



Education

WHA School Board hears reports on Working Together Coalition, SHIP, CIHS

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Published: Wednesday, March 23, 2011 10:55 AM CDT

Informative reports filled the agenda at the March 14 Walker-Hackensack-Akeley School Board meeting.

Kelly Felton of the Working Together Coalition (WTC) presented the results of a survey taken by 333 WHA sixth- through 12th-graders. WTC involves concerned citizens working to prevent alcohol, tobacco or other drug use by youth. WTC also works through the Pine River-Backus and Northland school districts.

WHA students were asked to self-report on 40 external or internal developmental assets such as family communications, adult role models, social competency and personal identity. Students who have more developmental assets show fewer risk-taking behaviors, Felton said.

Although 46 percent of students said they had positive family communications, only 32 percent felt they could have a positive conversation with parents. Just 46 percent felt they lived in a caring neighborhood and 32 percent said they had a supportive school community. Forty-two percent felt their parents were involved in education but only 27 percent felt their communities valued them.

Asked about adult role models, just 20 percent reported a positive adult role model in their lives. Sixty-six percent look to their peers for positive role models.

Asked about internal assets, female students had higher rates of positive responses than males, Felton reported. Still, only 28 percent of students felt they have the skills to plan ahead and make good decisions. Only 34 percent felt they exhibited cultural competency, and 45 percent felt they could solve a dispute nonviolently. Forty percent felt they have control over what happens to them.

Overall, the survey revealed that only eight percent of WHA students had from 31 to 40 assets, which is most desirable. Another 44 percent scored from 21 to 30 assets.

The grant that funds the WTC program runs for another three years and could be renewed for another five years, if a subsequent grant is approved.

College in the High School (CIHS), a hybrid classroom and online learning pilot project at WHA, was explained by Carrie Schlicht.

Twenty-five WHA students are enrolled in instructor Dave Lundquist's CIHS English lit class, which blends face-to-face classroom instruction three days a week with online learning two days.

Schlicht, who taught at WHA for several years, has worked with online learning for the past four years and has helped facilitate the project.



WHA's new Superintendent Mary Donohoe Stetz was at the recent board meeting. Photo by Joe Sherman

WHA is the only high school in this area that offers a hybrid class, although one of Schlicht's friends also offers a hybrid class at West Central Area Schools.

Hybrid learning allows material to be tailored to a student's needs, and provides instant feedback. It also allows students to use technology and to be more autonomous.

"It's more effective than all classroom or all online learning, it's college preparatory, and it's good preparation for life and careers," she summarized. An article in an upcoming issue of The Pilot-Independent will focus on hybrid learning. More information is also available at www.hybridpilotproject.com.

Leslie Staker, Cass County Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) coordinator, Public Health Nurse Jamie Richter and WHA student Heather Vikre reviewed how WHA has incorporated SHIP's goals to improve nutrition and physical activity.

At WHA, quarter-mile walking paths have been created where students walk laps during the lunch hour. Students record the number of laps walked and after they rack up 26.2 miles, they get a "I walked a marathon at lunch" T-shirt.

An after school snack cart sells fresh fruit, yogurt, cheese sticks, fresh sandwiches and other healthy snacks to students. During its first month of operation, about 700 healthy snacks were sold. Vikre, who volunteers to work at the snack cart, said the cart gets about 20 customers per day, especially when sports practices are in session.

Technology coordinator Mary Muller's technology update outlined WHA's current wired and wireless network, including recommendations for replacing aging equipment with new or renovated computers and labs in the next year.

The proposals were also reflected in WHA's five-year capital facilities plan, outlined by Superintendent Wally Schoeb.

Each year WHA levies about \$200,000 for operating capital and about \$55,000 for facilities, revenue that is separate from the general fund. Roof or elevator repairs and deferred maintenance also come from a separate levy.

In the capital plan, WHA tries to predict how much it will spend each of the next five school years for repairs, computer leases, textbooks, equipment replacement, maintenance equipment, Smartboards, school buses and more.

"The five-year plan may change every year, but this gives us an idea of where we are heading," Schoeb said. The projections ranged from \$209,100 for the 2011-12 school year to \$273,200 in 2015-16.

The deadline is fast approaching for students to pay a deposit on a New York City choir trip next year, proposed last month by music director Sutton Stewart. A minimum of 40 students is needed for the March 22-26, 2012, trip, but only one-third that number have signed up. "I'm not sure if we will have enough interest," Principal Peg Novak said.

Twelve people also are interested in being chaperones, although not that many would be needed. Three individuals are teachers.

In February the board tabled any decision and will now wait and see if 40 students sign up.

In other matters the board:

Heard that Dr. Seuss Night and the Book Fair held recently in the elementary were a huge success, with \$3,700 raised for the elementary library;

Noted that PMA Financial Advisors will attend the April board meeting;

Accepted a notice of desire to negotiate from the WHA Education Association;

Scheduled a working session for March 28;

Will discuss at the working session a proposal by The Watson Consulting Group for management services related to student transportation options and updating the district's 2008 strategic plan;

Approved a letter of support for Phase 5 of the Shingobee Trail that would provide a safe direct connection between the new U.S. Forestry Service offices and city park to WHA schools and the Community Center via a tunnel under state Highways 200-371;

Reviewed the 2011-12 proposed school calendar, took board member suggestions for changes and agreed to consider a revised calendar at the April meeting.

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