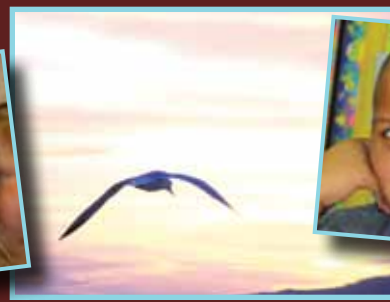


NCS D News Zone



VOLUME VI

ISSUE II

SEPT. 21, 2011

ARE YOU ENGAGED?

of the employee engagement survey Sept. 26 through Oct. 10. This is your chance to speak out and have your voice be heard! Tell us how you feel about your job, your work environment and the work of the Natrona County School District.

You will get an e-mail invitation to participate in the 15-question survey, which connects to the district's strategic Goal #4 — Safe and Healthy People. If you do not have daily access to a computer, ask your supervisor for help.

Your answers are confidential. The Gallup Organization, a worldwide leader in polls, is conducting the survey and only its staff will see your aggregated responses.

Overall results will be compiled at the district, school and department level to help the continuous improvement process. Gallup will provide an executive summary to Cabinet and will train administrators and managers in the implications of the results.

You can help make things better.

“We really want to get better and have an organization where all employees are happy to come

NCS D employees will be invited to participate in year two

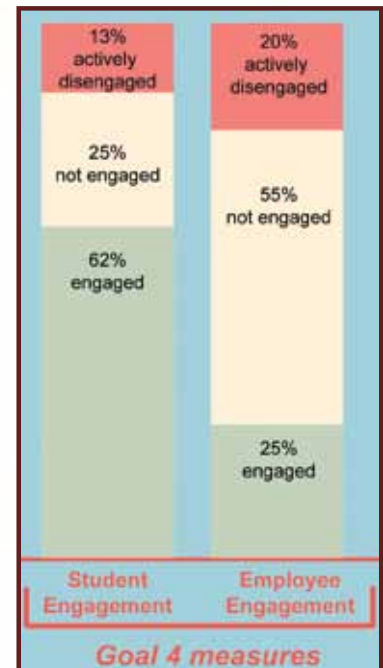
to work,” Dr. Crystal Mueller, associate superintendent of Human Resources said.

The survey measures employee “engagement,” not satisfaction.

Engagement means how much you are invested in your work and how much you believe you can make a difference. It is a research-based predictor of attendance, safety and productivity. Employee engagement also is known to impact student engagement and, therefore, academic success.

Students will have a chance to complete a similar survey in October. It measures student engagement, hope and well-being. Students in fifth through 12th grade will take the survey in class. A random selection of parents also will be invited to take the survey in November.

If you have questions, contact Mueller at 253-5231 or by e-mail at crystal_mueller@natronaschools.org.



Results of the 2010-11 Gallup engagement survey

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WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN BUILDING NCS D'S FUTURE?



Who are we?
Who do we want to be?
How do we get there?
Those are the key questions that the Natrona County School District has been asking for the past three years, as we develop and implement a strategic plan and a system of continuous improvement.

This time has come, now, for each of us, as individual members of the district team, to ask ourselves the same questions.

All 2,500 of us, as employees, are the Natrona County School District. Certified or classified, part-time or full-time, permanent, temporary or substitute, each one of us has a contribution to make to the whole, to the mission of helping all of our students succeed.

The big question for most of us is how?

How does a bookkeeper, a bus driver, a campus supervisor, a secretary, a teacher, an IT tech or a principal play a role in building this future?

It starts by understanding and living a core set of values. It's not enough to memorize the district's "Every Learner a Champion" slogan; we all need to understand what that means. Who are the learners? What does it mean to be a champion? How do we get there?

Last month, we took a big step. For the first time in years, every employee in our district came together for a common training. And, it wasn't a one-time thing. Throughout this year, each employee will participate in five milepost trainings around the mission, vision, values and goals of NCS D. Through these mileposts, each person should start to develop a clear picture of how he or she fits in the larger puzzle.

The first step is creating common expectations. All employees are critical parts of this organization, and we need every department, every school, every work group, and every person to be as good as they can be. Only then can we, collectively, be great for our students.

