

New superintendant to help fill staff vacancies

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 19 April 2012 19:39 - Last Updated Thursday, 19 April 2012 19:41

By Diane Stamm

The Wauneta Breeze

The Wauneta-Palisade schools board met Thursday, April 12. The meeting was highlighted by discussions concerning staffing, the External Visitation Team and the maintenance plan.

New Superintendent Randy Geier was present at the meeting. Geier was hired March 19 after working as principal at Elm Creek Public Schools for the past three years. He will begin his year July 1, 2012.

Personnel Report

The Board discussed the business education program and the possibility of Reducing in Force the program which would reduce teacher Joyce Spickelmier's position from full-time to half-time. Without counting fifth and sixth grade keyboarding classes there are about 18 students taking business classes.

Principal Troy Holmberg said, "Accreditation rules have changed and several business classes could be reduced to semester long courses rather than lasting the full on staff is endorsed to teach business and could teach those more popular courses offered.

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In executive session, the Board decided to enforce the Reduction in Force and reduce the business program because enrollment in the program at this time doesn't justify a full time teacher. Sibley noted, "You are not reducing a person, but rather a program and this decision doesn't reflect the teacher's performance." The Board left open the possibility of returning to a full-time teacher if the students show more interest in business classes.

Early Leave Incentive as also discussed as part of the Personnel Report. Teachers who have 15 years of continuous employment with the district and are 55 years of age are eligible for the benefit.

This voluntary separation agreement is offered by most districts and gives teachers more flexibility to retire when they want to according to Superintendent Dr. Stan Sibley. Teachers who accept the incentive receive a one-time payment equal to the difference between their salary and the base salary of a teacher who has received their bachelors of art degree. They also receive a cash benefit of 25 percent of their unused sick leave at their daily rate of pay.

Dr. Sibley said, "Offering this incentive doesn't fall within the tax lid and it is good business sense to remind staff that this is an option as they look to retire." Board President Jon Anderjaska called the move a "win/win." Dr. Sibley said only a "very small handful" qualify, citing the 15 years of service being the catch. The Board wanted to make sure teachers know the incentive is available.

Listed third on the Personnel Report was the creation of a new position. Coordinator of Data and Technology Services would include "responsibilities in the areas of data management, compliance, media services and support of technology services for the district and staff." There will be a more complete job description available at the next meeting.

The Board accepted the resignations of Art teacher and assistant track coach Janessa Wood as well as elementary PE teacher and head football coach Justin Bernhardt. Each of these teachers has been with the district one year and Sibley and Geier agreed to work together to find replacements as these positions are declared vacant.

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Discussion Items

Following the Personnel Report the Board moved on to discuss end of year activities. Kindergarten Round Up will be held May 4. Twenty-one students are anticipated to take part. Students in grades K to 6 will take part in the Benkelman Carnival May 15. The high school band is planning a trip to Kansas City towards the end of May. There will be no elementary school Monday, May 21, due to teacher training on the new Reading Series that will be implemented the 2012-13 school year. Graduation will be held Saturday, May 26.

The five-year maintenance plan was reviewed. Summer of 2012 projects include new ventilation from the kitchen, replacement of entry to small gym, light fixtures in the wood shop and new playground surfacing in Wauneta. New playground surfacing will also take place in Palisade as well as fixing or replacing the north and west gym doors, illumination of the flagpole and inspection of the fire escape slide.

Board members were pleased with the new bleachers in the Palisade gym. Kenny Lawless, Maintenance Director, and Bill Bischoff recently made the trip to Elkhorn to bring home the new bleachers. Jojn Jutten said the new bleachers, stage curtain and new floor have made a drastic improvement to the gym.

Action Items

The Findings and Recommendations from the External Visitation Team were discussed. Dr. Sibley said the findings were “consistent and compatible” with what the school is already doing. The team also stated that the new reading series will be beneficial in meeting the reading goal and offered to return at any time to insure that implementation is successful. The team recommended that technology be used more in each class as an additional tool to teach with, though it doesn’t replace the instruction provided from the teacher.

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The External Visitation Team recommended that moving all the elementary grades into one location would be very beneficial for collaboration of teachers and managing elementary learning. This grade makeup might look at PK through fourth or fifth grade in Palisade and moving fifth and/or sixth to be included with junior high at Wauneta. This topic was touched on briefly, though nothing was decided. Dr. Sibley emphasized that preparing people (staff/students/parents) for the move is very important.

The Board approved the 2012-2013 school calendar and SPED contracts and accepted bids by Unitech for refinishing the Wauneta gym floor and Gaston's Lawn and Landscape for lawn care. The Board was given copies of the approved Concussion Awareness Policy Implementation Materials and approved a corrected policy concerning school days for staff. Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy received first reading approval.

Allison Sandman delivered an administrative report for ESU 15 Board of Directors. Mr. Holmberg discussed the busy month and the upcoming activities. He said coaches will be working with Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney to help with baseline testing for concussions and work with the Nebraska Concussion Network for training.

Dr. Sibley concluded the regular meeting by bringing up complaints about unsupervised students running around outside the school at the end of school days and traffic complaints of vehicles/drivers not respecting the stop sign arms from the buses.

In Executive Session the Board discussed pending litigation, the purchase of property, and Reduction in Force for the business program.

A meeting of the school board will take place this morning to continue discussion on Reducing in Force, Early Leave Incentive and the possibility of shifting grades between Wauneta and Palisade.