

NCS D News Zone



VOLUME V

ISSUE X

MAY 25, 2011

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS SUPPORT SUMMER READING

By Jenni Luckett

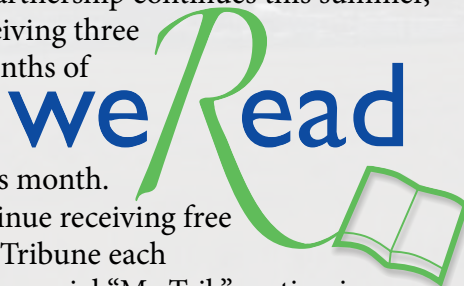
Summer is a dangerous time for student learning. Recent data shows that student proficiency on the NWEA reading test drops an average of 4 points from the end of third grade to the beginning of fourth grade here in Natrona County. For low-income students, the drop is closer to 12 points.

Students need to keep reading over the summer. While we can't keep them all in school, we can help support families in participating in summer reading and literacy activities that keep the books open. Be sure to help your students and families learn about these great summer activities:

We Read

This partnership between the district, the Casper Star-Tribune and the Natrona County Public Library provides free books for K-3 students each month, as well as family literacy activities weekly in the newspaper. The partnership continues this summer, with students receiving three books (for the months of June, July and August) before school lets out this month.

Families will continue receiving free copies of the Star-Tribune each Tuesday, when the special "My Trib" section is



printed. You can learn more about the partnership online at www.natronaschools.org, or by contacting Linda Krafft in the Library and Technology Resource Center (LTRC) at 253-4302.

Go To Bat For Kids

The Casper Ghosts also have joined NCS D in the effort to support student literacy. Last month, each school received a set of vouchers to hand out to



students in recognition of positive academic or social behaviors. Each voucher provides students two free tickets to a 2011 Casper Ghosts home game. But everyone can win as part of Go To Bat. In addition to the vouchers, the Go To Bat For Kids program will feature NCS D library staff members at select Ghosts games, where they will host a booth with reading activities and free book giveaways. Check them out at Ghost games June 30-July 2, July 14-16, July 29-30, Aug. 5-6, Aug. 18-20, and Sept. 1-3. And, don't forget to give out your school's supply of vouchers to eligible students!

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CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN 2010-11



“We value our journey toward excellence in our behaviors and outcomes, as we celebrate accomplishments, progress and triumphs.”

As we reach the end of another outstanding school year, the Natrona County School Districts has so many accomplishments to celebrate on its journey

toward excellence.

We kicked off our school year by opening two new school buildings: Summit Elementary School and CY Middle School. The openings were not only successful; already, the two communities have become leaders in our larger district.

Just this month, the career-technical education curriculum piloted at the new CY Middle School was adopted as the CTE curriculum for all middle schools in our district. That school helped us take an important step on our journey to providing rigorous and relevant educational opportunities for our students and preparing them for college and careers.

In the meantime, Summit Elementary School has led as an example of how to engage our broader Natrona County community. The school has partnered with the Child Development Center of Natrona County to provide a community preschool on site. It has hosted evening events, bringing schools back to the center of the community. And, most importantly, it has modeled how to take the community’s dreams and turn them into a reality.

Learning from our experiences at Summit, NCS D hosted its first community charrettes this month to begin the design of the remodels of Kelly Walsh and Natrona County high schools, as well as the design of the new high school campus, which will include Roosevelt, Transitions, Star Lane and the Center for Advanced and Professional Studies. We are listening to our

community and building the groundwork for a high-school system that will meet the needs of our students deep into the 21st Century.

We also have made tremendous progress toward our five strategic goals this year. More students are reading at grade level, excelling in the classroom, graduating from high school, exhibiting safe and healthy behaviors, and becoming champions in our community.

Earlier this month, we learned that the Safe Schools Healthy Students grant, which is coming to an end, has helped transform our district’s approach to discipline in schools. We have moved from a largely reactive to a proactive model that has resulted in about 25 percent fewer discipline referrals in schools. That’s huge. That means more students are spending their time learning, rather than disrupting or being disrupted in the classroom. It means our schools are becoming daily more positive places for children and adults.

