RE CONNECTED TO

By Jennifer Cousineau

"I'm not sure we've ever talked, all as a team, about this district, how we got to the Compact and why we're moving along the continuous improvement journey," Superintendent Joel Dvorak said during a recent Milepost training. "We're holding these trainings so that we all know how the district works, what we have to do with it and how we're each connected to it."

The trainings began in August at the all-staff gathering and will continue throughout the school year.

Mileposts:

#1: Learn the history of the Compact, which inspired the district's mission, goals and values.

#2: Understand the district's organizational structure and each employee's role.

#3: Understand the types of decision-making, described in the Compact and board policy; understand employees' role in decision-making at NCS D.

#4: Understand collaborative governance in relationship to the systemic continuous improvement model.

#5: Understand the Compact and how it connects

to each employee's daily work; review collaborative journey work and lessons learned in connection to each employee's daily work.

Approximately 2,500 district staff members — from custodians to librarians, substitutes to office staff, and bus drivers to administrators — are part of one organization that is united in supporting the students of Natrona County to receive the best education possible. We have a common goal, no matter our title: to empower every learner to grow, excel and be a successful contributor to the local and global community.

If you have any questions about the trainings, contact your supervisor. Questions about the Compact can be directed to Mike Bond at 253-5231.

This year's continuous improvement theme is "Live your dream ..."

All staff are invited — and encouraged — to bring their dreams, talents and ideas as we continue along this journey together.



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THOROUGH EXAMINATION REVEALS A HEALTHY SCHOOL SYSTEM

It's something we talk about everyday. It's in the actions each of us do everyday. Now we have validation that what we are "doing for the kids" is creating a high functioning district system based on putting student outcomes at the center of it all.

At the end of October, a team of educational professionals from AdvancED visited the Natrona County School District to complete a thorough examination for Accreditation. The team spent time meeting with an impressive list of stakeholders within the district — teachers, principals, parents, students, trustees, cabinet members, and myself. In all, over the course of four days, the team listened to 1,902 people and visited every school in the district. That's more than 475 people per day.

I'm so thrilled that after an intensive and extensive look at our processes, systems, results and many other measurements, our school district has received a recommendation for full accreditation with no stipulations attached. This recommendation goes to the State Board of Education. This is a true affirmation of our effort to live continuous improvement each day. It's a true affirmation of the hard work each of you puts into your everyday in helping more and more students to become successful. It's a true affirmation of our efforts in becoming excellent. This should generate confidence that we have the necessary practices in place that will elevate our district to excellence.

We should receive a full written report around Thanksgiving. This document will include a report for each school to see how they did against the measured standards. We want our parents and community to see how we are performing for their kids so we will share it with the community. I know the feedback this report



"This should generate confidence that we have the necessary practices in place that will elevate our district to excellence."

will offer will be helpful now and in years to come to feed continuous improvement for our systems, processes and ultimately outcomes for our students.

The team left us with three items for improvement:

1. Build collaborative partnerships among the district office and schools to increase student learning.
 2. Develop processes and criteria to ensure site-based decisions and school options contribute to district-wide student success.
 3. Fully implement the vision and plan for instruction technology to promote best practices for 21st-Century learning.
- The team will return in two years to review how we've done on those three items.

My humble and sincere thank you to all the staff who spent hours preparing for this important visit and for taking time out of their already jam-packed days to meet with the accreditation team and their efforts to make our visitors feel welcome in our district. I am so proud of the hard work and dedication you give to our kids each and everyday. This accreditation should leave you with a sense of pride and validation that what you are doing is creating a high-quality environment for students to learn.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT CHANGES TEMPORARY FOOD LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

The Casper-Natrona County Health Department has changed the requirements for food licenses since the passage of the Wyoming Traditional Food Act last year. Non-profits no longer need temporary food service permits for fundraisers or functions at the schools where the food will be served. John Drinnon, environmental health division director, cautioned that just because a license is not required, safe food handling practices should not be ignored. In a conversation with Mike Pyska, NCS D Food Service manager, Drinnon stressed that no raw milk or wild game should be served at these functions.

Pyska has available the Wyoming Department of Agriculture bulletin on food safety requirements to help people meet guidelines. He encourages district staff especially pay attention to the following sections:

* All food and water used in the stand must come from an approved source — no home canned foods or wild game is allowed and water shall come from a source that has been tested for bacteria. All foods must be prepared on the premises or in a licensed kitchen. No potentially hazardous foods may be prepared in a home kitchen and can only be sold to the final consumer by that home processor.

