



Monday, Nov. 25, 2019
Vol. 2, No. 6

Just So You Know

Standing in front of a class full of ninth grade English students recently while discussing the process of writing proved to be the invigorating experience that I needed at this point in my career. In one respect, it was nostalgic, but more importantly, it served as reassurance that our children, and the adults teaching them, are in a very good place when it comes to literacy.



Along with social/emotional learning, the focus on literacy in the Emery School District is profound and a No. 1 priority with the school board, the district office, and each of our 10 schools. Goals for improvement have been written by the schools through the Teacher/Student Success Act (TSSA) and are also part of the district's Digital Teaching and Learning Grant administered through the IT Department. Schools have used funding from each grant to bolster their literacy programs, either individually or collectively, while integrating technology as a support mechanism. Many schools have carved out a chunk of time for daily literacy periods in addition to regularly scheduled time for the English Language Arts curriculum.

Each of the three classes I visited recently began with "paper and pencil" writing, either in a student writing journal, or on single sheets of paper to be turned in and reviewed by the instructor. The writing included prompts, use of new vocabulary words, and reflection on research projects. Most recently, these students have been researching Hurricane Katrina, which opens numerous possibilities for new knowledge that is relevant to their lives whether it be the political strand, the human tragedy strand, the changing climate strand, or the historic strand.

My role, and its connection to my nostalgia, had to do with the journalistic style of writing which I have been involved with since I was a high school journalism student in the sixties. It was my challenge to speak as a journalist to these students while offering insight into the research that goes into writing about significant events whether it be news reporting, feature writing, editorializing, or personal opinion and reflection. This was not a lesson on writing, however, but rather a lesson on living and building the individual storehouse of experiences and knowledge that support good writing.

"Writing can be hard work," I told the students. "But when you have skills, knowledge, and experiences to draw on, writing can be very fulfilling, not only for you but for others as well."

The district's Administrative Council Book Club recently read, *"The Principal"* by Michael Fullen who noted early in the book that studies show that more than half of America's students are simply bored with school and find it to be irrelevant in their lives. In addition, the recent publication of the 2019 SHARP Survey indicated that more than half of the Emery District's 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th graders who took the survey last year reported being disconnected from their schools. That same study group, however, reported spending extraordinary amounts of time on their electronic devices. Is this a kid problem? A parent problem? Or is it a school problem?

Part of the solution has to come from making meaningful connections with kids—not in an electronic way, but rather in a human way. Yes, we are doing that through our collaborative efforts to improve literacy, but when you combine that with our goals relevant to social/emotional learning we have a meaningful formula for well-rounded individualized success.

Thanks to Courtnee Justice and Shanda Winget for inviting me to visit their classes.

Superintendent Davis

Vision Statement:

"Education is a collaborative effort of home, community, and school. Students experience success on a daily basis and excel in performance through applying knowledge to real life situations. Schools are student-centered, guided by educators who possess excellent leadership and educational skills. Education expands beyond the classroom walls through the use of technology, and the curriculum meets the highest standards of an ever-changing world. Graduates are prepared to enter the workforce or continue their formal education at an advanced technical institution or a college or university. The Emery County School District believes that learning today provides leadership for tomorrow."

Highlights from the 2019 SHARP Survey

2019 Survey Administration

Administered to students in grades 6, 8, 10, 12 in 2019

Included 39 school districts and 17 charter schools in Utah

One private school participated

Emery District Participants:

Sixth Grade 141

Eighth Grade 146

Tenth Grade 164

Twelfth Grade 120

District Total: 571



Components of the Survey

- Substance Use
- Antisocial Behavior
- Community and School Climate Safety
- Social and Emotional Health
- Physical Health and Safety

Substance Abuse- Alcohol

Use in the past 30 days by 10th and 12th graders declined from 2017-2019 by 2 percent but was still above the state average for 12th graders.

Six percent of 10th graders reported using alcohol in the last 30 days while 13.6 percent of 12th graders used alcohol during that same period.

The most preferred location for drinking was at a residence and without parental permission.

Substance Abuse- Marijuana

Use in the past 30 days by 10th graders increased by nearly 5 percent from 2017 to 2019 while dropping by one percent for 12th graders.

Each district grade level was below the state average in use within the past 30 days.

2.9 percent of 10th graders and 6.4 percent of 12th graders reported using marijuana within the last 30 days.

Substance Abuse- Prescription Drugs

Use for every grade level in the district was below the state average except for sixth grade which was .6 percent higher.

However, only 1.8 percent of that age group reported using prescription drugs.

Substance Abuse- Cigarettes

All district grade levels surveyed for lifetime use and use in the past 30 days were above the state average. However, lifetime use by eighth and twelfth graders was lower than in 2017.

The primary source for cigarettes locally is a convenience store, supermarket, or gas station.

Substance Abuse- Vaping

Nearly 35 percent of district 10th graders have vaped at least one time. That is nearly 10 percent higher than the state average.

