

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

January 23, 2013

Legislative Update (Northeast Arkansas Town Crier -- by Rep. Homer Lenderman and Rep. Wes Wagner)

Earlier this year we told you about new way of learning in Arkansas classrooms. Common Core has now been implemented in grades K-8 in all Arkansas schools. The Common Core standards are designed to have all of our students college and career ready upon graduation.

With a new way of learning, comes a new way of tracking our students progress. This week, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) released its reports under the state's new accountability system.

The No Child Left Behind Act left states to develop their own curriculum standards and implement annual tests. But all 50 states had different standards and different tests to measure performance. Arkansas was granted a waiver for No Child Left Behind before the beginning of the school year.

The new system measures student performance in three categories-student achievement, student growth and graduation rate at high schools.

Now schools no longer compete with other schools or chase a state level target. Instead of a one-size fits all approach, targets are now individualized.

The new system uses the classifications of Exemplary, Achieving, Needs Improvement, Needs Improvement Focus, or Needs Improvement Priority. These replace the labels formerly used under No Child Left Behind.

Right now a large number of our schools across the state are listed as "needs improvement". But Education Commissioner Dr. Tom Kimbrell says that does not mean those schools are failing.

"It means those school leaders and teachers look at the data to find out which students are not making their gains," said Dr. Kimbrell. "It means they develop teaching and learning strategies to help each student achieve."

If a school receives the lowest ranking of "needs improvement focus", it will need to develop a plan for improvement. If there is no improvement in two years, then the district could be classified as academically distressed.

If you would like to see how your school is performing, visit the Department of Education website www.arkansased.org.

Boy Collapses On Playground (Booneville Democrat)

A J.D. Leftwich High School student walked into Randy Loyd's office in the Magazine Gymnasium Friday morning and expressed gratitude to the coach. It was not sports related.

The boy, a sophomore, said he was glad he had taken Loyd's health course. Through that course he became certified in First Aid and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

The student put that training to use Thursday evening when a sixth grade student collapsed on the Magazine Elementary School playground while playing with friends during the school's after school program.

Magazine Police Chief Boyd Hicks said he was several miles north of the city when he heard a radio transmission about the incident.

The boy had been playing catch with a friends when he collapsed after catching the ball. He had stopped breathing according to school superintendent Sandra Beck.

When Hicks arrived on the scene the high school student and a school employee, were performing CPR on the boy.

"One of the things we try to do is to prepare our kids for real life," said Beck. "I'm just proud he remembered everything he was taught in class."

With the CPR in progress Hicks retrieved an AED (automated external defibrillator) and hooked it to the child.

Hicks said CPR continued on the boy until an EMS ambulance arrived and the AED remained on the child en route to the hospital.

"Everyone did a wonderful job in helping this young boy," said Hicks.

Hicks estimated about 20 school personnel and friends were at hospital with family until they left for Little Rock. A Magazine Fire Department volunteer announced on Facebook a debriefing for anyone who was at the school or at the hospital with the family and needs to talk to someone.

From the hospital the boy was flown via helicopter to Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock.

Beck, who went to the hospital after learning of the incident, said further information about the condition of the boy, whose name she could not release due to HIPPA laws, would have to be obtained through the hospital.

The boy's name was widely posted in Facebook posts and a Facebook page referencing the child and a second who was diagnosed with "a serious sickness" last week was launched Friday morning. By 11 a.m. the "like" count on the page was 148; by 11 p.m. it was 483; by 11 a.m. Monday morning it was 705.

That page, and others, announced a T-shirt fundraiser for the families of both children being conducted through local business, Khilling Printing. For more information on the fundraiser, call 969-2559.

Coach wins national award (Greenwood Democrat)

Greenwood head coach Rick Jones was named the National Federation of State High School Associations Football Coach of the Year on Monday.

The NFSHSA is based in Indianapolis, Ind., and is the national leadership organization for high school sports. The Arkansas Activities Association is a participating member. Jones will be honored at the annual NFSHSA meeting in Denver, Colo., in June.

"We harp so much on football being a team sport, we focus on team accomplishments and goals, and I'm proud of what our team did," Jones said. "As a result of what our team did, players and coaches sometimes get awards. I'm proud of what our team has done the nine years I've been here."

Greenwood won its third consecutive state championship with a 51-44 win against Pine Bluff in December. The Bulldogs were 14-0 despite being elevated in classification to 6A and playing in the 7A/6A-Central with four 7A teams. The Bulldogs led the state in scoring this season and set a single-season school record with 663 points.

