



Cardinal Update

September 16, 2022



OUR "WHY": To inspire passionate life-long learning

Hello everyone! As we hit mid-September, the school year is fully underway and we have many activities that we need to update you about.

- We have Parent-Teacher Conferences next Wednesday (4:15 p.m. - 8:15 p.m.) and Thursday (7:00 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.). Please plan to attend. Your child has the greatest chance of success when the student, teacher and parents are communicating and working together!
- One thing you might find new this year when you speak with your teacher at conferences is that we have changed testing platforms. Previously we utilized NWEA Map Testing but this year we have moved to using Fastbridge. We made this change in search of better, more usable data so we can help our students succeed academically.
- We are currently in our 5th year of the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) process. This process evaluates our school improvement over the past five years and determines if we are accredited by the state or not. As you may imagine the past five years have been a roller coaster ride due to the many things that have affected our schools (COVID, new staff, changes by the state to the accreditation process, the addition of the Star Recognition program and a combining of the Redesign Process with the KESA process). We are looking forward to sharing with the Accreditation Review Council the advances we have made the past six years to help our students and improve our schools.
- If you attend Parent-Teacher Conferences at the Middle/High School in the evening, you may notice that we have several things going on. Wednesday or Thursday evening, they will be testing and aiming the new football/track stadium lights. Please park in the East or West parking lots as the drive through on the South side of the building may be closed. Thursday evening will be busy as we have home HS Volleyball matches v Sacred Heart starting at 5:00 p.m. and MS Volleyball and Football will be playing at Hutch Trinity that evening. You will still be able to meet with teachers except for the teachers coaching those sports will not be available Thursday evening. If you miss meeting with any teachers please feel free to reach out to them with an email and request a meeting or phone call to discuss your child with them.
- We will not have school on Thursday or Friday of next week. We will still have our Football game against Bennington that night along with the Little Cheer and Dance Clinic. This will be our first game under the new lights!

- Speaking of the new lights,.....For those of you that do not know, we had a light pole fall down during the wind storm on December 15, 2021. This brought to our attention that our poles may be in worse condition than previously thought. After having them inspected, our suspicions were confirmed. After nine months of working with our insurance company and FEMA, we have been able to get all of our light poles and lights replaced with new steel poles and LED lights at zero cost to the district! This has saved the district \$370,000. Due to the timing of the inspection we were not able to get the lights replaced prior to the school year starting however by moving a couple games we were able to get the company to install the football lights during this two week window. The company will return at a later date to complete the project by installing the new lights at the softball field.
- We have just put out a Request for Proposals to resurface our track and possibly make some needed additions to the track facilities. These bids will be considered at the November Board of Education meeting. We have more student-athletes participating in track than any other sport but our track facilities are in need of repair and improvements in order to allow our kids to continue to compete safely.
- We have one other project that is taking place in the near future. On October 3rd we will begin remodeling our district office. Our district office was brought in as a temporary building around 30 years ago and has had little maintenance done to it. This year we added a district office staff to help with the increased reporting that is required of school districts now and we need to provide an office to accommodate and create a productive working environment for our staff. The remodel will include the building of a wall for a new office, new flooring, removal of some cabinets, new counter tops for the cabinets that remain, new paint throughout the building and a few other minor updates. Starting October 3rd our district office staff will be relocated to the Middle/High School for approximately 6-8 weeks. The new telephone system should allow you to communicate with our staff by calling the district office telephone number (785-914-5602) but if it does not, please call the Middle/High School Office (785-914-5600) and they will be able to communicate the message to our staff. We will still be available by email. If you need to speak in person to a district office staff member or myself, you will need to go to the front entrance of the Middle/High School and check into the office as all doors to our school buildings are locked for security purposes.

- You may be asking yourself why and how are we doing so many projects at this time. The answer is that several projects were put on hold from 2010 – 2018. This was due to school funding being reduced each school year during that period. In order to continue to keep our facilities attractive, functional and safe, we need to make these improvements now. Over the past four years the state has increased our funding to try to get us back to previous levels and this has allowed us to budget our money for several projects. Most districts would pass a new bond issue to get these improvements accomplished but due to the great past planning and increased state and federal funding we have been able to make the following improvements to our district without a bond issue AND without increasing our mill levy for our district taxpayers. We will continue to prioritize stabilizing our mill rate for our patrons as we appreciate the continued support our community provides to our schools. Some of the projects we have been able to complete recently:
 - Air Conditioning in our main gym
 - Two new school buses and a new van
 - New equipment purchased for the Industrial Arts Program
 - New weight equipment in the Weight Room
 - New Telephone System throughout the district including adding telephones in every classroom for increased communication and security
 - New Bleachers at our outdoor facilities for increased safety and reduced maintenance costs.
 - New steel light poles and LED lights.
 - Remodel and update the District Office
 - Some Future District Improvements:
 - Resurface and update the track facilities
 - Elementary Playground Improvements
 - Remodel and update the MSHS Science Classrooms

- We will have official enrollment numbers on September 20th as that is the date that we must turn in our enrollment to the state. Prior to Covid, our enrollment numbers were up. Each year since the 2019-2020 school year, our numbers have decreased. In 2015, 47% of our students were from out-of-district. This year we are at approximately 40%. There are several reasons for this decline but in my opinion, if we are to continue to attract students to our district we must make certain of five things:
 - We must provide a top quality academic experience in our General Academic and Core classes, our Career and Technical Classes, and our Fine Arts classes.
 - We must offer successful extracurricular programs such as FCCLA, FFA, BPA, Student Council, Music, Art and Athletics.
 - Our facilities must be safe, attractive and comparable to other districts of our size in our area. We also need to look for ways to make our school district stand out among area schools.
 - We must be able to attract and fill our open positions with top quality employees in all areas including teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, maintenance workers, counselors, secretaries, district office staff and coaches.
 - We must be innovative in our thinking to provide our students their best chance to be successful in our ever-changing world.

For the past two and a half years our efforts have been around keeping our students and staff safe, physically and social-emotionally, during the pandemic. I think I speak for everyone that we are excited to get back to focusing on academics, developing well-rounded students and providing our students and staff great facilities.