

Carbondale Attendance Center / Santa Fe Trail Junior High School 104 N. 4th, Carbondale KS 66414

To: Dr. Steve Pegram, Superintendent
From: Mr. Michael Flax, Principal
Date: 1 January 2014
Re: January BOE Report

December 19 – We had a great Christmas assembly on the day before we took off for the holidays. I call it the Christmas Sing! But it is so much more than that. Mrs. Jarrett plans and manages the entire assembly. The choirs sing, the students sing, we see video clips, students and staff are engaged in competitions, and other activities. The rest of the day was filled with activities provided by the teachers in their classrooms or by grade level. We did surprise the junior high school students with a party that included dancing if they chose to do so. Air hockey, Wii, cookies and drinks, and music were all available to the students. The 5-8 students seemed to enjoy the day, and there were zero discipline issues that arose due to the “less structured” day.

Library Para – We welcome Andrew Truelson to the staff as we return for second semester. He has been hired to replace Mrs. Peggy Kunkel in the library. Mr. Truelson spent the first semester at SAC, where he substituted for Mrs. Debbie Ebert in the computer lab. Mrs. Ebert spent last semester student teaching, with part of that time working in our building under the supervision of Mr. Scott Adams. She will return to her duties at SAC in January.

Discipline Report – The office dealt with a total of 36 discipline referrals for the second quarter. Of these, six were bus referrals. Two students served in-school suspensions, one spent time in conference with me, and the rest of the referrals resulted in detentions. With forty days of school and only 30 office referrals (outside of bus referrals) that is so much less time spent in dealing with discipline issues than usual, at less than one office referral per day. I believe that there are numerous reasons for the low number of discipline issues. Among those are the presence of the resource officer in the hallways and lunchroom, established and adhered to classroom behavior expectations, and others. Something that cannot be overlooked is the morning greetings that take place each day as students enter the building. Many times staff and administration pick up on students who might be struggling and help them with that before the day even starts. These students can be directed to the counselor, the resource officer, or administration to help get things talked out. These students have a chance to get a new direction before they head to class. With much hesitation, I credit Dr. Pegram for his directive to use this practice daily.

Activities – Boys’ basketball practice has been underway since mid-December. 7th graders are practicing at CAC, but will play their home games at SAC. The reverse is true for the 8th graders, with practice at SAC and games at CAC. The first games of the season are scheduled for Monday, January 6 when we host Atchison County. Due to their shortage of players there will be only three games, and all three will be played at CAC. The order of play is 7A, 8A, and finally 8B. The first game begins at 4:30. An alert will be sent out on Monday as a reminder to all parents. January and February are full of games, so come out and watch if you have a free evening. With the usual two games in each gym we usually finish up and are home by 7:00 on home games. This will change next year with our new league, where standard practice is that all games are played in the same gym.

Pressure! – We have really thrown a lot of new things at teachers this year. Because we have begun the BYOC process, the new teacher and administrator evaluation system by McREL, as well as the implementation of two new reading series for the fifth and sixth grade teachers, and the full implementation of the CCRS, it is no wonder that teachers sometimes are feeling the pressure from us administratively. This is probably similar to what each and every new teacher encounters at the start of a career. Mrs. Hamit and I are working to facilitate these implementations, encouraging teachers to openly

communicate with us about their struggles and concerns, and trying to provide support in whatever ways we can. The teachers are handling the changes and expectations professionally and positively.

Instructional Strategies – We are continuing our review of research-based strategies for increasing student achievement. As we have been looking at these for the past two years at CAC the strategies that we have not covered yet this year are all items that we have covered previously. We have the following left to cover: Summarizing and Note Taking; Assigning Homework and Providing Practice; Identifying Similarities and Differences; and Generating and Testing Hypotheses. We have discovered that most of these strategies are already ingrained in our teaching, and that teachers use them as they fit their classes and their personal teaching styles. The administrators have discussed being more flexible with teachers as far as how often we need to see these strategies and how we will monitor their implementation. At CAC we are having discussions with teachers about the strategies but have relaxed our expectation for how and why we will measure teacher use of the strategies.

Student Schedule Changes – Mrs. Kristy Hamit and Mrs. Maggie Mead have spent considerable time with student schedules this year. We often get questions about why some student schedules change from the first ones we publish at the beginning of the year. We utilize the Edgenuity (formerly e2020) and reading and math support classes to address concerns for individual students. When students do not pass first semester classes or are struggling with math or reading class we often alter their schedule to get them the support they need to recover credit and become successful with the material. This sometimes takes students out of a planned elective course which raises questions for parents and students. It is our philosophy that core class success must have priority at this level.

Explore Conferences – We are preparing to meet with students and parents over the next couple of months regarding the results of the Explore Testing that our seventh and eighth grade students took in November. The test results are in, and Mrs. Hamit, Mrs. Mead and I have looked over the individual student results. The scores of a few students surprised us, both with higher scores than expected for some and lower scores for others. Dr. Pegram created a data sheet with grade level numbers for those who scored in the CCRS-ready range. The focus of the eighth grade conferences will be using the information from the Explore to plan for high school schedules. The seventh grade conferences will basically be a review of the test scores and to begin conversations about student career interest. Several teachers will join us in hosting these conferences.

Submitted by Michael Flax