

Dear Parents/Guardians:

By now you may have heard that USD 352 Goodland has decided to become part of Kansas Can School Redesign Project, and I am sure you have many questions about what that means and how it may impact your student in our district. My goal is to write a series of letters over the next several months explaining where we are, what we are doing, and keeping you up to date on the process. So, we will call this letter our first in the series and primarily will deal with some background information.

When Dr. Randy Watson was named our new Commissioner of Education, he along with the State Board of Education set out on a listening tour across the State of Kansas. They heard from parents, business leaders, and educators in an effort to redefine education with a focus on what it would take to have every student achieve success. They analyzed all the data gathered from across the state to chart a new direction and to give us a new vision focused on many more things other than just state assessment scores in defining success. Utilizing this information with State BOE direction came the new vision called Kansas Can with a mission of leading the world in the success of every student. It is a bold mission, similar to the bold accomplishments of NASA back in the early 60s in a quest to be the first to the Moon.

In 2016, KSDE launched a pilot program to redesign schools around this new vision. The first schools to go into the Redesign Pilot were called Mercury 7. A year later, they launched another application process for schools to enter redesign and those schools were called Gemini I schools followed by Gemini II a year later. Goodland administration and staff have been watchful of the progress and failures from the initial Mercury 7 schools through Gemini. Last year they rolled out the next redesign application called Apollo.

After careful consideration and many thoughtful conversations, our teachers and BOE voted to apply to be one of the members of the Apollo project, and we were accepted. This will be planning year. We will be going to meetings, visiting other districts and preparing for our own journey. A core team has formed to “pilot” us along this year, and it will be their job to evaluate the things we do well and the things we need to do differently. They will be seeking input from our entire staff, students, parents, and our greater community. Our goal will be to achieve success for every student and prepare them for the world ahead of them. There are some things this district does really well, but we know we have to do some things differently if we are going to achieve this bold goal and prepare our students for success in the world ahead of them.

We want to be an educational community that continues to improve and works hard to prepare our students. Our USD 352 mission statement is to Engage ~ Enrich ~ Empower, Every Student Every Day. This is our guiding principle. The reality is that although great things are happening in our district and community, we can always do better.

I know I didn't answer all your questions about Apollo Redesign, but hopefully this letter gives you a little background information. We will continue to communicate with you as we move forward. Stay tuned!

Sincerely yours in education,

Bill Biermann