

School Board updated on results from NeSA tests, AYP standards not met

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 13 December 2012 17:16 -

By Diane Stamm

The Wauneta Breeze

The Wauneta-Palisade school board met in Palisade Friday, Dec. 7, at noon for its monthly board meeting.

Jill Hurtt, Data Coordinator, attended the meeting to update the board on results from the NeSA tests. Hurtt also told the board that the school didn't meet its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement, as determined by No Child Left Behind federal regulations.

According to Hurtt, this resulted from a change in guidelines for the process used to determine the district's AYP status. In the past, results were used from the building with the most students. The Palisade Attendance Center, with the most students, has previously met the requirements.

This spring the board voted to change the classroom makeup, moving the kindergarten through second grades to Palisade and the fifth and sixth grades to Wauneta, making the larger school the Wauneta Attendance Center.

Due to the small class size of the eleventh grade, which is the only grade that takes NeSA tests at the high school level, the NeSA results from the 2010-11 school year were combined with the results from the 2011-12 school year. The combined group of juniors, who tested at 72.16 percent proficiency, did not meet the state-set goal of 79 percent proficiency for the NeSA reading test, which resulted in a district-wide AYP decision of "not met."

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Next year's results will continue to pose a challenge when class sizes are meant to be at least 30 students. This year's juniors and seniors (tested last year as juniors) don't have 30 total students so the results could be based on the fifth through eighth grades.

In two years, 100 percent must meet or exceed the standards.

Hurtt said the schools would have been fine this year if the guidelines hadn't changed and also discussed the various changes that the district is making to ensure that NeSA test scores improve in the coming year, which will allow the district's AYP status to improve.

Superintendent Randy Geier and Hurtt discussed with the board ways the teachers and administration have been preparing for the upcoming, on-line NeSA tests and other ways the school has been trying to help struggling students keep up with classmates.

Communication between teachers has been one key Geier, Hurtt and Principal Troy Holmberg have encouraged. Regular teacher meetings keep faculty up-to-date on how students are doing in other classes and are helping teachers encourage students to work on other subjects during free time. Administrators also said teachers are working hard to get students to turn in late assignments and papers and administrators are emphasizing curriculum planning.

The school is also working on test taking strategies for this spring's on-line NeSA testing, including C for L, a NeSA prep test.

Outgoing board member Stuart Bartels called No Child Left Behind a waste of school resources and time, taking teachers away from teaching and turning them into coaches.

Moving on from testing, the board elected to keep the door open for teachers interested in early retirement and then moved on to discuss the recent Nebraska Association of School Boards conference and administrative reports.

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Other business

Holmberg said National Honors Society induction has been moved to an afternoon rather than evening ceremony. Holmberg added that the same change may be made to the spring's Honors Night.

Geier recognized Allison Sandman for receiving her Level 2 NASB school board pin and Jon Anderjaska for receiving his Level 6 pin.

According to Geier, locks will be installed on the weight room doors this week and security cameras still need to be ordered. He also said a new banner to celebrate the recent football state championship has been ordered and repairs will be made to two other banners hanging in the gym.

The board approved the transfer of funds from the building CD at First Central Bank in McCook to the school's building fund to cover recent improvements by Pivot Electric and Snell.

The school needs \$117,560 to cover work by the businesses for, among other jobs, electrical upgrades and installation of new heating and air conditioning units. The remaining money from the CD, worth \$136,016.24, will go into the building fund.