So, what does it mean to be good? We all have been asked to sign a document outlining the expectations of professional employees of NCS D. The goal of this exercise is simple: We have to have a common language and common ground. We have to know what it means to be good at our jobs. We have to know what is expected of us in order to be engaged, meaningful contributors to the organization.

The expectations are very simple: We are all professionals, supporting the work of the organization that employs us.

* We support the district's mission, vision, goals and core values.

* We uphold the Compact, our governing document. We evaluate our work, and we strive to improve in all things.

* We are an educational institution and, therefore, we value learning. All employees try to keep learning and growing to improve in their work.

* We are respectful and professional; we honor diversity; and we model appropriate adult, workplace behavior for each other and our students.

* We take advantage of opportunities to learn and grow, and we implement those opportunities in our work.

* We use data to evaluate our efforts and keep learning.

If you have questions about what these expectations mean, please have a conversation about them with your supervisor. No one will get in trouble for seeking to better understand the expectations.

These expectations are fundamental first steps in creating a common culture where we can, indeed, work together professionally for our collective goals. They are the first step to ensuring we are an organization that learns, grows, excels and truly gives each of our students the opportunity to do the same.

READ IMPORTANT INSURANCE UPDATES

You must complete the third year of the Healthier WY wellness insurance premium discount program to receive your \$40 monthly savings in 2012. If you are unsure whether you have completed the program, you may check your status by going to www.healthierwy.org and select, "Your Status" at the top of the page.

Healthier WY requirements are:

1. Complete the Cigna Health Assessment online between Oct. 1, 2010 and Sept. 30, 2011, and receive a separate \$50 incentive check. Log onto <http://www.mycignaforhealth.com>. If you have any problems with the health assessment, you may call CIGNA at (877) 719-9004.

2. You must have an annual physical/wellness exam by a licensed health care provider prior to Sept. 30, 2011. Your health care provider must complete the form, sign it and then you must mail it back to EGI in the addressed envelope that is provided. Please keep a signed copy of this form for your records. It must be postmarked no later than Sept. 30, 2011.

3. If you have not completed at least three of the monthly challenges by now, you will not be able to receive the premium discount for 2012.

If you have any questions, please contact Tammy Till at tammy.till@wyo.gov. Please refer to your Healthier WY code in your e-mail.

HEALTHIER WY, YEAR FOUR, BEGINS OCT. 1

To receive a health premium discount for 2013, you must again take the health and wellness assessment, have an annual physical exam by a licensed health care provider and complete at least three of the following challenges by Sept. 30, 2012:

Challenge 1: 4 Weeks to Fabulous — October 2011 (improve overall health)

Challenge 2: Safety First — December 2011 (vehicle, home and work safety)

Challenge 3: Healthy Breakfast Club — February 2012 (yes, eating a healthy breakfast)

Challenge 4: Active For Life — April 2012 (sorry to say ... it's about exercise)

Challenge 5: Skin You're In — June 2012 (skin health)
Challenge 6: Eye On Health — August 2012 (eye health)

IN OTHER INSURANCE NEWS ...

Insurance assistance payment

Earlier this year, the Compact Issues Committee recommended to the Board of Trustees that employees who are insurance eligible as of Oct. 1, 2011, receive a one-time insurance assistance payment of \$600, equaling approximately \$475 after taxes. Trustees approved the recommendation. It is intended that the money be distributed via check on Oct. 10. There will be no direct deposit. Special thanks to CIC members and trustees!

Open enrollment

The State of Wyoming Employees' Group Insurance (EGI) open enrollment period begins this November. Changes made during open enrollment (OE) will become effective Jan. 1, 2012. This period allows employees and/or their dependents (spouse and/or children) to enroll in the health and optional dental benefit plans if they are not currently enrolled. (The optional dental plan is subject to a waiting period.)

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)

All paperwork must be completed and submitted to the district's Benefits Office no later than Nov. 30.

You may attend one of two sessions of EGI's employee OE meetings Oct. 25 from 11 a.m. to noon or 2 to 3 p.m. at the CSF-McKinley Annex.

Arlene Steward, Benefits and Salary manager, may be reached at (307) 253-5208.

