

Carbondale Attendance Center / Santa Fe Trail Junior High School

To: Dr. Steve Pegram, Superintendent
From: Mr. Michael Flax, Principal
Date: 2 December 2013
Re: December BOE Report

Music Opportunities – We have many activities in the music department over the next three weeks for our students. The two junior high vocal music groups, The SFTJH Singers and the SFTJH Choristers, have both been invited to perform in Topeka next week. Both groups will be in downtown Topeka at the Bureau of Community Health Systems to sing for their “Old Fashioned Christmas” Celebration and Conference. The Singers will perform on Tuesday, December 10 at 12:30. The Choristers will sing on Friday, December 13 at 12:30. We are excited to have been invited, and the students are preparing to represent Santa Fe Trail during the holiday season. Mrs. Lari Jarrett has worked hard to have our groups recognized and prepares them for these kinds of out-of-school activities. The sixth grade students will have their band and choir concert on Monday, December 9. That will be held in the gymnasium, beginning at 7:00. We have five students attending the Tuba Christmas in Kansas City next Monday, and we have two students participating in the North-East Kansas District Honor Band at Blue-Valley this Saturday. Mr. Lance Quilling and Mr. PJ Stephenson will be sponsoring these students on these trips. There is one other annual holiday event in which the junior high musicians participate. That is the annual Christmas Sing Assembly, which is held the last school day before break. Since this is not a concert, but a school-wide celebration we do not invite parents or patrons to join us. You, however, are welcome to come. The assembly begins at 9:00.

Library Para – Mrs. Peggy Kunkel has submitted her resignation as the CAC library manager. Peggy is returning to Emporia State University to complete her degree work in library science. Mrs. Kristy Hamit and I will be interviewing several candidates for that position this week. We are hoping to have the position filled by next Monday, December 9. That would allow for BOE action at the meeting on December 11.

Betsy Harlan Opportunity – 7th grade science teacher, Mrs. Betsy Harlan, has been invited to participate in the *Fair and Impartial Policing Community Academy* this month. Following the training academy, Mrs. Harlan will work with this group on the community advisory board. The purpose of the academy is to develop comprehensive approaches that identify and eliminate bias in policing practices throughout Kansas. The academy will cover several topics including racial profiling, the recruitment, hiring, education, and training of law enforcement officers, outreach programs, and the benefits and elements of a comprehensive program to facilitate fair and impartial policing. Participants are selected by the Kansas African American Affairs Commission, and include a broad range of citizens from throughout the state. I am looking forward to learning about this experience for Mrs. Harlan.

Activities – The wrestling season comes to a close this Saturday when the team participates in the league tournament at Holton. Most of the wrestlers are experiencing success, with many placing and medaling at the competitions so far. Tonight, December 3, we are hosting Shawnee Heights and Perry-Lecompton in the Carbondale Gym, beginning at 4:30. Our home meets are

usually well-attended and well-run. We host two events each season at home. The girls will finish their basketball season next Thursday, December 12 with home games against Royal Valley. At this time the 8th grade girls are sitting in 2nd place in the league with one league loss. The seventh grade girls have not experienced a winning season, but the coaches report that they continue to work hard to become better. When girls' basketball and wrestling finish we begin boys' basketball. The first practice for boys will be on Tuesday, December 10. They will then take a two-day break, with practice resuming with a full schedule on Friday, December 13. Due to the large number of seventh graders interested in playing basketball we will have seventh graders practice at Carbondale and eighth graders practice at Scranton. Games will still be played as our usual: 8th grade at CAC and 7th grade at SAC. The first game for the boys will be the day we return to school for second semester, Monday, January 6.

BYOC – The teachers are making good progress in the BYOC process. We did not have a work session for them during the month of December. Each group was asked to print their progress after their second November session. I am hopeful that by the end of the school year we will have a fairly substantial portion of our curriculum “map” in publication form. It is important for the teachers and parents to understand that the documents are living and working documents, with changes and alterations made as we begin to use them as our guide. We have done departmental work sessions and grade level work sessions. My teachers have requested time with the SAC and SFT staffs to discuss how our curriculum map aligns with each of theirs as far as the standards and activities are concerned. I hope to facilitate those meetings in the early spring semester.

Word of the Month – The word of the month, as provided to us by the student council, for December is *Hope*. We will be focusing our character and life skills efforts on this word during the entire month. At the daily morning assembly I will speak to the students about hope, examples of such, and encourage them to find hope in whatever circumstances they find themselves. I believe this is a very fitting word for our students and staff, and I'm looking forward to doing my own reading on the subject. One of the philosophies I abide by is that no matter what correction, consequence or discipline I have to make with students that I do not leave them feeling hopeless. A couple of my favorite short poems about hope are:

“Hold fast to dreams,
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.” By Langston Hughes

“We dream to give ourselves hope. To stop dreaming – well, that's like saying you can never change your fate.” By Amy Tan

Veteran's Day Program – What a great day we had with our *Veteran Guests* last month! It was a pleasure to have so many of our former and current service men and women in the building for the annual CAC Veteran's Day Assembly. Thanks to Mr. Ed Hug for organizing the event, and to Mr. Quilling, Mrs. Jarrett, and their assistants for having the bands and choirs sing for the audience. It was great to have Dr. Ed Gerhardt back in the building with us. His speech was so very applicable to our students and staff, as he shared the story of several of our local heroes and

the roles they played in the defense of our nation. The pictures he brought in for his speech, and shared by the students, helped us put faces with the names that we hear when people speak of Kansas History and our participation in the service efforts. I hope you will all consider attending sometime in the future, as we will continue to make this a part of our Veteran's Day recognition yearly.

Novel Writing – I have heard lots of excitement from many of the eighth grade students in regards to the language arts project they have been working on for the past few weeks. November is National Novel Writing Month, and Mrs. Allison Folger embraced the challenge to have her students write their own novels. They studied the facets of novels and the components of good stories. The focus on character development, selecting the right setting for their story, and the layout and plot alignment made the actual writing more manageable. The students set their own goals as far as word count. Along the way they made contracts with staff to mark their progress. I know that two students have come to me with their contract, signed by them, Mrs. Folger and me, to get the reward for hitting the benchmark I agreed to with them. I love that the students are excited about the writing, and to hear students telling other teachers what a great activity this is. The students will be celebrating National Novel-Writing Month and their completion of their own novels with a party this Wednesday.

Submitted by Michael Flax