

## **From the Superintendent:**

Generally, when I write for the newsletter, I tend to focus on one thought or issue and discuss that in some detail. However, for this newsletter I will be mentioning several issues and discuss in a very general way.

I would like to remind patrons of our district website (<http://usd292.org>) and encourage you to utilize this resource when possible. We do attempt to keep the various pages up-to-date as much as possible. We are rather limited on staff and many of our people serve multiple roles. This does make it difficult to stay on top of updates to the website but we do strive to do so. There are several links on our home page that will for the most part be up-to-date at all times. One of those is the “Calendar” link. That link will take the user directly to my Outlook calendar that is constantly being updated as activities are added or changed. There is also a link to the “WHS Daily Bulletin” that serves as an announcements page. The bulletin generally lists upcoming activities for approximately a week in advance. There is also a link for the breakfast and lunch menus for the two buildings.

As I hope you will recall, I have mentioned on several occasions that all districts across the state will be implementing a new accreditation process. This new process, known as the Kansas Educational Systems Accreditation or KESA officially begins with the 2017-2018 school year. KESA will be based on five-year accreditation cycles that focus on the actual educational processes in place within the entire system. Prior to KESA, individual school buildings were accredited annually based almost entirely on state assessment results. The old accreditation system was not put in place because the Kansas State Department of Education believed it was the right thing to do. That method of accountability was a product of the No Child Left Behind legislation passed under former President George W. Bush. Kansas Schools are currently operating in what is being called “Zero Year.” The state department is providing training opportunities, other forms of guidance and resources to school districts so they will be able to begin the accreditation cycle next August.

With the general election coming up on Tuesday, November 8, I think it is worth mentioning some of the “political” issues relating to public education in Kansas. Operating budgets for all school districts in Kansas have been basically flat for the past three years due to the elimination of the old funding formula and the implementation of “block grants.” The block grants essentially froze operating budgets at the 2014-2015 level. The 2017 Legislature will be required to develop and implement a new funding formula as the block grant system will expire on June 30. The true challenge for the Legislature will be a matter of revenue. State revenues have been declining significantly since 2012. There is also a school funding law suit pending against the State of Kansas. Last spring, the Kansas Supreme Court ordered the Legislature to provide more equitable funding. On September 21<sup>st</sup>, the Supreme Court held a hearing on the adequacy of the funding provided by the State. The decision has not been announced for that portion of the law suit but is expected sometime in January.

In November, five of the Kansas Supreme Court Justices are up for retention voting. I would guess that it is likely one or more political action groups will spend money on mailings for the purpose of removing these justices from the court. PAC’s have the right under current law to utilize this strategy to promote their cause. As a school official, I cannot legally or ethically utilize this forum to promote any political candidate or question on a ballot. However, I can ask that our patrons take the time to learn all the facts related questions or candidates that will be on the ballot and then vote according to your conscience.