Also this month, we celebrated the graduation of about 700 young people. About 60 percent of those will start college in the fall. Others will take the skills they’ve developed in high school to enter the working world. Some will join the military. Some who didn’t make it across the stage will go on to earn their GEDs. All told, hundreds of young people are starting a new journey, building on the foundation that we gave them, the relationships we built with them. That is something that should make every member of the NCS D team very proud.


The path to excellence is never at an end. The whole point of a journey of continuous improvement is that we constantly strive for ways to make our students’ experiences and opportunities a little better. But this year’s leg of the journey has been a success. I commend each of you for your hard work. This summer, we will continue fixing and replacing school buildings, planning new programs, and reviewing our curricula. And, we will look forward to coming together again in the fall, with a new group of students, a new chance to help brighten the future, and a new opportunity to be champions.

GET INFORMED ABOUT INSURANCE RATE HOLIDAY, INSURANCE ASSISTANT PAYMENT

You should have received the following letter from the NCS D Employee Insurance Benefits Office via U.S.P.S. mail last week. Please review it regarding the upcoming temporary rate holiday for health, dental and life insurance premiums. Natrona County School District employees are on different pay schedules; therefore, insurance payroll deductions will be affected

according to the individual schedules. Details were included in the mailing.

Please note that the holiday is *in addition to* the April 4, 2011, recommendation made by the Compact Issues Committee regarding the \$600 insurance assistance payment to employees, which is scheduled to be paid in the fall.



THE STATE OF WYOMING

MATTHEW H. MEAD
GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER BOSWELL
DIRECTOR

DEAN FAUSSET
ADMINISTRATOR

Department of Administration and Information

Human Resources Division – Employee Benefits

TO: State of Wyoming Health Insurance Participants

FROM: Ralph Hayes, Manager
Employees’ Group Insurance

DATE: May 10, 2011

RE: **Temporary Rate Holiday**

Employees’ Group Insurance (EGI) instituted a rate increase in December of 2010 based upon calculations of anticipated paid claims for the health and dental programs using the most recent 12 months of paid claims prior to June 2010 plus medical and dental trends. Since that time the health program’s utilization has moderated and we currently have a reserve level that exceeds the level allowed by the federal government.

We have good news for plan participants. A two-month rate holiday has been declared, which means you will not pay any premiums for your health, dental and life insurance in June payroll for July premiums and July payroll for August. This way EGI can return the excess reserves to the individuals and entities participating in the program. Dependent life and voluntary benefit premiums will still be collected.

While it would seem practical on the part of the state to take the savings mentioned above and use the funds to offset future premium increases, we do not have that option. The federal government mandates that a state can only accumulate a limited amount of funds in its insurance reserve, and we are over that limit at this time.

The rate holiday is temporary and normal premium deductions will be reinstated in August 2011 for September premiums. While this effort will reduce our health insurance reserve to meet federal standards, the cost of health care and the size of claims continue to grow. Participants may want to consider this temporary savings an opportunity to set aside funds for future medical expenses.

Please contact the district’s Employee Insurance Benefits Office if you have questions regarding your insurance (Arlene Steward, 307-253-5208 or Victoria Nolte, 307-253-5207).

COMPACT EVOLVES WITH DISTRICT

By Jennifer Cousineau

When the district's governing document of trust, the Compact, originally was written in 2001, emphasis was put on relationships, trust and collaboration "due to the turmoil and distrust brooding in the district at that time," Carol Glasgow, Compact coordinator, said.

Ten years and four amendments later, Glasgow said the Compact has come a long way from that original document.

The Compact Issues Committee (CIC) met earlier this spring to make some language revisions to ensure the document better aligned with current district practices. Some language was changed, some was added, and some was altogether removed. Most of the language remained the same, including details about continuous improvement, which Glasgow said has always been in the Compact, even if it hasn't always been practiced.

