

PAWS test results disappointing

# School officials pleading for time to raise student scores

by Jonathan Green

Hot Springs County School District administrators spent over 90 minutes Thursday night pleading with school board members for time to allow district initiatives to raise test scores.

While board members gave no indication anyone's job is in danger it was clear no one is remotely happy with recent Proficiency Assessment for Wyoming Students (PAWS) test results. Many said as much.

"I'm very upset about it, very upset," board member Belenda Willson said.

Elementary principal Deb Brown, about fourth grade test results, which were particularly difficult, said, "We don't like what we see here."

Board member Travis Bomengen said of the fourth grade results, "It needs to be an overhaul (of the curriculum)."

"The results are disappointing," superintendent Marty Kobza said. "And we are going to do better."

Kobza, Brown, middle school principal Matt Spring and high school principal Dustin Hunt then tried to explain and sell their plan.

**A plan in place**

The first step was to explain the administrative team has a plan. Former administrators were not criticized (or mentioned), but everyone made it clear the district was late in developing a comprehensive plan to improve instruction.

Kobza argued, PAWS results aside, students are learning and growing. The curriculum just isn't teaching them what the PAWS tests expect them to know.

Internal testing indicates students are learning, he said. But what the district teaches needs to be "aligned" with state guidelines used to develop the PAWS tests each year.

The superintendent said services provided

by the Curriculum Leadership Institute (CLI), which the district purchased last year, are helping to bring the district into alignment. But it will take time.

In the interim, Kobza said administrators are working with teachers to put "stopgap" measures in place. The CLI process, now beginning its second year, will take four years to rework every facet of the curriculum.

**Test criticized**

Kobza also said the PAWS test is a moving target, although he added, "That's no excuse." If too many students answer a particular question correctly, that question is dropped the next year.

Brown said it is difficult to compare the results from year to year because the test is always changing. To make matters worse, the test was offered twice in school year 2007-08.

What was made clear is teachers will be asked to teach to standards and align their curricula to those standards. Some teaching freedoms will disappear, but everyone at the board meeting insisted the profession will remain an art.

"Everything we're doing is research based," Kobza said. "Remember, standards were developed by teachers, across the state."

He added it would be "malpractice" if administrators fail to require teachers to retool their methods. "The research tells us what works. We can't do this anymore."

Board member Karen Leyba clapped.

"Some people will not like this culture," the superintendent continued. "But that's alright. There are a lot of places that will continue to work in the model of 'work in isolation.'"

He seemed to be indicating teachers not ready to join the new collaboration theme will not have trouble finding employment elsewhere.

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# Homecoming slides into action on Monday, peaks on Saturday

by Cindy Glasson

Plenty of activities are planned for Homecoming Week starting Monday.

The theme is the 80s Thriller. Nominations for homecoming royalty started Wednesday with voting running through Tuesday.

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes will be sponsoring a Slip and Slide into Homecoming Monday on the north side of the high school. The kitchen staff will be spending the day making huge batches of gelatin for students to slip and slide through from 4-5:30 p.m.

"It's really messy but a lot of fun," student body president Cody Abbott said.

Students will be dressing as their favorite character on Tuesday. Activities that night include Buff Puff Volleyball (boy's volleyball), which will be coached by the Lady Bobcat volleyball players, in the high school gym at 6 p.m.

Powder Puff Football (girl's flag football), coached by the Bobcat football players, will start at 7 p.m. on the football field.

People will see doubles on Wednesday, when students dress as identical twins.

There will be an air band competition on Oct. 1 at 9 a.m. in the auditorium. Abbott said groups of four to five students will com-

pete as a prelude to coronation. Coronation of homecoming royalty follows at 10 a.m.

The cheerleading squad will sponsor a pep rally at the football field at 7 p.m. Students will be decorating their class floats on Oct. 2.

Lineup for the 2 p.m. parade will begin at 1:30 p.m.

The Lady Bobcat volleyball team will host Big Horn at 3:30 p.m.

Football against Big Horn starts at 7 p.m. and the homecoming royalty will be introduced at halftime.

The homecoming dance is in the high school gym on Oct. 3 from 9 p.m. to midnight.



Cody Boss walks a log as Thermopolis Middle School classmate Zoe Stone, center, starts her slide back to the ground. Working her way up the confidence course is Kayla Gilbert. Supporting them with safety ropes from the ground are, l-r, Eric Herold, Coleton Draper, David Clinger and high school guidance counselor Amy Mason. --Pat Schmidt photo

# Thermop vet joins flight to view WW II Memorial

by Cindy Glasson

Navy engineman second class Frank Mueller of Thermopolis left Casper for Washington, D.C., Tuesday as part of the Wyoming Honor Flight for World War II veterans.

Mueller is one of 5,000 WW II veterans living in Wyoming. This Honor Flight took 110 veterans plus support staff to see the WW II memorial.

The trip is free for the veterans; however, they had to pay for their hotel room in Casper the night before the flight.

Guardians accompany the veterans at a cost of \$800 for the flight. The delegation includes a doctor, nurses and other volunteers.

Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal, a Hot Springs County native, addressed the veterans at a special ceremony before the flight.

Mueller was raised 20 miles from New York City before being drafted in 1943. He served as a submariner in the Pacific until 1948 and was present at the official surrender of Japan at Tokyo Bay on Sept. 2, 1945.

After the war he began driving buses and trucks and moved to Wyoming in 1962. He retired as a trucker in 2005 after 57 years.

Mueller lost a son in the Navy during the Vietnam War. Four other family members served 20 years in the Navy, two daughters and two sons-in-law.

"I'm not going just for myself," Mueller said of the trip. "I'm going for all my friends who aren't here."

He has an 86-year-old friend in Sheridan who is extremely ill.

"I'm going for him," he said.

"I never expected anything like this to happen. What the state is doing here is a wonderful thing."

WW II veterans or guardians wishing to make future trips may call 772-5145 for an application. Those wishing to donate to the Honor Flight may call 637-2606.

# Benefit funds park improvements

There is a public benefit luncheon to raise money for the restoration project on the stairway at White Sulphur Springs on Saturday from 1-3 p.m.

It will be held at the Washakie Pavilion. Music will be provided by the Sand Creek Band.

The restoration project is being led by Riverton resident Dianna Mitchell, who is a descendent of Chief Washakie.



Veterans Frank Mueller, left, and Karl Kertson greet one another before Mueller leaves for the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., on Monday. --Jonathan Green photo