What is AQuESTT?

Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow, AQuESTT, is the new accountability system for public schools in Nebraska. Previously, each school was ranked based on its respective NeSA (state assessment) scores and graduation rates. AQuESTT is intended to be a way to represent a school and district by assigning them a classification score (1-4) rather than a ranking. In the assignment of classification, a score of 1 indicates a need for improvement, 2 is a rating of good, 3 is a great classification and 4 is excellent.

AQuESTT has six pillars that are represented within the overall classification. Those pillars are: 1) positive partnerships, relationships, student success, 2) transitions, 3) educational opportunities and access, 4) college and career ready, 5) assessment and 6) educator effectiveness. The information gathered is through NeSA assessments, school characteristics and administrator surveys.

Lyons-Decatur Northeast District was assigned an AQuESTT classification of 3 (great) when considering all tenets of the AQuESTT system. The high school was assigned a classification of 3 (great). The middle school was assigned a classification of 4 (excellent). Our elementary school was assigned a classification of 2 (Good). I am extremely pleased with these results.

You may have heard that congress approved a new bill that replaces the old No Child Left Behind (NCLB) system. This new Nebraska AQuESTT system will be an excellent match for this new federal program. I applaud our State School Board and Commissioner for their foresight in leading the Educational assessment process in Nebraska.

More information is available on line about the AQuESTT system at aquest.com.

By, Fred Hansen, Superintendent
Speech

By Melissa Brokaw

The speech season has started again! Mrs. Seagren and I are glad to welcome new members to our team. Freshmen: Ryan Payton, Layne Miller, and Reid Preston and Sophomore: Kassandra Prieto-Garcia. We are also glad to have returning members including: Cameron Barry, Julisa Prieto-Garcia, Cassidy Mentink, Brent Miller, Blair Preston, Abby Peterson, Mickayla Petersen, Kelsey Payton, Brock Vetick, and Amelia Schlichting.

The team will be competing in the following meets: Howells/Dodge on Jan. 27th, Logan View on Jan. 30th, GACC on Feb. 6th, Wisner- Pilger on Feb. 20th, EHC at Twin River on Feb. 27th, and the LDNE triangular on March 5th. Districts will be on March 16th at Bancroft-Rosalie. The team hopes to compete at state on March 24th. All meets start at 8, except for conference which starts at 9.

As always we love to see familiar faces in the crowds at these meets. Hope to see you there!

East Husker Conference Art Show and Speech Meet

The conference art show and speech meet will be held February 27, 2016 at Twin River Community Schools. Twin River School is located in Genoa Nebraska.

Burt County Spelling Bee:

Lyons-Decatur is hosting the Burt County Spelling Contest on Tuesday, February 16th beginning at 9:00 a.m. Contestants in grades 5-8 from all Burt County Schools will be participating. Spectators are welcome.
From Mr. Lahm’s Pen

THANK YOU for making our school at Lyons-Decatur a ‘great’ one! Even the numbers of our test scores prove that we are a great school. However, our school is ‘great’ for far more reasons than any test score number might try to justify. I know this can be a rather boring and/or polarizing subject, but do bear with me as I try to share the cliff notes version of where we are in education in 2016.

In December of 2015, Congress and the President overwhelmingly passed the ESSA or Every Student Succeeds Act. This act effectively ended No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001. This new law puts more educational decision-making back in the hands of the states where it belongs. However, it still requires that states have an accountability system in place to help make data-driven decisions.

About two years ago, Nebraska proactively embarked on an effort to create an accountability system that focused on improving schools and teachers. The system is named AQuESTT or Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow. (Hang with me. It only gets better with time.:)) Here is the short of it. AQuESTT set up a system that classifies schools in one of four categories (4-Excellent, 3-Great, 2-Good, 1-Needs Improvement). Our NeSA (Nebraska State Accountability) assessment scores placed us in the Great (3) category, and our middle school (if you will) of 7th and 8th grade students is actually considered to be in the Excellent (4) category.

“Why does this matter to me?” you might ask. “We have a great school, and I did not need the state telling me what our school is or is not.” “You schools spend too much time, effort, and energy worried about testing kids just so you can rank yourself.” Again, in many ways you are correct, but what if there was a method to our madness.

Any business has to use numbers to be able to justify itself to its shareholders or simply to the business owner to be sure there is profitability. Even if a profit is being shown, we always want the greatest ‘bang for our buck.’ However, the business owner also knows that there are so many factors out of their control as well. This is true of schools as well.

Schools need to be able to have data to show that what they are doing is working. While the debate will continue about if we test students too much, people want numbers to quantify that what they are doing is working. A teacher and administrator need to have an idea about how they can improve year after year. We also know that there are so many factors that we cannot control in education. However, our mission at Lyons-Decatur is to “empower all students to achieve.” AND…we take that mission very serious.

We know that we have a great school system at Lyons-Decatur that goes far beyond testing of students. If you do not believe me, just come to our school during an Empower Your Genius time to see students of all grades working together. Visit with one of our teachers and/or students about the $10,000+ dollars we were able to raise for the Veterans Memorial in town. Ask about our ongoing science research projects. Check out the senior community studio projects that will be completed in late April to early May that is improving our school and communities. See all of our classrooms with teachers and students engaged in a variety of learning projects. You have empowered us at school to have the resources necessary to provide ALL students with the opportunities to achieve. THANK YOU for helping make us a GREAT school!!!

By, Derek Lahm, Principal
Coming Assessments
In the next couple months, our students will be taking some very important assessments in the Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) test as well as the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) assessment. The MAP assessment tracks academic progress in terms of growth of individual students through their academic careers. This assessment offers valuable insight to teachers in regards to student's strengths and weaknesses in particular subject areas. We have even been able to have valuable goal-setting conversations with individual students regarding their MAP scores.