Baldrige criteria also have always graced the pages of the Compact, as it incorporates the statement of philosophical agreements and core values and concepts of continuous improvement.

Some of the Compact's wording was changed to make it more "district appropriate," according to Glasgow. She said CIC removed all references to "IBAP" (Interest-Based Agreement Process) because it was only one process of collaboration. Also changed were the guiding principles to reflect the many different methods of decision-making used in the district.

Other changes included referencing board policies and administrative regulations and what the four governing committees (CIC, Leader Group, Compact Steering Committee and Problem Solving Committee) do and are designed to do. CIC also decided the

Compact would be reviewed annually.

The Compact expanded in size, too, with the addition of the district's issue routing form, mission statement and goals, a glossary of terms and the Expectations of Professional Employees agreement.

Compact will be taught, incorporated over summer

Several trainings will be held over the summer, including Leadership Academy for principals and directors and an August event for all staff.

"All training is being tied back to the Compact so people learn to live it and learn that it's what ties the entire district together," Cheryl Gettings, director of Organizational Development, said. "All of our work is common to help us be a district instead of individual schools. The [August] training will give us a common vocabulary and understanding about how the Compact defines our work and brings us together to do that work. [It will] help employees celebrate their role in the Compact."

The goal of this summer's Leadership Academy, the work of which will be ongoing throughout next school year, is to have leaders begin connecting strategically with "all of our big rocks," explained Administrator of Organizational Development Verba Echols. The "rocks" include the Compact, new teacher evaluations, principal evaluations and the Gallup student engagement survey.

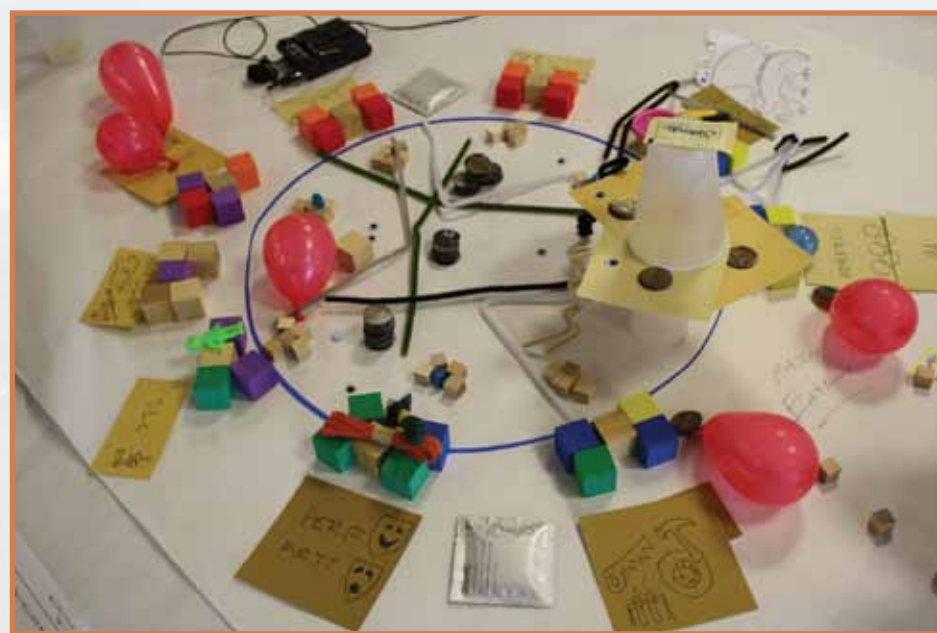
If you have questions about the Compact or do not have a copy, contact Glasgow via FirstClass e-mail or 253-5392. The most updated version of the Compact also is on the district's website.

DISTRICT, COMMUNITY BEGIN HIGH SCHOOL DESIGN PROCESS

By Jennifer Cousineau

More than 100 people met earlier this month to begin the high school systems charrette, or design process. The goal of the charrette is to provide a solid direction for the programming and facilities for secondary education in Casper; no design decisions were made.

