

From the Superintendent:

Springtime is upon us and although Graduation and the last day of school are just around the corner, we remain busy as we work to wrap up the year. Just a quick glance at our April calendar can make one wonder how everything that must be accomplished can be completed. Students and staff must be able to focus and prioritize their efforts in both academics and the various activities that are taking place. The fact that we are able to accomplish all that we do when so much is demanded of our time is a testament to the character of the people involved in this school district and the Thunderhawk community.

In addition to all of things that are taking place within the school district, I believe that one of my responsibilities this time of year is to stay up-to-date with legislative happens that will affect this district and attempt to communicate that information to the community. Although the Legislature is currently on recess and is only scheduled to reconvene for the short veto session, they do have some issues to address.

Low state revenues have been a major concern for quite some time and although steps have been taken over the past two years to maintain a “balanced budget,” nothing has been done to correct this trend. Revenues have been below the estimates for 12 of the last 15 months and there is no sign that this trend will change without legislative action. New estimates will be released in the later part of April and will become the basis for the state budget for the next two years.

In February, the Kansas Supreme Court found that the current school finance plan (also known as Block Grants) is unconstitutional because it is not equitable. The legislature did pass a bill just prior to first adjournment they believe addresses this issue. It remains to be seen if the court will agree. In the February court order, a June 30 deadline put in place that would close Kansas public schools if the legislature fails to meet the court’s requirements.

The lawsuit against the state also contains an issue of adequacy that has not yet been addressed by the Supreme Court. I believe that unless the legislature can develop a new school finance formula that satisfies the Court, it is quite possible the state may lose on this issue as well. School districts currently receive less funding that can be used for operations than was being received 12 years ago when the state was ordered to provide more funding resulting from the prior lawsuit the State.

There is no doubt legislators are facing a difficult time and have some tough decisions ahead. In order for them to appropriately represent their constituents, they need to hear from the people who elected them to office.