A book, a burger and a bridge

By Jennifer Cousineau

I drove into the Central Wyoming Fairgrounds parking lot and immediately my senses became overwhelmed. My eyes, ears and nose were intrigued, though the carnival and rodeo has long been gone. Instead of elephant ears, I smelled burgers grilled just right. Instead of screams of adrenaline, I heard screams of innocent delight. Instead of carnies offering expensive carnival prizes, I saw kids and their parents walking away with free books.

Aug. 31 marked the third Book and A Burger event, which welcomed 220 families from Mills and Mountain View elementary schools to a dinner and book giveaway. At each monthly event, families are served dinner (usually burgers or hot dogs), listen to stories read by local celebrities and each child gets

to choose his or her very own book,

donated by Rescued Treasures, St. Vincent's Thrift Store and Poverty Resistance.

"It's great," Candi Long, grandmother to Mountain View students Aiden Long and Kylie Carter, said. "The book giveaways are great, and we get resources we might not have known about."

The resources Long referred to are representatives from community agencies that offer direct services to youth and their families. Table hosts direct the families to the resources, where they will get information about scholarships, free classes, transportation, services, etc. Each agency also provides giveaways, and private drawings are held from thrift stores for goods such as shopping certificates, making each event quite fruitful for those who attend.

The key behind Book and a Burger,

Event Coordinator Linda Melotte, with Living Streams Fellowship (LSF), told me, is to be a bridge between the families and the agencies.

"We want to get families connected to the things they need to be a success," she said.

Melotte and Jansen Bagwell, CEO and pastor of LSF, hope others in the community — and state — duplicate this program to give aid to as many families as possible.

"We started the church four years ago," Bagwell explained. "We looked at property all over and were really drawn to the town of Mills. Then we heard about the We Read program and the Casper Star-Tribune and school district's efforts to help families, so we approached Mills' and Mountain View's principals to see how we could serve the town."

Serve the town Book and A Burger does. In fact, it's serving the town so well that Bagwell recently secured a larger venue to house the growing monthly get-togethers.

"Does it work? Does it really connect families and help them be successful?" you may ask. Melotte explained that the table hosts gather data at each dinner and once enough data is compiled, LSF staff will review it to see if families are utilizing the program to its fullest potential.

Bagwell and Melotte hope teachers use it to its fullest potential, too. They want to "be an arm and a leg to teachers," Melotte told me with sincerity in her eyes, because teachers have access to these students on a regular basis and can use LSF and Book and A Burger as a resource, where the entire family unit is together.



Pastor Jansen Bagwell serves burgers to families at last month's Book and A Burger event.

"If a kid is misbehaving in class, but the teacher knows he doesn't feel safe at home or that his family is struggling with certain issues we can help and get them in touch with agencies that can give them services."

Not only did my tummy get full at this event, my heart got full, too. It is a fun, very rewarding and worthwhile two hours and I highly encourage all NCSD staff to help by being a table host at least once. The dinners are held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. the fourth Wednesday of every month, except for December, when the dinner will be held the 21st. The next dinner will be Sept. 28 in the Industrial Building at the Fairgrounds.

For more information or to help, call 472-0267 or e-mail office@livingstreamsfriendship.com.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- * Be a table host.
- * Suggest celebrity readers.
- * Donate children's books.
- * Donate money for the dinners.

DISTRICT 'MOVES AHEAD WHERE IT CAN' ON FACILITIES PROJECTS

By Jennifer Cousineau

The Select School Facilities Committee met earlier this month and while there was no official vote or contract presented, Mark Antrim, associate superintendent of NCSD Facilities & Technology, said that legislators told the district and School Facilities Department (SFD) that the remedy for the high school system has been set: There will be Natrona County High School, which will be renovated to bring the current structure to 21st Century standards for 2,000 students; Kelly Walsh High School, which will undergo some renovations and ultimately house 1,800 students; and CAPS, which will house Roosevelt High School and its 300 students and the Center for Advanced and Professional Studies, which will be a shared facility for 500 NC and KW students. Finalizing the budget for the project will require review of several options for the reconstruction of NC and KW and the construction of RHS/CAPS.

