

Carbondale Attendance Center / Santa Fe Trail Junior High School
BOE Report –May 2017

The following is a report of the activities and events at the Carbondale Attendance Center / Santa Fe Trail Junior High for April and May 2017.

Activities – The track season comes to an end today with the league track meet at Prairie View. The four teams have competed well, and we have placed first at several meets. That will wrap up any sports and academic competitions for the year. There are still numerous classroom/grade level activities to finish up. OAC and CAC will have separate field days this year. Each will be at the respective school, and some of our seventh grade students will be helping with them. There are field trips, fourth quarter celebrations, and just general end-of-year traditions that will take place. Teachers have been directed to use instructional time wisely, and when the students are not in one of the activities they must be engaged in learning.

Departing Staff – We are losing several members of the staff at the end of the year. I wanted to mention them by name, as they have all contributed to our school and district. Mr. Russell Fawl will be heading to the Auburn-Washburn district next year after teaching fourth grade here. Mr. Bill Theodore has been our junior high technology teacher. He will be leaving us, and I have heard many students say they will miss him a lot. He has been popular with many students. Mrs. Allison Folger, language arts teacher, will be transferring to the high school here. I believe she began her teaching career at CAC, which was before my employment began fifteen years ago. Mr. Thatcher Decker, social studies, will also be teaching at the high school next year. Mrs. Betsy Harlan is retiring at the end of this school year. She has taught at multiple subjects at a variety of grade levels. These staff members will be missed. I appreciate what they have brought to the district and this building.

Art Show - The junior high students hosted the annual art show here two weeks ago. It was a great success. Many students and even more parents came out to view the art work produced by our students. We changed the venue this year and held the show in Mrs. Riggs's classroom. Several students assisted Mrs. Riggs in transforming the art room into a gallery. Our art program is well-received, and the work our students create and are exposed to is great in scale. I believe we have a very good art program at our building, and there is a nice pool of talent among the group we have in junior high. They are being challenged, and based on the feedback from parents they are producing high quality art.

Interviewing – We have interviews scheduled for the junior high language arts position and for one special education position, possibly two. By the time the BOE meets Wednesday, I hope to have a recommendation for filling the language arts position. Kristy and I have been making room assignment changes to go along with the transferring staff and the new staff. We hope to have that mapped out by the end of this week. That will make for some additional maintenance tasking, but we are certain with the changes being published before school is out they will have time to make a schedule that works.

Student Issues – I know you have heard from us ad naseum about student issues this year. We have tired of it as well. I just think it is important to let you know that in the last three weeks we have had six students hospitalized with emotional and mental issues. In addition to that, we have had to involve law enforcement with other students a couple of times. One student's team has met with TLEC administration and a school attorney, as we had a surprise visit from an attorney representing a student and his parent. There will be two additional meetings in an effort to resolve the issues specific to this case. I have had concern from a

few students, a parent or two, and a couple of staff who are feeling less than safe here due to some student behaviors. Kristy and I continue to do our best to reassure them, and to preserve the safety of everyone here.

Drills – Today (Wednesday, May 3) we had two of our safety drills: a tornado drill and a lock down drill. Later this week we will have a fire drill and then an evacuation drill. I alerted the parents via School Messenger that we would be having these before school is out. I wanted to make sure they understood that this is not reactive to the threat situation of two weeks ago. We are required to get a fire drill per month, three severe weather drills, one lockdown and one evacuation per year. However, that did give me an opportunity to have a discussion with the students here about safety and the consequences of their behavior. I may run the fire drill and evacuation drill the same day, as nice weather days have been few and far between.

Student Promotion – I have been meeting with four eighth grade students and their parents regarding the very real potential that the students may not be promoted to the ninth grade. We have made two offers of support to get the students ready by fall, but they would not be participating in the recognition ceremony next Friday. It has been standard for students to have to pass three of the core classes for the year in order to pass eighth grade. At this point these particular students are failing at least three core classes each. We have offered the following options for the students. One, they may enroll in summer school at SFTHS, with the requirement that they pass the classes there. They all understand the fee for doing so, and that they get the fee back if the students pass the classes. Our second option is for the students to return the last week of school, when the eighth graders are not here but the rest of the classes are. They would have time with teachers to go over material they have missed, work on assignments they failed to complete, and get one-on-one support with struggles. If the work was completed at a reasonable level of passing, we would consider that on a par with completing the requirements. This would be a very intense four days of work, and they would be expected to participate fully. Retention of students is something that has me “on the fence” as far as why, how, and to what extent it helps students.

Submitted by Michael Flax
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