"We had great participation from the community," Superintendent Joel Dvorak said. "It was a high-energy, very engaging, creative process that has set us up for some excellent work on designing spaces that will occur the end of May."



Innovation kits were put on each table so charrette participants could channel their inner youth and get creative with design suggestions for the high school campus project.

The charrette included members of the selected architect and construction management teams (Bassetti Architects and Adolphson & Peterson for Natrona County High School; RB+B Architects and Sampson Construction for Kelly Walsh High School; and The Cuninghams Group as architects of the new campus), as well as community members, NCSD trustees and district staff and students.

During the 2½ days of work, the group came up with four guiding principles and interests under them, which would serve as common ground for all three sites:

- 1) Collaborative learning communities: professional work settings, relationship-based work settings, global connection and transparency
- 2) Inventive learning settings: flexibility to support differentiated learning and teaching, sparks curiosity, variety of settings to serve diverse needs, furnishings that are adaptable and agile, and ubiquitous and flexible technology

3) Meaningful community partnerships: welcoming and appropriate space for mentorships, lifelong learning opportunities, stewardship of our planet and its resources, and service to the community

4) Culture of empowerment: shared ownership of learning settings, personalized learning settings, services distributed to serve students, celebration of student achievement, and safe and nurturing environments

Participants will reconvene May 24 through 26, again at the Casper Events Center, for the next step of the charrette process. All sessions are open to the public.

If you have questions about the process, please call 253-5370.

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If you have questions, call Jenni Luckett in NCSD Community Partnerships at 253-5380.

Local libraries

For the third year, Verda James Elementary School will open its library for summer hours to encourage students and families to keep reading. The library will be open from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for families to check out books, play games and do book club blogging. There also will be a parent book exchange, as well as Kindles for students to check out. Students also can enter to win prizes for participating in the summer library hours.

Willard Elementary School is promoting the Scholastic Summer Reading Challenge. The school also is trying to provide books for fourth- and fifth-grade students to take home over the summer, in addition to the books K-3 students receive through We Read.

Meanwhile, the Natrona County Public Library will host its summer reading programs for various age groups. Registrations for the programs begin May 31. Encourage your students to sign up.

Back to School Bash

The 2011 Back to School Bash also will focus on literacy. The Aug. 13 event will have a theme, "Reading Makes Life Colorful." The free family event features activities and information from schools, nonprofits and other organizations and agencies serving children and families. All booths are geared toward children and include giveaways or games. Let your families know about the 2011-12 school year kickoff party, and be sure your school has a booth, too. Call Jennifer Cousineau at 253-5382 for information.



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Recycling work will continue over summer

Thanks to all of the school representatives who have helped Jennifer Cousineau with putting together a districtwide recycling program. Cousineau will continue her work over the summer. The greatest needs seem to be copy/"white" paper, magazines, newspapers, catalogs, cardboard and plastic bottles. Cousineau will talk with Cabinet about having City of Casper bins located at all schools to be picked up by the city.

Plastic bottle recycling has been incorporated at CSF, along with copy/"white" paper, and magazine, newspaper and catalogs. Cousineau would like to thank CSF's custodians and Multi-Media Services team for their help dumping office bins into the larger receptacles, and for wheeling them outside for city pickup.

Other recent recycling efforts include items being reused from the old Southridge Elementary building, which began being demolished earlier this month, including:

- * Flora from the old school has been donated to CSF and City of Casper

- * All door hardware was moved from Southridge to the Westwood building when staff and students temporarily moved in

- * Some playground equipment was moved to Westwood

MEET YOUR LTRC TEAM

By Jennifer Cousineau

This year's *News Zone* has introduced NCSD staff to several district departments and groups. We'll end the volume acquainting you with the Library and Technology Resource Center team, formerly known as Library Services.

The name was changed because the department wanted to facilitate more technology, especially at the elementary level, and collaborate between teachers, librarians and library media technicians. Linda Krafft, district library coordinator, said the new name "represents the new vision and goals and the changing environment of libraries."