"We think we're on the same page," Antrim said, though he'll feel a lot better when it's in writing.

While nothing has officially been approved or moved forward, Antrim said a fact is that a request for proposal (RFP) for educational specifications has been approved and put out by the SFD. (Educational specifications describe and define the spaces that will deliver curriculum ... the classrooms, adjacencies, furniture, fixtures, lighting, etc.) The goal is to create a standard for all ninth- through 12th- grade classrooms and spaces. The RFP closes Sept. 22, after which the listing of candidates will be published, followed by interviews conducted by SFD and NCSD officials.

The "ed specs," as Antrim called them, are the next step in the process, in order for the SFD to submit to the select committee its 2012 budget request for the Legislature. It is estimated that construction for the entire high school project will cost between \$220-\$240 million. Antrim hopes to "get back on track with design" in December.

Another topic discussed at the Sept. 8 meeting was the needs index and why it changes — drastically — every year. Specifically, why was Park Elementary, which last year was in spot 18 for funding for a new design, moved to spot 104 this year, which puts them out of the running? Antrim's only assumption is that it's because some major maintenance work was done, but he, along with trustees and other district officials, are requesting an answer from the SFD. The district is working to get Park and other elementary schools back on that list for design work. During the 2011 Legislative session, planning dollars were approved for North Casper, Pineview, Evansville, and of course Park, elementary schools. The district has asked the SFD to authorize Antrim and his team to proceed with planning. Work to secure funds in the 2012 session also is underway.

Antrim remains hopeful.

"We're moving ahead where we can."



Don't judge it by its cover! Crystal Kletsch helps her son, Nathaniel, choose a book for him to keep at the Book and A Burger event in August. At present time, the event is open to Mountain View and Mill elementary school families.

MIKE JENNINGS VS. SYD WEBB

Which do you call in a crisis?

By Jennifer Cousineau

Student Support Services, formerly Student Support/Safe Schools, is now under the direction of Mike Jennings, who replaced Marty Wood as Wood accepted an assistant principal position at Kelly Walsh High School. As Wood prepared for his transition, he had some recommendations for Curriculum & Instruction (C&I) staff members about keeping the focus of the position on student support, curriculum and support of that curriculum. Dr. Mark Mathern, associate superintendent of C&I, explained that as a result, the position has been split between Jennings and Syd Webb, NCSD risk manager.

Under Jennings's direction in Student Support Services, which is located in the old CCA building, 920 S. Beverly, will be: tutors, Title III and support for school counselors and nurses. Jennings also will oversee the Reconnect Program, suspension lab and expulsions.

Tammy Ray, assistant principal of Roosevelt High School/Transitions, now oversees Juvenile Detention Center students.

Several support staff have moved with Jennings to the old CCA building, commonly being referred to as the "700 wing," including Gayle Schnorenberg, Student Support Services administrative specialist; Cris Cuthbertson, attendance and nursing secretary; Deb Fields, Suspension Lab secretary; and Bernie Ourth, attendance officer. Tanya Sisneros, virtual school program specialist, also is housed there.

Mathern said another change is that he has challenged both Jennings and Dr. Tammie Bertelson, special education director, to continue to blur the lines around Student Support Services.

"We know that the services we provide to kids on IEPs are also in need of student support," Mathern said. "In a sense, both of these departments are providing services to kids to help them be productive in the classroom."

Who should you call if there is a bomb threat or

massive snowstorm? Enter, Webb. Under his direction in Risk Management will be procedures for handling bomb threats, shooters in or around schools, delays caused by weather and student and staff deaths. Webb also will be in charge of the district's crisis management team, with Jennings providing technical assistance in interpreting policies and procedures.

"We are not divorcing ourselves from the responsibilities of kids here," Mathern explained. "If there is a student tragedy or some sort of situation where kids are struggling, Mike and Syd will work closely together."

A third player in the changes is the Community Partnerships Office, which will disseminate AlertNow messages and ensure that information is available to the public and responsibly delivered and received. Please make sure your contact information is up-to-date with Cheryl Caster, information systems specialist. Please encourage your students' families to update their information with the school's office manager.

