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Moving forward through the holidays and beyond

By Dr. Brenda S. Dietrich, Superintendent of Schools

I want to wish all of you the very best for this holiday season and hope that you enjoy your winter break. My family will be traveling to McPherson for our annual get-together, then returning to Topeka for the remainder of the break. The district office is open and I will be popping in and out during that time.

District operations continue over the holiday time. You might notice our maintenance staff working in the buildings on a variety of projects, including installing partitions in the restroom at the middle school and completing back-logged work orders. You will also see activity at WRHS. We have contracted to replace water pipes and install 200 new lockers over winter break at the high school. As an FYI, the water will be shut off for a few days as the pipe work is being completed. Our computer tech staff will be pulling cable and up-grading and installing computers in various buildings as well.

We have several district initiatives that will continue after the first of the year. Focus Groups will reconvene to give us input on our Strategic Plan. To date we have gotten feedback from the following groups:

- WRHS Students
- Certified Staff
- Parents New to the District
- Established Parents
- Higher Education
- Patrons Without Students
- Small Business Operators

In early January we will speak to recent WRHS graduates. We will schedule classified staff, city, state, and county officials, and corporate interviews for later in the month. After all the focus groups the information will be compiled for use in the development of the district Strategic Plan. For individuals who did not get a chance to participate in a focus group you can pick up a list of focus group questions from the Shuler Education Center. Written responses can be submitted to my office.

Tallgrass construction will begin in January if the weather cooperates. The completion date for the new building is August 3rd. The elementary schools will soon be participating in ParentConnect in grades 4, 5, and 6 so parents will be able to access current real-time information regarding their child's assignments, grades, discipline, and attendance.

I sincerely wish all of you a very peaceful and relaxing winter break and we will see you all again on January 5th when classes resume!

Two Auburn-Washburn teachers win Horizon Award

Twenty-eight beginning educators from around the state were named Kansas Horizon Award recipients recently. Jerrod Bohn, Language Arts teacher at Washburn Rural High School, and Kristen L'Ecuyer, 5th Grade teacher at Jay Shideler Elementary School were among the winners. The Kansas Horizon Awards are sponsored by the Kansas State Department of Education and recognize exemplary first-year educators.

The Horizon Award program, currently in its second year, allows all school districts in the state an opportunity to nominate one elementary and one secondary teacher for the award. To be eligible for a

Horizon Award, teachers must have successfully completed their first year of teaching and have performed in such a way as to distinguish themselves as outstanding. The Horizon Award program is a regional competition with four regions corresponding to the state's U.S. congressional districts. Four elementary and four secondary classroom teachers may be selected for the award from each district. The only other Horizon winner from Shawnee County was Seaman teacher Jessica Starr

Recipients of the 2004 Kansas Horizon Award were notified of their selection by Dr. Andy Tompkins, Commissioner of Education. They will be recognized at a special luncheon in February.

As recipients of the Kansas Horizon Award, these educators are invited to join the Kansas Exemplary Educators Network (KEEN), a network of educators from around the state who have been formally recognized for exemplary performance. Members of KEEN have an opportunity to network with other outstanding educators and participate in a number of professional development programs throughout the year

District continues to release Vacancy Bulletins

As certified vacancies for the current and 2004-2005 school years become available due to resignations, retirements, and other staff changes they will be included on the Certified Staff Vacancy Bulletin. Per the Negotiated Agreement these announcements will be shared with staff via online postings.

Transfer Request - Employees desiring a transfer shall submit a written request to the Superintendent, stating the specific assignment or nature of the assignment and school or schools anytime on or before May 16, 2004.

Vacancies may or may not be posted as open on the external job listing depending on the status, process, time-line, etc. for each specific job.

The Education Division is always happy to answer any questions you might have about vacant positions and the employment process in USD 437.

Business Office Update

Reminder: All purchases made on behalf of the school district must be approved in advance. Complete instructions on the purchasing process are found in the Purchasing Manual.

Did you know: You can sign up for Direct Deposit at any time. Employees who participate in Direct Deposit have their paychecks automatically deposited at the beginning of each pay day. Employees also receive a normal pay stub with a dummy check attached. There is no charge for the service and it can be implemented within thirty days of signing up. It's safe, secure, and simple. Check with the Payroll Office for more information.

Board hears plans for Wanamaker Road upgrades

In November, representatives from Bartlett & West Engineers and Shawnee County Public Works Department presented information about future plans for Wanamaker Road. Short-term plans call for a new intersection at 41st Street and widening of the street between that intersection and 37th street. The next phases call for improvements to intersections at 53rd and 61st Street. The final part of the project is to improve and widen Wanamaker Road from 41st to 61st Street. Funding and project timetables have not yet been established.