31.2 percent of twelfth graders have vaped, which is right at the state average.

Vaping statistics indicate that lifetime use has jumped from 1.3 percent in 2015 to 8.5 in 2019.

Vaping within the last 30 days shows alarming increases from 2017 to 2019 with nearly 20 percent of 10th and 12th graders currently vaping.

The most preferred location for vaping among local teens is at parties and social situations.

The primary source for vaping products is borrow or bumming from others.

Vaping has surpassed cigarettes as the primary first use of tobacco by district teens.

(Continued on next page)



(Continued from previous page)

Substance Abuse- Note

Students strongly believe that their parents are opposed to underage drinking, tobacco, marijuana, use of prescription drugs, and vaping, but only 35.8 percent of teens believe their parents communicate their expectations of NO use or consumption to their children on a regular basis.

Substance Abuse- Chewing Tobacco

Although the SHARP data shows that the Emery District remains above the state average in use of chewing tobacco, use is trending downward.

In 2015, 19.7 percent of seniors indicated that they had used chew in their lifetime while 10.4 percent of seniors indicated they had used in the last 30 days. The 2019 survey indicated that lifetime use for seniors dropped to 10.7 percent while 30-day use also dropped to 2.1 percent.

Of concern is the increase in use by sixth and eighth graders over 2017.

School Environment

How often do you feel that the school work you are assigned is meaningful and important?

(often to almost always)- District 38.4 State 39.4.

Note: All grades but eighth show a decline in support for this question.

In the past year, how often did you enjoy being in school?

(often or almost always)

For 2019, the district favorable response was 40.4 while the state was at 47.2.

Eighth grade showed an increase in this category from the previous survey while all other grades were down from the previous survey (2017).

How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?

(quite important or very important)-

District 53.8 State 54.3

Eighth, tenth, twelfth results are up from the previous survey while sixth grade is down.

94.8 percent of district students surveyed believe there "are lots of chances for students to get involved."

That compares with 88.4 percent in the state.

There are lots of chances for students to talk to teachers one-on-one: 83.9 district 86 state

I feel safe at my school: 83.5 district 86.3 state

My teachers praise me when I work hard: 56.6 district 55.5 state

Students who listed being worried at school, listed the following concerns:

Students using alcohol or drugs: 56.3 district 51.3 state

Suicide by a student: 48.9 district 58.7 state

Gun violence or active shooter: 35.4 district 42.7 state

Getting bullied: 28.8 district 27.7 state

Earthquake/Fire: 26.8 district 38.2 state

Gang violence: 21.4 district 29.4 state

(Continued on next



(Continued from previous page)

Unsafe Places:

Parking lots
The school bus
Bathrooms



During the past 30 days, student has felt so unsafe at/on way to school that student skipped school: 17.4 district 10.7 state (Highest percentage came from eighth grade at 23.8)

During the past 12 months, student has been picked on or bullied on school property: 21.5 district 18.1 state (Highest among sixth grade at 27.4)

During the past 12 months, student has been harassed or threatened via internet, email, or cell phone: 22.6 district 20.8 state (Highest among tenth grade at 29.4)

High mental health treatment needs:

20.9 district 19.3 state (Highest is tenth grade at 22.7 and twelfth grade at 22.5)

Suicide indicators and self harm:

During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide? District 17.2 State 16.4 (Tenth grade highest at 23.5)

... did you make a plan? District 13 State 12.3

... did you attempt? District 14.2 State 15.4

Screen Time and use of social media apps multiple times per day:

All district grades are above the state average with twelfth grade being highest at 82.3 percent. District average is 65.1 percent.

When it comes to playing games two or more hours per day, the district is at 65.9 percent while the state is at 66.7.

Risk Profile:

Low commitment to school: District 52 percent which is above the state and national average.

However, district youth, 75 percent, have protection in their belief in a moral order which is above the state and national average.

USBE amends State Board Rule regarding vaping

SALT LAKE CITY: The Utah State Board of Education has adopted new rules which will allow schools to confiscate and possibly destroy electronic or e-cigarette devices found in student possession on campus. However, in order for that to happen, local boards will have to adopt or amend existing policy. Also, local board policy will have to be adopted or amended regarding searching students for controlled substances.

The new rule allows schools to turn confiscated devices over to law enforcement should they suspect an illegal substance is being used. Although Utah does have a medical marijuana law, that law does not allow cigarette or e-cigarette devices as delivery systems.

It is reported that Utah Rep. Susan Pulsipher is drafting legislation that would add e-cigarette components to substance abuse

programs and potentially provide stipends to schools that create a positive behavior plan for students.

Under the new "expedited" rules, the earliest the two could go into effect is Jan. 8, 2020. The USBE staff is working on updated model policies for schools on both search and confiscation. The model policies should be available before the new rules go into effect.

