

PAWS test results show strengths, weaknesses

by Cindy Glasson

The Board of Trustees for Hot Springs County School District No. 1 reviewed student data with the district principals at their monthly meeting Oct. 20.

Using the data gathered from Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students (PAWS) testing over the last few years, each principal showed where the strengths and weaknesses were for each of the grades under their supervision as well as outlining basic strategies to bring up students' averages.

Deb Brown, principal at Ralph Witters Elementary School, told the board with such small classes, the percentage point changes in the data amounts to just one or two students.

Brown said application of knowledge has been a problem.

In other words, the students have the knowledge, they are just having difficulty applying that knowledge to practical situations or problems.

Math and science appear to be the two problem areas for knowledge application according to the PAWS data.

"Mastery and maintenance are key when it comes to math," Brown said. "We are suggesting small-group instruction. We're kind of stuck in a plateau in some areas and the small-group instruction should help us move out of the plateau." Brown told the board the writing scores are really good across all the grade levels from kindergarten through fourth grade. Now the job is to find ways to accelerate those writing skills even more.

PAWS at middle school

Middle School principal Matt Spring said the PAWS data shows their problem areas are fifth-grade math and eighth-grade writing skills.

Spring said the fifth-grade math skills are a big issue, but the teachers are working very hard for a solution. He indicated the fifth-grade math program might require a complete overhaul.

"We have had tremendous increases in both sixth and seventh grades across the board," Spring said. "We went from 14 percent below proficient in reading in fifth grade to zero percent below proficient in sixth grade the next year."

"Right now, we only have one or two students in fifth grade that are below proficient in writing."

The data shows sixth-grade math and seventh-grade writing have hit a stagnant spot, not gaining ground, but not losing any ground, either.

Spring said they are working right now on splitting up the reading and writing skills in order to work more closely on the individual subjects.

Growth at high school

In the high school, principal Jason McArthur indicated the PAWS results are showing growth for both the 10th and 11th grades in all areas except math.

"Technology is really helping the teachers to determine what kids are lacking in which areas," he said, "and showing them how to better improve their teaching techniques to get the concepts across."

McArthur said there has been more pre-testing in an attempt to better prepare students to take the ACT test.

The additional work appears to be paying off with a 1.3 average point increase on the college prep test.

"Hot Springs County High School students are generally better prepared for college than the state average," McArthur said. "Of course, there is still room for improvement. There is always room for improvement."

Parent surveys tabulated

In other business, superintendent Dustin Hunt informed the board that parent surveys filled out earlier in the year have now been tabulated and letters of appreciation will be sent out to the parents who took the time to complete them.

"We're going to be able to use the surveys to identify trends (within the system)," Hunt said.

Hunt also told the board the recent visit by the state's Advanced Education Committee went very well.

"Our teachers were extremely well prepared," he said, "and represented the district very well."

The district was commended on technology in the classroom, the Curriculum Leadership Institute (CLI) process, Professional Learning Community (PLC) implementation across the district and on the facilities.

The committee would like to see the establishment of a clear mission statement and vision statement.

"They felt we needed a system to measure the effectiveness of our system," Hunt said. "What is working? What isn't? Are we getting the desired results?"

Hunt said they were given a few models to review and will be doing so over the next few weeks.

Summit for the Cure laughs



Richard Simmons, aka Ryan Williams, got the ladies up and moving to the beat during the Susan G. Komen Summit for the Cure in Thermopolis on Saturday. Louise Odde shows off her style and grace during the fashion show for the event at Days Inn. —Cindy Glasson photos

Summit for the Cure filmed by GE crew

by Cindy Glasson

The Susan G. Komen Summit for the Cure was held in Thermopolis on Saturday, providing plenty of information on breast cancer as well as stories of hope and some great entertainment.

Held at the Days Inn, the event kicked off at 9 a.m. with information on early detection of both breast cancer as well as cervical cancer from Denise Padilla and Carolyn Johnson with the Wyoming Department of Health.

Local physicians participated in an open discussion with the attendees along with radiologists, oncologists and

lymphedema therapist.

A survivors' panel was held after lunch featuring Bobbi Barrasso and her husband, U.S. Sen. John Barrasso.

Fun was had during the afternoon session with a visit from "Richard Simmons," aka Ryan Williams and a style show presented by Hazel-n-Pearl's.

One of the organizers of the event, Linda Hausner from Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital, said they did have quite a surprise when a film crew arrived for the Summit.

"We had heard they might be coming," Hausner said,

"but we couldn't believe what was actually going on when they arrived."

The film crew from Katalyst Films, owned by movie and television star Ashton Kutcher, not only filmed the event for General Electric (GE) as part of its new campaign addressing breast cancer awareness, but did several individual interviews with the survivors and Dr. Vernon Miller.

In addition, filming was done in the hospital's mammography suite.

The new campaign by GE will appear on its website at a later date.

Science fair



Fifth graders Emily Anderson, left, and Myracle Snooks, show off their projects on invertebrates during the fifth grade science fair at the middle school last

week. Students traveled from classroom to classroom on an "Invertebrate Walk" as part of the program.

—Cindy Glasson photo

Commissioners approve sidewalk project, discuss overpass issue

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners approved a request for proposal for the sidewalk project around the new county parking lot, approved tax rebates and supplementals on behalf of the assessor's office, discussed a contract from the State Parks Department for the fairgrounds and heard from Park Superintendent Kevin Skates regarding the condition of the underpass leading into Hot Springs State Park during their Oct. 18 meeting.

Maintenance Supervisor Chuck Carver presented a request for proposal (RFP) to the commissioners in order to put out bids for installation of sidewalks around the parking lot south of the courthouse.

The RFP includes installation of approximately 140 feet of sidewalk on the Fourth Street side of the parking lot as well as matching the sidewalk to existing curb and gutter between the alley and the parking lot approach.

Bids for the project will be opened at 10 a.m. Tuesday, the day of the next commissioners' meeting.

The county assessor's office presented a series of four

tax rebates in the amount of \$379.56 for approval along with three supplemental tax notices amounting to \$73.61.

Both rebates and supplementals were approved by the commissioners.

Fairgrounds lease

A new lease agreement between the state and the commissioners for the land the fairgrounds are on has brought up some questions for county attorney Jerry Williams.

The issue is the insurance liability the State Parks Department is requesting for the fairgrounds, an amount Williams says results in over-insurance for an agency that is technically a sub-agency of the state.

Commissioners Brad Basse and Mike Baker were both uncomfortable signing the agreement in light of the county attorney's concerns.

The commissioners agreed to send a letter to the State Parks Department explaining their reasons for not signing the agreement at this time.

Overpass issue

Skates approached the commissioners asking for support in

his attempt to get repair work done on the overpass leading into Hot Springs State Park.

Skates has talked with both the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) and Burlington-Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) regarding the need to replace the roadway beneath the underpass and the underpass itself.

"BNSF won't do anything unless the underpass is unsound," Skates said. "We can get a permit to do cosmetic stuff, but there isn't enough staff to sandblast and paint."

Williams indicated there could actually be a design safety liability issue with the underpass.

"There could be a negligent design suit filed if there's a fatality due to the blind corner there," Williams said.

Skates said they lose, on average, six air conditioning units off the tops of motor homes each year going into the park.

"The park is definitely the crown jewel of our community and the entrance certainly detracts from that," Basse said.

The commissioners agreed to support Skates when the project gets further along.