

# NATRONA

## COUNTY SCHOOLS

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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### LEGISLATURE DINNER TALKING POINTS

January 26, 2012

The Legislature is set to convene for its 2012 Budget Session on February 13. As a district, there are a few key areas we will be watching, including funding for our High School transformation project. The Board of Trustees and members of Cabinet met with Natrona County Legislators Thursday evening here at Central Services. The eight legislators that attended were engaged, asked informed questions, and were interested in what's happening in our schools. We were able to set very clear expectations and showcase the great progress happening at Natrona County Schools. Included are talking points that were shared with the legislators for your reference.

#### *2012 Legislature*

Wyoming Accountability in Education Act - fully support these efforts and many of the items mirror what NCSD is already doing.

#### *Strategic Plan*

Everything we do at NCSD is completed with the five goals of our strategic plan in mind. I am proud of the great progress we are experiencing.

Goal 1 concerns Literate Students and that “all NCSD students will read at grade level by the end of third grade.” What excites me is the continuous improvement we’ve seen. In 2007, about 64% of our kids were reading at grade level by the end of grade 3. Now that number is up around 80%.

For Goal 2, we aim to “perform in the top 10% in Wyoming on statewide assessments.” It’s an aggressive goal and we are about halfway there.

With our third goal, we are tracking the percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> graders who graduated on time with their peers. We are up near 80%. As we begin our high school transformation with the addition of the CAPS facility, we hope to see that number much closer to 100%.

Each year we measure staff and student engagement to track our Safe & Healthy goal. With 77% of our staff and our student population (5<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> grade) responding, we are showing impressive gains in engagement. The top performing schools track a staff engagement index of 55%, in Natrona County, we are right about 40%. We are closing the gap. With students, engagement grew to 64%.

We’ve recently started using a tool within the Systems Check where we measure the use of PSDA - Plan, Do, Study, Act. It reinforces our goal of being Effective & Efficient in our operations and classrooms. A majority of our educational programs and student services are either showing proficiency or progress in using PSDA for improvement.

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### *Facilities*

NCSD's vision is to create 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning facilities to allow every student to be fully engaged and offer learning environments that best serve each student's needs.

1. Southridge Elementary is a priority as the former site has already been razed. Students are attending school at the former Westwood site. Our goal is to have a bid on the street by the end of January and shovels in the dirt by May.
2. We met with the City of Casper and the Boys and Girls Club of Central Wyoming to finalize the "K" Street property for a new North Casper Elementary. This will pave the way to begin the design process.
3. A \$3 million renovation project is underway at Dean Morgan Junior High. 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.

The design process is expected to be finished by spring 2012 with the first phase of construction of 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.

4. We have an aggressive plan to move forward with the High School System in our district. We strongly believe in building our high schools to accommodate the five year enrollment projections from when the project is completed and we will continue to plan toward those numbers in the design and building process. We owe it to the kids of Natrona County to provide adequate space for ideal learning environments, not crowded hallways or classrooms.

We are pleased with Governor Mead's and the JAC's appropriation of \$126 million in the budget to fund an innovative plan for secondary education in Natrona County. Your support of this appropriation is appreciated.

*Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS)*

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We recognize that every student has his or her own unique learning style, 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning facilities will allow spaces to adapt to the needs of each student and provide students and teachers the necessary tools to do so. This model of educational delivery is based upon providing flexibility of space.

Using a model that encourages pathways to careers, career exploration will begin in middle school with the development of a six year plan for the student. Once the student enters high school, they can begin to choose classes or programs that may lead into their career or supplement post-secondary education.

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The Center for Advanced Professional Studies will provide four “academies” of study with hands-on, interactive learning within a specific field of study:

- Academy of Creative Arts, Communication and Design (CACD)
- Academy of Business, Agriculture and Natural Resources (BANR)
- Academy of Architecture, Construction, Manufacturing and Engineering (ACME)
- Academy of Health Sciences and Human Services (HSHS)

In addition, the CAPS program will have a strong community connection with collaboration with community partners and industry to provide relevant instruction within the field of study. It will give students options to be able to graduate ready to begin a career choice or graduate ready to advance their education in college or a trade school, sometimes beginning post-secondary education already having college credits on their records.

### *Hedonic Wage Scale*

Cost of Living – this is a positive step for Natrona County.

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