The NeSA assessment measures our students’ knowledge of the Nebraska state standards in the particular subject areas. NeSA assessments have high stakes attached to them not only for your individual student(s) but also for our school.

If you have a 4th, 8th, or 11th grade student, they will have an extra NeSA assessment in the subject area of writing that they may have taken before you read this article. The reading, math, and science (RMS) tests will take place toward the middle and end of April. There will be much more to come regarding these assessments. We never want to base our entire school efforts on assessments, as there is so much more than just book knowledge that is learned at school. However, we also recognize the importance of assessing ourselves to improve our product for our students.

Mid-Term Reports:
Mid-Term reports in grades 7-12 will be available at parent-teacher conferences on Thursday, February 11th. The next mid-term report will be April 15th.

Parent-Teacher Conference:
Parent – Teacher Conferences are scheduled for Thursday, February 11, 2016 from 3:00-8:00 p.m. School will dismiss at 2:00 p.m. on that day. There is no school on Friday, February 12th for teacher in-service.

Title 1 Parents Meeting:
Lyons-Decatur Northeast School is a school wide Title I program. This means that all K-6 students can be served by Title I. All elementary parents are invited to attend our annual Title I meeting. The meeting will allow time for parents to ask questions about the Title I program and provide input on possible changes for future services. The meeting will be held on Thursday, February 11th in the Title 1 Room 308 at 6:30 p.m., during our Second Semester Parent - Teacher Conferences.

Annual Report Card
Included in the Feb/Mar newsletter is the Annual Report Card for the school district. This provides patrons of the district with information on school district demographics, financial data, state standards assessment and ACT scores, transportation, facilities, goals, curriculum, enrollment, and faculty size.

The newsletter and calendar are available on our school web site: www.lyonsdecatarschool.org and also in the main office.
News from the Guidance Office:

Financial Aid Forms: The Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) forms are available on-line at fafsa.gov. Help is available locally for the process of filling out these forms.

ACT: The traditional time for ACT testing for juniors is April. This year, the test is scheduled for April 9th. The registration must be submitted by March 4th, 2016.

Scholarship Information: As scholarship information arrives, it is posted in the Guidance Office. Seniors need to be proactive in searching for financial aid. The list of local scholarship is posted on the Guidance Office’s Naviance web site www.succeed.naviance.com. Contact John Bellar at 402-687-2184 if you need more information.

PARENTS:
Please remember when there is a “10:00 AM Late Start”, the Decatur shuttle buses will leave Decatur at 9:20 AM.

SCHOOL CLOSING INFO:
The sources we will use to notify people of any changes in our school time schedule will be...
1. ADT – Early notification system
WOW T– Channel 6 Omaha
KETV – Channel 7 Omaha
KMTV – Channel 3 Omaha
KTIV – Channel 4 Sioux City (www.ktiv.com)
107.9 FM – AM 84 Radio West Point

Please listen to these stations for announcements. Do not call the school or administrators’ homes as these phone lines are needed to contact stations and staff. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

Yearbook includes all grades!

Yearbooks will go on sale from January 15th to March 1st. The cover is being designed by the Graphic Design Class with the theme; “Turn Up the Heat”. The yearbook staff is excited about the 100 page all color book that we will have. Included in this year’s book will be all the students at LDNE, preschool through 12, videos and memories. Yearbooks will cost $40.00 and you may pay the office or Mrs. Sharp.
Pre-School Registration

Pre-School Registration will be Friday, April 8th at 2:30 pm. Please call the school if you have a child who is or will be 3 or 4 years old on or before July 31st 2016, and did not attend pre-school the previous year. Please bring your child’s birth certificate and a record of your child’s shots with you on April 8th.

Kindergarten Child Find

We are currently compiling a list for next year’s Kindergarten class and we want to make sure we include everyone. If you are new to the district or your child did not attend pre school, please call the school so we can put your child’s name on our kindergarten list. We are looking for children who are 5 years old before July 31st, 2016. If you have a child in that age group and you are not going to send them to school next year, please let the school know also.

Northeast Music Department News

Congratulations to the following students for being selected to participate in these honors:

**UNL Festival for Winds and Percussion** (January 21-23rd)
- Martin Long

**Wayne State Honor Band** (January 30th)
- Brent Miller, Martin Long, Benny Estrada, Amelia Schlichting, *Reid Preston

**Wayne State Honor Choir** (February 5th)
- Blair Preston, Jessie Mutum, Amelia Schlichting, Lupita Prieto

**East Husker Conference Honor Band** (February 8th @ Madison, Concert--7:00PM)
- Brent Miller, Layne Miller, Reid Preston, Bow Whitley, Benny Estrada, *Martin Long, Amelia Schlichting, Paige Coates, Jacob Whitaker.
  *Denotes Principal (1st) Chair Placement

Upcoming Performances
The Burt County Community is always invited and encouraged to attend all LDNE performances.

Chili Supper Concert-Monday, March 7th 6:30 p.m.
Come out for a night of popular music and chili! For $5 you get all you can eat chili with sides and a drink. The night will feature the High School Choir, Jr. High Choir, 7-12 band, and various solo performances. This event is somewhat unusual in that all the music being performed has been selected by students. This is their chance to prepare and perform their music. Please come support their efforts in this informal setting.

WSC Music Festival-Tuesday March 8th
LDNE Jr. High Choir students will be participating in the Wayne State College Jr. High Music Festival again this year. The day is organized to encourage 7th-8th grade music students to develop their musicianship by performing in large ensembles, small ensembles, and solos. All performances are open to the public and are adjudicated for a rating. Parents and community members are encouraged to attend. Students who receive a Superior (I) rating from adjudicators will receive a certificate and ribbon.