Numbers to add in your phone

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Mike Jennings 253-3152

Gayle Schnorenberg 253-3150

Deb Fields/Suspension Lab 253-3151

Cris Cuthbertson 253-3177

Bernie Ourth 253-3173

Tanya Sisneros 253-3186

RISK MANAGEMENT

Syd Webb 253-5265

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Kelly Eastes 253-5370

Jennifer Cousineau 253-5382 (Jenni Lockett is no longer with the district. Please call Jennifer with whatever PR, marketing and advertising needs you may have.)



Midwest students launch new year with big dreams

By Jenni Lockett

Whether they dream of becoming a princess or nurse, a teacher or "Army man," elementary students at Midwest School are dreaming big this year.

The K-12 school's elementary team members got together this fall to launch the first day of school, quite literally, with some fun goal-setting.

Teachers used the book "Dream," which was a focus of staff development for all Natrona County School District employees this year, to help their students identify their hopes for the school year that started Wednesday.

Each child wrote out a dream, then tied it to a balloon to launch into the blue summer sky. (The teachers held on to a copy of each dream to check back in throughout the school year.)

Some dreams were what you might expect of young children: becoming a princess, visiting Nickelodeon stars in Hollywood, or, from one science-minded student, building a teleporter.

Others were more academic: "I want to read a book

by myself," said one first-grader. I want to work hard in P.E., so I can go to the Olympics," or "I want to be a science star," wrote others.

Principal Chris Tobin said her dream is for Midwest to become an excelling school in the district, as other teachers nodded along.

"I want to be the best teacher I can be," added fifth-grade teacher Cheryl Anderson, so I can help them get their dreams."



FIRE DEPARTMENT HAS RULES FOR HAUNTED HOUSES

If your school is planning to have a haunted house next month to kick off the holiday season, a representative from your school must complete the haunted house application, as required by the Casper Fire Department. You can download a copy of the application and the fire department's haunted house application plan at www.natronaschools.org.

Call Syd Webb, NCSD risk manager, at 253-5265 if you have questions.



**NCSD OFFERS FREE
FAMILY PORTRAIT
OPPORTUNITY**

The Natrona County School District has arranged a free gift for all employees.

Employees are invited to have a family portrait taken by a professional photographer at the Central Services Facility. Your family will receive one 10"x13" portrait, and you'll have the opportunity to purchase additional poses and copies, if you choose.

Photo sessions are from 4 to 9 p.m. Friday, Sept. 23, and from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 24, in the Garfield Room at the Central Services Facility. Portrait proofs will be available in October. (A minimum of 70 sittings are required, or this event will be canceled.)

Bring your family,

your pets (with proof of vaccination to get into the CSF building) or just yourself for this free portrait opportunity. Get a free portrait to enjoy, or order even more to share.

Appointments are required! To reserve a time, please e-mail lori_burns@natronaschools.org with your name, phone number, the number of people who will be included in your family portrait (note any pets) and your preferred day and time.

(Please note: This program is free of charge to the district.)

**KNOW SIGNS, SYMPTOMS
OF CONCUSSIONS**

High school and middle school sports can be a great way for young adults to learn valuable life lessons in teamwork, goal setting

and discipline, but they can also test and push a student athlete's endurance and strength and can lead to injuries.

Concussions are a common injury among student athletes and should be taken seriously. It is believed that concussions are under-reported by victims for fear of being removed from competition, peer pressure and society pressures to "get back on the horse." A concussion is considered a traumatic brain injury and should be treated as such.

Studies have shown that at least four of every 10 high school athletes who have concussions return to action too early. Returning to play before giving the brain enough time to heal can leave athletes susceptible to second-impact syndrome,

resulting in severe brain swelling and damage.

Athletes with head injuries should be evaluated by a qualified coach, trainer or medical professional before being allowed to return to play.

Visit www.natronaschools.org to print a handy "concussion signs" pocket guide. For more information, call the Wyoming Medical Center Sports Medicine/Head Injury Hotline at (800) 442-2222.

**ATTEND OCTOBER
DTF MEETING**

The Natrona County School District Diversity Task Force will hold its October meeting from 4:45 to 6 p.m. on the 13th, in the Westwood Room at the Central Services Facility. All district and community members are encouraged to come.