* All meats and other potentially hazardous foods shall be kept at an internal temperature of 41°F or colder or 135°F or hotter during display, service and holding. Foods requiring reheating shall be heated to 165°F for 15 seconds, prior to serving or holding. Minimum cooking temperatures: poultry and stuffed meat products — 165°F; ground beef and pork — 155°F; pork, fish and lamb — 145°F; eggs — 145°F - 155°F. Under no circumstances will potentially hazardous foods be allowed to sit at room or air temperature.

* A thermometer capable of testing the temperatures of hot and/or cold potentially hazardous foods must be available.

* Wrapped food shall not be stored in direct contact with ice. Canned and bottled beverages may be cooled in ice water to which sanitizer (50 ppm chlorine) has

been added, providing the container is drained and cleaned daily when in use.

* Condiments shall not be served from an open-type container. Individual packets or an approved dispenser shall be used.

* Ice shall be from an approved source and stored in a clean, covered food-grade container and dispensed with a scoop that has a handle. The handle of the ice scoop shall be kept out of the ice at all times.

* Milk shall be served in original containers of one pint or less or from an approved dispenser. Raw milk is prohibited.

* Only food-grade containers shall be used for food or ice storage. Garbage cans or trash bags may not be made from food-grade material. Enamelware food contact surfaces are prohibited.

* All food contact equipment, surfaces and utensils used in the preparation of food shall be kept clean until used. If facilities are not available to wash, rinse and sanitize utensils, extra utensils must be provided in case those in use fall on the floor or ground.

* Only-single service items shall be used by the consumer at the temporary food stand. All single-service items shall be protected until used, properly dispensed and stored off the floor or ground by at least six inches.

* Wiping cloths shall be available and stored in clean bleach and water solution the strength of which is 200 ppm. Chlorine test strips should be available to test the sanitizing solution strength.

* A convenient handwashing facility shall be available for employee handwashing. If hot and cold running water and a sink are not available in the stand, then a container with clean water for washing hands with soap shall be available in the stand. Disposable towels shall be used for drying hands. Hand sanitizer shall not be used in place of handwashing.

* Employees shall be free from contagious or communicable diseases, sores or infected wounds and wear clean clothing while on duty. Hair restraints such as caps, scarves or hairnets shall be worn. Long hair shall be tied back to prevent it from coming in contact with the food. There shall be no smoking in the food stand.

* Spray bottles shall be labeled as to contents. All cleaners, detergents, sanitizers and other toxic items shall be stored separately from food and food contact surfaces and equipment.

Contact Consumer Health Services for further information at (307) 777-7211. You also can contact Pyska via FirstClass e-mail or at 253-5203.

DISTRICT, CFD CONDUCT ANNUAL INSPECTIONS

NCS D Risk Management and Maintenance staff members, along with members of the Casper Fire Department, will be visiting schools this month to conduct the annual inspection process for the district. Staff should pre-inspect their buildings, offices and classrooms to decrease safety concerns.

Listed below are some of the most common violations; the following minimum safety guidelines must be met in all district locations. For a complete listing of common violations and safety guidelines, refer back to the August 2011 issue of NCS D News Zone.

* Appliances: All additional lighting, microwaves, coffee makers, toasters and refrigerators must be UL-rated, and the rating must be displayed. Portable heaters must also be UL-rated and have an automatic tip shut-off sensor.

* Cooking: Cooking is prohibited in classrooms, other than those designed for that purpose.

* Candles, etc.: Candles, burning incense and other types of flames are not allowed in buildings. Plug-in candle or potpourri warmers also are not allowed.

* Extension cords/surge protectors: Extension cords and flexible cords cannot replace permanent wiring. Surge protectors cannot be "piggy-backed" onto one another.

* Fabrics: Fabric hung on walls or light fixtures must have been treated for combustibility and flammability when it was manufactured or sprayed with fire retardant.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please contact Syd Webb in NCS D Risk Management at 253-5265.

Meet Your New Communications Specialist

NAME: Shauna VanderLinden

WHY DID YOU WANT THIS JOB? When I sit down to help my daughter with her fourth-grade math homework, I am reminded why I am a communicator and not an accountant. Because simply put, I'm good with words, not numbers. My entire career has involved crafting words into meaningful, entertaining, and informative communication pieces.

WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND? With a bachelor's degree in Journalism, I followed my passion in broadcast news to several television stations in the upper Midwest and West including Nebraska, Wyoming, and North and South Dakota. One of my proudest accomplishments is being a part of the successful launch of KCWY-News 13 in Casper in 2003 and seeing it become number one in the market within its first year on the air. After more than a decade in television news, I had the opportunity to move into non-profit, health care communications as the Public Relations and Marketing Representative for Wyoming Medical Center. In that role, I was charged with telling the hospital's story and sharing some of the amazing outcomes and achievements from the talent within the walls of WMC.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO BECOME AN NCS D TEAM MEMBER? Teachers have such a great impact on our children's lives. I see it with my children as they pretend to be teachers and emulate their teachers in play. I remember always wanting to be a teacher growing up. As the educators in my life helped shape my world and help me to see where my talents lie, now I find myself not as a teacher but instead as a communicator in the world of education.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE FICTIONAL CHARACTER OR BOOK? My favorite series of books has always been "Little House on the Prairie."



CONSULTANT RETURNS RECOMMENDATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM

By Shauna VanderLinden

The finish line may be far in the distance, but the redesign of the high school system may soon get the green flag. A third-party independent consulting firm has finished its study of the district's plan and has come to a recommendation of its own. Fanning Howey was brought in to analyze the educational programming currently delivered in NCS D's secondary schools and the facilities, which are currently available or are needed to provide an environment for 21st Century learning. Fanning Howey's conclusion and recommendation to the School Facilities Department mirrors the district's original intended plans for the high school system. This will include renovations for Natrona County and Kelly Walsh highschools and a brand new CAPS campus to include Roosevelt High School.

"We are thrilled the district's plan has been validated by Fanning Howey's recommendation," said Mark Antrim, associate superintendent of Facilities & Technology. "I'm confident the project can now move forward with the School Facilities Commission's approval."

If approved by the School Facilities Commission on Nov. 17, the high school system should be back in the design process by the end of November.

Planning for other sites around the district is ongoing. The following is an update on some of the construction plans.

SOUTHRIDGE ELEMENTARY

DLR Architects have been chosen for the design

of a new Southridge Elementary. A request for bids for construction of the building will be going out in the coming week with bids to be open early to mid-January. Construction is expected to begin in spring 2012, with an opening of fall 2013.

NORTH CASPER ELEMENTARY

Preliminary studies are underway for the site adjacent to the Boys & Girls Club on "K" Street. The design process is scheduled to begin in spring 2012.

DEAN MORGAN JUNIOR HIGH

MOA Architecture has started renovation design for 21st Century learning. Renovations go beyond the scope of the building, as the need for parking will be addressed along with more efficient athletic fields. The district will use major maintenance funding to renovate the existing structure at an estimated pricetag of \$3 million.

"We are excited for this project as it is very important that we bring DMJH up to the same standards of other middle schools in the district," said Dennis Bay, executive director of Facilities & Technology.

The design process is expected to be finished by spring 2012, with the first phase of construction to begin by summer 2012. Preliminarily, the renovations will be completed in a three-year, phased plan. To keep student learning a priority and distractions to a minimum, most of the construction work will be done when school is not in session — summers, nights and weekends.

NCHS STUDENTS TACKLE BULLYING

During National Bullying Awareness Week (Nov. 13-19), members of the Safe School Ambassadors (SSA) program at NCHS were recognized by the Board of Trustees. This program empowers leaders from diverse groups on campus and equips them with nonviolent communication and intervention skills to stop bullying and violence among their peers. Currently, there are 75 students trained as ambassadors at NCHS. Coming up in the December issue of NCS D News Zone, find out what other schools in the district are doing to address bullying in their schools.



OPEN ENROLLMENT ENDS NOV. 30; NO EXCEPTIONS!

By Arlene Steward

The State of Wyoming Employees' Group Insurance (EGI) Open Enrollment Deadline is Nov. 30, 2011, for an effective date of change of Jan. 1, 2012. There are no exceptions to this deadline! Any changes will be reflected in December's payroll deduction, as premiums are deducted in advance. Detailed enrollment information was mailed to employees the week of Nov. 14.

