

From the Superintendent:

With the month of January winding down, I have now worked about a month and a half in the role of superintendent for both districts serving the Thunderhawk communities. During this time, I have become even more convinced that current circumstances present a tremendous opportunity to improve the overall educational program for our students. Being the Superintendent for both the Wheatland and Grinnell districts has created a shift in my thinking and approach to leadership. In the past, although I have tried to consider any impact on the cooperative agreement, my primary charge was to act in the best interest of one district only. I am now required act in the best interest of both districts, and in turn, the best interest of every student served.

The situation leading to the change in leadership is definitely unfortunate; however, the overall timing creates a positive situation moving forward. During the 2017-2018 school term, all K-12 educational systems in Kansas will be implementing a new accreditation system referred to as the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA for short). We are currently in what the Kansas State Department of Education is referring to as Zero Year. This is a time for planning and preparations for the implementation of this new process. We have made a conscious decision to enter into this process as a single system rather than each district “doing their own thing.” Utilizing this single system approach will promote greater collaboration between the two faculties and provide more opportunities for in-depth conversations related to curriculum and the utilization of resources.

We have taken the first step in this single system approach by creating a KESA Leadership Team. This team has five members and is composed of teacher leaders from each building and myself. On Tuesday, January 24, this team attended an accreditation training in Oakley during the morning. The team then met that afternoon for some in-depth discussion related to what we currently do and what we should be doing moving forward. Discussion not only covered our work toward accreditation, but also strategies we could possibly implement to help improve on our educational programs. Based on the feedback I received from individual team members and my own perceptions, this was one of the most productive meetings held since the implementation of the cooperative agreement.

From my perspective as superintendent, this is an exciting time as we work toward improving opportunities and educational experiences for our children. The KESA process requires that we shift our focus toward how we provide education rather than just the results of a test. That shift in focus will be a major adjustment for many of our faculty members as testing has been the primary focus for many years. On behalf of our faculties, staff and students, I ask for the continued support of parents and patrons as we progress through this new accreditation process.