District officials meet with local legislators

The Southeast Education Service Center hosted state legislators representing southeastern Utah at a luncheon meeting at the Carbon School District Office on Tuesday, Nov. 12. Each of the four school districts comprising the Service Center was represented by local board members, business administrators, and superintendents. Legislators in attendance were Kristine Watkins, Carl Albrecht, and David Hinkins. The Emery School District was represented by Board President Tracey Johnson, Business Manager Jared Black, and Superintendent Larry W. Davis.

Conducting the meeting for the Service Center was SESC Board Chairman JT Strouder from the Grand School District. He took the legislators through the 2020 legislative priorities established by the Joint Legislative Committee (JLC) comprised of the Utah School Boards Association, the Utah School Superintendent Association, and the Utah Association of School Business Officials.

Those priorities include:

- Fully funding student enrollment growth 6 percent increase to the WPU (Weighted Pupil Unit)
- \$5 million additional to transportation
- \$500,000 additional to NESS (Necessarily Existing Small Schools)
- \$65 million in one-time funds for safe schools

While there was general support for these priorities by the legislators, there were concerns expressed about whether to increase the WPU or to fund separate education-related programs. It was noted that increasing funding to the WPU would give more discretionary use of those funds to school districts. On the other hand, keeping WPU funding at a minimum and funding separate education programs would come with strings attached and generally underfund rural school districts.

Tax reform was also considered in the meeting. The JLC priority list notes, "We are prepared and willing to work cooperatively with the Legislature to explore solutions to solve the state structural tax imbalance through a fair and comprehensive

review." However, it was noted by district representatives that any changes to the current funding mechanisms for public education, namely income tax, would have to provide an on-going source of funding that will support increasing ed funding and specifically increase teacher salaries.

In other discussion, the legislators were asked to support a proposal to amend the Juvenile Justice Law that will sunset a school's option to send truancy cases to juvenile court at the end of the current school year. Known as a "backstop," superintendents argued that having the court referral option in place has served as a meaningful deterrent to unexcused absences. Without that option, however, schools, especially those in rural areas, are limited in how they can address truancy.

Also, a request was made to legislators to support changes in the configuration of Educational Service Centers in the state. Under the proposal, Service Centers will become Service Agencies which will allow for more Utah State Board of Education support, both financially as well as in human services. The proposal also calls for an on-going increase to Service Agency budgets to cover cost of living and inflation.

Of final concern, legislators were asked to consider the impact that each education bill has on the resources of districts, especially rural school districts. When legislation comes to districts in the form of State Board Rule, often without funding or inadequate funding, it becomes a challenge for districts to write local board policy, find adequate funding to initiate and sustain programs, write grants, and collect and evaluate data.

The 2020 Utah Legislature gets underway in January and runs through the middle of March. During the session, local legislators work closely with district representative in discussion of various education bills and the impact such legislation would have on school districts.

Scott Crane, director of the Southeast Education Service Center representing Emery, Carbon, Grand and San Juan School Districts, organized the legislative meeting with assistance from executive secretary Johnna Boyack.

Emery School District
Mission Statement:

“The mission of the Emery County School District is to provide a comprehensive education that will prepare students to take a proactive and responsible role in an ever-changing world.”

District Calendar:



Nov. 25: Juvenile Justice Committee Meeting, 3:30 pm, DO

Nov. 27: Minimum Day

Nov. 28-29: Thanksgiving Recess

Dec. 2: Midterm Earlyout, PLC for teachers

Dec. 4: School Board at Book Cliff Elementary, 4:30 pm work session and 5 pm general session

Dec. 9: Coal Country Strike Team, 1:30 pm, Salt Lake City

Dec. 10: Association/Board/Superintendent Meeting, 7:30 am, DO... Administrative Council Meeting, 8:30 am, Ferron Senior Center

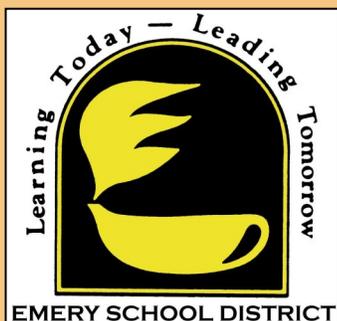
Holiday Schedule: Friday, Dec. 20, minimum day... No school
Dec. 23-Jan. 1... School resumes Thursday, Jan. 2

Emery County School
District

PO Box 120
120 N. Main Street
Huntington, Utah
84528

Phone: 435-687-9846
Fax: 435-687-9849

Website: emerycsd.org



STICKY NOTES:



Change in District Office Business Hours: The Emery School District Office has maintained 8 am to 5 pm business hours during the school year for generations. However, times have changed and the need to adjust these office hours to meet the needs of district schools, employees, and stakeholders has become apparent. Starting in January 2020, the district office business hours will be 7:30 am to 4 pm. District office staff will have a 30-minute lunch break. These new business hours will be in line with employee contract starting and ending times as well as those schools who start before 8 am. While the new hours will eliminate the “dead” time from 4-5 pm, the district office will continue to honor requests for post-office hour meetings and classes, background checks, deliveries, etc.