Some of the new technology incorporated into literacy teaching are Kindles, iPads, iPod Touches and Nooks, all of which are just different avenues for teaching reading, according to Krafft.

"I believe that part of teaching means diversifying for your population," she said. "A book would certainly be one form of teaching/doing/practicing reading. Digital devices are just another format for reading. Whatever way we can facilitate comprehension ... it's all just a matter of reading."

Meet the team



Name: Joan Goehring
Title: Library Media Technician

Why did you want to get into education: In junior high, I thought I wanted to be a school teacher. In high school, I began working for a telephone company. I was there for 30 years. I retired

and moved back to Casper, and had an opportunity came up in library services as a sub, initially.

Favorite fictional book or character: No specific author or book, but I love historical fiction.



Name: Lois Graff
Title: Library Media Technician

Why did you want to get into education: I had positive experiences myself going to school. I enjoyed it.

Favorite fictional book or character: "Frindle," by Andrew Clements



Name: Linda Krafft
Title: District Library Coordinator

Why did you want to get into education: I guess I always wanted to be a teacher, from the age of 5 or so. My brother and sisters went to summer school. I helped the teacher when I was 13.

Favorite fictional book or character: Harry Potter, because he's magic and I

would love to have magical powers. If I had magical powers, I would make every child read by the end of third grade. I also like young adult fiction ("Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie," by Jordan Sonnenblick is one of my favorites). And author Phyllis Reynolds Naylor.

Encourage your students and their families to read together over the summer!

Read

HAS YOUR SCHOOL SIGNED UP FOR THE BASH?

NCSD's Community Relations and the Discover Program are teaming with the Casper Star-Tribune to bring the community the fourth annual Back to School Bash. This year's event will take place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 13, at the Casper Events Center with the theme "Reading makes life colorful."

So far, only five schools have signed up for a booth. Booth spots are free and can be manned by school staff, student organizations, parent volunteers, etc. The Bash is a fun, interactive way for your new and returning students to meet people from your school, pick up important information and just have a fun time.

If you have questions or would like to sign up, please call Jennifer Cousineau at 253-5382.

DTF HOLDS MAY MEETING

The Natrona County School District's Diversity Task Force will hold its monthly meeting from 4:45 to 6 p.m. Thursday, May 26,

in the Westwood Room at CSF. Topics of discussion will include the partnership with Mercer Family Resource Center, diversity brochures, Back to School Bash, anti-bullying wristbands, evaluation of this year's plan and next year's plan, new membership and apparel, defining roles, building contacts/representatives and book studies and discussions. Meetings will not be held over the summer.

Also, come check out the diversity wall outside of the Superintendent's Office! It's a work in progress, but it is clear that NCSD respects humanity.

For more information, contact Kathi Hawley via FirstClass e-mail or 253-5231.

CONGRATS TO 2011 GRADUATES!

Congratulations to the class of 2011, as they gear up to walk across the stage and earn their much-deserved diplomas. We wish you luck as you tackle the next chapter of your lives.

Congratulations also to all other 2011 champion learners ... we look

forward to seeing you next year!

STAY IN THE KNOW OVER SUMMER

It's hard to believe it's the end of another school year. We hope all staff have a fabulous summer, whether you'll be on vacation or not.

Don't forget to check the district's website and Facebook and Twitter accounts to continue receiving important information. Remember, you can continue to give the district feedback, too, by commenting on the website or e-mailing ncsd_ideas@natronaschools.org.

See you in the fall!

NEWS ZONE WILL RESUME IN AUGUST

This issue of *NCSD News Zone* will be the final issue for this school year. Keep your eyes open in August, though, for Volume VI, Issue I!

MMS OPEN OVER SUMMER

Multi-Media Services will be open for print, copy and mailing jobs over the summer. In fact, summer is a great time of year to get a jump-start on your projects! Call 253-5263 with questions about any jobs you have.