The open enrollment period allows employees and/or their dependents (spouse and/or children) to enroll in the health and preventive dental benefit plans if they are not currently enrolled. During the year, a qualifying event or coverage loss at no fault of your own will allow enrollment within 60 days; proof of loss must be provided at that time. Also, at this time, employees may elect to make the following changes:

* Drop coverage (must remain in the optional dental program for one year)

* Drop dependents (spouse/and or children)

* Change deductible options

* Change premium pre-tax and post-tax options (flexible spending for premiums)

* Enroll or renew flexible spending accounts (medical and/or dependent care)

A completed enrollment form is needed for the options listed above. To access forms, you may go to EGI's web site, egi.wy.gov, or you may visit the district's Benefits Office to complete your forms.

If you choose to print from the webpage, when there are two pages associated with an enrollment

form, PLEASE PRINT THE TWO PAGES TO A "FRONT & BACK ONE PAGE" FORM.

Optional dental

There is a three year waiting period before the employee will be eligible to enroll in this plan if this plan was not chosen when the employee was first eligible.

Life insurance

If life insurance was not elected when the employee was first eligible, at any time, the employee and/or spouse wishing to have life insurance coverage must complete an enrollment form, and wait for approval or denial. Children could be added without proof of good health.

Voluntary benefits

The following voluntary benefits have waiting periods if they are not elected when you were given the opportunity to enroll when you first became eligible: vision, short-term disability (STD), long-term disability (LTD) and long-term care (LTC). You may inquire about these benefits at any time.

You will be receiving details regarding the Open Enrollment process along with each option's waiting periods if they were not elected when you were given the opportunity to enroll when you first became eligible.

The State of Wyoming September 2011 Benefits Press was mailed to your home address. The 2012 insurance premium rates are published in that issue.

Changes beginning Jan. 1

CIGNA's "Call a Nurse Anytime" program will no longer be available due to low volume. Please discard

your magnets.

There will be new Great/West-CIGNA ID cards, due to the change from CIGNA RX Prime (TelDrug mail order) program to MedImpact (MedVantx mail order) program. New ID cards will be issued in December and will be activated for use beginning Jan. 1. Your current ID number will remain the same.

It is important that you read the details about the MedImpact (local), MedVantx (mail order) and Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy programs in the September 2011 issue of the State of Wyoming Benefits Press, mailed to your home in October.

Healthier Wyoming

Congratulations to the 584 employees who completed the wellness program to earn credit for 2012. You will save \$40 per month (\$480 annual discount) on your 2012 health premiums. The discount will reflect on your paychecks beginning December 2011, through November 2012. Insurance premiums are deducted in advance.

The Wyoming on Wellness fall newsletter was mailed to employees' homes in October. Please review that issue regarding the opportunity to earn a \$40 monthly health premium discount in 2013. The program runs from October 2011 through September 2012.

Arlene Steward, Benefits & Salary manager, may be reached at (307) 253-5208. You also can contact Monica Sayles, employee relations specialist, (307) 253-5310, or Patty Hines, compensation specialist, at (307) 253-5229.

Wyoming Conference Shows Latina Students How to Set — and Reach — Goals

By Jennifer Cousineau

As district staff members, many of us have the opportunities to attend a myriad of conferences to pursue growth on our professional journeys. Conferences aren't only for adults, though.

Sixteen sixth- through 12th-grade Latina students from the Natrona County School District attended the annual Wyoming Latina Youth Conference last month. The mission of the conference, according to Allie Abel, ESL (English as a second language) teacher, is to "enrich and empower young Latinas through mentors, education and awareness."

The conference is for girls in fifth through 12th grades, and discusses current educational and social issues faced by Latinas in today's day and age. The girls develop skill-building techniques (with guidance from appropriate mentors and role models) and network with peers and learn from their experiences by taking part in exciting and fun social events.

This year marked the 10th year the conference has been held. It was NCSA's third year attending. Attendees are chosen by teacher recommendations.

Workshops held this year focused on teen pregnancy; culture; drugs, gangs and suicide; and age-specific educational workshops that discussed resources, study tips and motivation. The keynote address was given by Dolores Huerta, a major player in the American civil rights movement and one of the most famous and celebrated Latinas in the United States. Huerta spoke to the girls about staying in school and the power of choice.

"The girls are in charge of their decisions and

COCURRICULAR COMMITTEE REVIEWS EQUITY IN DISTRICT OPERATIONS

The work of the Cocurricular Review Committee evolved from a Compact Issues Committee (CIC), which was tasked with developing an equitable way to distribute the funding for cocurricular costs associated with salaries.