The Bulldogs ran their winning streak to 38 games, matching the third-longest winning streak in state history. With their third consecutive state title, Greenwood is the only school to ever win three state titles in a row on two occasions. Greenwood also won three straight in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

"It's a culmination of a lot of things, a lot of people, great coaches, a great administration, and a great community," Jones said. "I hear people give acceptance speeches, and it's really true, that it's a great accomplishment for the community that has supported us so much and supported the kids, who are willing to work hard. That doesn't happen everywhere. It's a great reflection on the parents and the community."

Jones is 107-16 at Greenwood and 239-64 overall in his coaching career.

"It's been a lot of people doing things right," Jones said. "It starts at the top with (superintendent) Dr. (Kay) Johnson, who is a great supporter and who cares, and it goes all the way through."

Manila School Board hears good report (Northeast Arkansas Town Crier)

The Manila School Board heard a good report at the January meeting with Superintendent Pam Castor announcing Manila District was one of 35 districts, out of 239 in the state, named an achieving school. Manila was named achieving district by the State Department of Education in an article featured the Arkansas Gazette.

Board members praised the administration, faculty and staff for a good job.

"It was due to a lot of hard work by a lot of people," Castor said. "We are very pleased."

All board members, Danny Robbins, president; Brandon Veach, vice president; Jeremy Jackson, secretary; Tracey Reinhart, Johnny McCain, Tony Crowell and Tommy Wager, were present at the board meeting.

Mrs. Castor asked the board to review a model policy on home school students' eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities.

She explained Triple A passed a resolution allowing home school students, meeting certain criteria, to participate in extracurricular activities. This can include sports, band, cheerleading, etc. Students must live in the district and attend at least one hour a day in the district where they are participating in the activities.

Castor distributed the guidelines and informed the board they will need to be familiar with the policy and be ready to take action on how they want to implement it into the district in June or July.

President Robbins opened discussion for suggestions on school safety issues.

"This has been on all of our hearts and minds for a month," he said. "We want to do what we can to make our school as safe as possible. It is sad to say too many times after a tragedy plans are discussed but are not carried out. I would like Board member Crowell to provide leadership for us on how we can improve and get better on safety issues."

Robbins said he had visited with Crowell, (a state police officer); Jackie Hill, Manila police chief; and James Skinner, resource officer in the Manila District.

"We have had a resource officer on campus for a while so we are ahead there," Crowell said. "Many schools our size do not have one."

Crowell said he would be glad to help in the efforts.

"We want to do everything to provide a safe place for our children," Crowell said.

He said they will be looking at the district's strengths and weaknesses.

"We can go to the community with this to get suggestions from the patrons."

The board said they are open to suggestions.

Castor said they will be hearing from the Governor's task force at the state level and bring back recommendations from the state.

"It is something we all need to start thinking about," Robbins said. "We need to stay on it and continue to make every effort possible."

Veach said the board needs to look at all the options and make a measured response in what Manila District needs.

Facility committee members, Robbins, Reinhart and Wagner, gave a report on the committee meetings since the last regular meeting. The committee has met with Cliff Chitwood, Mississippi County Economic Developer, to discuss possible growth predictions in the county as far as industry and jobs.

Wagner said he had talked to a representative from the governor's office and pointed out the time frame the district is under to make the decisions as far as getting a millage increase on the ballot, etc.

"They were helpful and were receptive in helping with our push in academics," Wagner said. "We are going to have to make a decision."

He said there are new pilot programs being discussed at the state level.

Wagner pointed out the public needs to know all of the facts including how the partnership money works. In some instances the district can be reimbursed more for new construction rather than renovation. In some cases, the district could build new with the same out of pocket cost as renovation due to additional partnership money.

Also, he suggested putting together a fact sheet for the public on what a 3 mill increase would cost individually and facts on the difference on new versus renovation with actual cost using partnership funding.

Castor said the funding changes annually and it is hard to be exact on the amount, but the method in some cases provides additional funding.

"The meetings and information have made me aware of things I did not think of before," Reinhart said. "I think our next step needs to be community input. I want to do what the majority of the community wants us to do."

They discussed safety issues with new construction versus what is possible with existing facilities.

The board agreed a decision will need to be made on which direction to go to accommodate future growth and the need of more space.

Following a closed session, Board member Veach made a motion to extend the superintendent's contract for one year. The motion passed unanimously. This will take Superintendent Castor's contract through the 2014-2015 school year.

In other action:

*The board approved three calendar proposals to be sent to the PPC (personnel policy committee) to be voted on by the faculty.

*Castor said she is looking at making up the day missed due to ice on President's Day if no additional days have to be missed.

*Castor reported the high school was found to have no grade inflation.

*Castor reminded board members their financial interest reports must be turned in by Jan. 31.

*The board accepted the resignation of Beverly Rountree as part-time cafeteria worker.

*The board had no objections to Castor's proposal to move the pitching cage to Building 100 at the park.
