

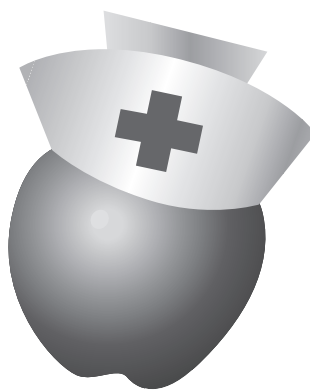
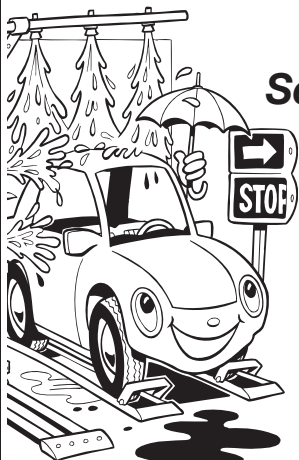
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Extra programs help tiny district get national nod

By Erica Bradley

The Norton Telegram
ebradley@nwkansas.com

With a high school named one of America's Best by U.S. News and World Report in 2008, Logan claims to be a small school district with a lot of extra programs to offer its students.

"We're doing something right," said Superintendent Bob Jackson.

Extra academic programs are offered to students, including a preschool, Spanish classes in all grades, distance learning and dual-credit courses with an area college.

Jackson said Logan offers preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds. He said the program started five years ago as a way for teachers to prepare kids for kindergarden.

He said it gives the preschoolers a basic foundation in things like letters, numbers and lining up properly.

This year, Jackson estimated there would be 14 children in the class for 4-year-olds and 12 in the section for 3-year-olds.

"We feel like it has been a very sound program," he said. "We're getting the kids off to a good start in their education careers."

"It's helped with our enrollment. Parents appreciate the opportunity to bring their children to school."

Logan also offers Spanish from kindergarden through 12th grade. Jackson said the language class is mandatory for students until they are entering their freshman year in high school, and optional after that.

He said they hired the Spanish teacher through the Kansas Department of Education's Visiting International Teacher Program. Jackson said she has been there a year and is enjoying Logan.

He said the Dane G. Hansen Foundation of Logan provided the money to hire her.

"We provide all of our kids, kindergarden through eighth grade, with Spanish," he said.

Jackson said Logan also offers "distance learning" classes, bringing in subjects taught at other schools and sending some out as well. He said Logan can receive classes such as psychology and sociology, and they send art and speech classes. He said they don't use the capability as much as he would like, but it is available.

Logan High School offers its students dual-credit courses through Colby Community College. He said students can earn up to 30 credit hours, equal to one year of college courses, while they are still in high school.

While the preschool and Spanish programs are unique to the area, he said, Logan is suffering budget problems like many other small districts in the state.

Enrollment has increased 18 to 195 since last fall, when enrollment was 177. In 2002, however, 213 students were enrolled.

He said the recent increase can be attributed



School
District

Logan

Enrollment fall 2009 — 195
Plus/Minus from 2008 — plus 18
Trend — Down 18 since 2002

to people who have moved to Logan.

Before this year, he said, Logan has been losing an average of five students per year. The superintendent said enrollment is the district's biggest problem because there isn't a lot of growth in the area.

"Our biggest challenge is the number of kids we have," he said, adding that the district is starting the year with \$50,000 less in the budget than last year due to state budget cuts.

"We're pretty bare-boned right now," he said. "\$50,000 is a big deal in Logan, but it is not a big deal at bigger schools."

He said the budget problems forced the school board to cut the art program, but he hopes to bring it back next year. Jackson said he hopes other cuts are not necessary.

"I don't care what program it is," he said, "it's important to someone."

"Our board has been proactive in looking at things we need to do. We will do everything we can to cut somewhere else and not negatively impact our children's education."

Jackson said the district employs 35 people, including 27 teachers, three custodians, two cooks, one maintenance person, one aide and a school nurse.

Jackson said the district faces one problem common to rural schools: hiring qualified teachers for every subject, though that's not a problem this year.

He said he feels fortunate to have a good mix of teachers, including veterans and new teachers.

He said one science teacher left last year, but Logan Robinson, a recent Kansas State University graduate, showed up to take the job.

"They are dedicated and inspirational," Jackson said. "Our faculty is one of the best around."



School enrollment follows area fortunes

By Vera Sloan

Colby Free Press
vsloan@nwkansas.com

Not often do small rural school districts build to a crescendo, dwindle and then make a comeback as the Golden Plains schools in Rexford and Selden have done.

The district is about the only one in northwest Kansas to show a steady increase in enrollment over the first decade of the 21st century, a trend that began when a Pennsylvania family opened a dairy west of Rexford.

Like many area districts, the predecessors of Golden Plains got their start soon after the land opened up to homesteaders and settlers. The young towns had need for schools for young families with children.

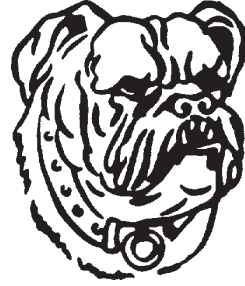
The first building to serve as a public school rather than a neighborhood school was constructed in 1889, the same year the Rexford School District was formed.

As families continued to move to the area, the school went from one room to four, plus a room for library and office. The present three-story brick building, built in 1924, occupies the same location as the original school.

From 1908 to 1911, Ben Foster, a Kansas City man, came to western Kansas to build a progressive farming and cattle breeding operation. Foster brought many families into the Rexford area as he amassed holdings of 33,000 acres in northwest Kansas and eastern Colorado. He began a breeding operation of purebred Hereford cattle in 1919.

It took lots of people to run the operation back then, and at one time it took two school buses to pick up the students from the families of men who worked at Foster Farms. After Foster's death, the heirs chose to close the breeding operation and sell off the land. That decision had a huge effect on the economy of northwest Kansas and especially the town of Rexford and its school. Grocery stores and service stations closed, and the school enrollment plunged.

In 1963, the district took a large part of the Menlo district after it closed. Part of the Gem School District also joined the Rexford district that year. Declining enrollment continued to plague rural areas, and in the 1968-69 school year, the Rexford district, which already in-



School District

Golden Plains

Enrollment fall 2009 — 205
Plus/Minus from 2008 — plus 13
Trend — down five since fall 2002

cluded Menlo and Gem, became Golden Plains, combining with the Selden School District in Sheridan County to the east. The first class graduated from the unified high school in 1969.

Classes for preschool through fifth grade are held in Selden, while junior high and high school students go to the Rexford building.

In the fall of 1999, the McCarty family sold its dairy operation in Pennsylvania, and by April 2000, the family was milking cows at a new dairy near the old Foster Farms headquarters at Breton, in eastern Thomas County and the Rexford School District. The influx of workers has had a positive effect on enrollment, and has brought a positive challenge by bringing another language into the school.

"We are very fortunate," said Mary Ellen Welshon, Golden Plains superintendent. "Young families have moved back to the area, and over all, the future looks good."

"We work hard to meet the needs of the students. We got on board with reading, and we are self motivating, and can go further that way."

"When I came here three years ago, we had 179 students, and have continued to grow from there to 189, and now there is a head count of 205. We won't know for sure until the census is final the middle of September."

Welshon said she can't say enough good things about the district's staff. She said when she worked for the Northwest Kansas Service Center, her choice was to be at Golden Plains.

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