The elementary schools had a 21-point system, or limit, for activities/clubs, which offered little

consideration for larger elementary schools. At the secondary level, criteria set up about 20 years ago for athletics, but very few guidelines for activities. The CIC Ad Hoc Committee on Cocurricular ran scenarios through the athletic and activities departments at secondary schools. The results were presented at November's CIC meeting (which occurred after this story went to print), suggesting equalizing the elementary school point system and establishing a point system for the

secondary level.

The Ad Hoc Committee identified several areas still needing review that the Cocurricular Committee will focus on.

Terry Hooker, Athletic & Activities manager, is leading the committee. Other members include Ruth Putnam, Marci Kutzer, Lynda Paulson, Paulette Parente-Hahn, Anne LaPlante, Marie Puryear, Mark Mathern, Ken Stoick, Frank Mello, Jeremy Prisbrey, Kelly Hornby, Crystal Mueller and Steve Hopkins.



have the power to make choices concerning their lives," Abel wrote. "At the conference, they are given resources to go to college, information about teen pregnancy, drugs and suicide. The girls leave the conference feeling excited about their futures and all the possibilities that their lives could entail."

The students sure seemed to enjoy it.

"I loved the conference! It was very fun and we learned a lot," NCHS 10th-grader Erendira Munguia wrote. "I really liked all the speakers that showed us about why it is important to make good decisions in life. I can't wait to go again next year!"

As for the mission of the conference? Accomplished.

"I already have one student who now wants to pursue the possibility of going to college," DeeAnne Simonson, English language learner teacher, wrote. "She now has that as a goal and knows that she advocates in her life that will help her meet her goal."

NATRONA

COUNTY SCHOOLS
970 N. GLENN RD.
CASPER, WY 82601

DTF WORKS WITH YEC

The NCSD Diversity Task Force (DTF) is working with the Youth Empowerment Council (YEC) to facilitate the viewing of a bullying prevention video. The YEC is asking participants to complete a bullying survey to understand students' perception of bullying in schools. If you would like your students to see the video, contact The Family Resource Center – Mercer House at 265-7366.

DTF has ordered 2012 Anti-Defamation League calendars. If you are interested in having next year's calendar, please e-mail Crystal Mueller on FirstClass.

Some holidays in December to be aware of are:

- World Aids Day*, Dec. 1
- International Day of Disabled Persons*, Dec. 3
- Ashura* (Islamic), Dec. 5

Bodhi Day (Buddhist), Dec. 8

Human Rights Day, Dec. 10

Bill of Rights Day, Dec. 14-15

Chanukah (Jewish), Dec. 21-28

Christmas (Western Christian), Dec. 25

Kwanzaa (African-American), Dec. 26, 2011 -Jan. 1, 2012

MEDALLION NOMINATION PACKETS AVAILABLE

Medallion nomination packets are available at schools, online and by contacting Human Resources. Nominations are due to HR at CSF by 4 p.m. Friday, Jan. 13, 2012.

The Celebration of Excellence, honoring Medallion winners and excelling schools, will be Tuesday, Feb. 21, at the Best Western Ramkota. Complimentary hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar will begin at 5 p.m.,

with the awards program starting at 5:30 p.m. Tickets are required for the event, as seating is limited.

Contact Sarah Prosinski at 307-253-5231 or on FirstClass for more information.

RENEW. REVITALIZE. RECONNECT.

The NCSD holiday party was so much fun last year, we can't wait to do it again! The Holiday Party Planning Team invites you to "Renew, Revitalize and Reconnect." We're thrilled to plan this fun occasion filled with friends, food, fabulous door prizes and dancing. Please save the date: Saturday, Dec. 10 at the Casper Events Center. A cash bar will open at 5:30 p.m., dinner will begin at 6:30 p.m. and the dance will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Meal choices are chicken with cranberry

glaze, vegetable lasagna, 10-oz top sirloin or butterflied colossal shrimp.

Tickets cost \$28 per person for the dinner and dance, and \$10 per person for the dance only. All services are paid with dollars generated by ticket sales.

Tickets will be sold in schools and buildings. Please see your school/building office secretary to purchase tickets. Tickets will be on sale through Dec. 2.

If you have questions or would like to be a part of the planning team, please contact Sarah Prosinski at 253-5231.

NCSD RAISES \$46,348.93 FOR UNITED WAY

Thanks to all who donated for the 2012 United Way campaign!

Thanks also to Geollen Stretesky in Multi-Media Services for leading the project.

