Southwest Joins Fight to End R-Word

By Haley Brockel, Gabe Strobel, and Alaina Wilson

The R-Word campaign is a worldwide campaign that “pays attention to the words we say around the kids who are special ed” says Julie Nelson, Southwest’s School Counselor. This R-Word is the word retard. The South Dakota Special Olympics brought the campaign to South Dakota to show people that this word isn’t what most people think it is. “In South Dakota, the campaign started in 2013 but globally it started in 2009” says Nelson It is in the dictionary as people who are slow. Today people don’t use it in that way. When you say it towards someone without a disability, it can be offensive those that have disabilities.

The campaign has a Facebook page available. If you look up “Spread the word to end the word”, it will come up. Nelson and her team also help put together a living billboard saying “Word Have Power” before lunch and put up a poster for people to sign outside the lunchroom.

Eighth Grade is ‘Cruising’

By Chase Messinger, Katie Collins, and Annika Enevoldsen

Several eighth grade students at Southwest Middle School are enrolled in drivers’ ed this year. Drivers’ ed is a class for any driver to learn the rules of the road. Some students that are enrolled are Mara Karn and Abigail Strahl. Karn said, “A lot of people don’t know all of the rules of the road. They just know the common ones.” This class teaches all of the traffic laws of the road and brings in different professionals to teach the driving basics and give examples.

Although the students, Karn and Strahl, found drivers’ ed slightly boring, they also agreed that it taught them a lot about driving. A benefit of drivers’ ed is that teens can get out on the open road by themselves sooner. That is because with drivers’ ed students only need to wait three months to get their restricted permit instead of waiting six months. All of the drivers’ ed students recommend all upcoming drivers to take this class. “Do drivers’ ed. It is good for the environment,” said Strahl.

The cost for drivers’ ed is 279 dollars. Teens need 30 hours in the class room and six hours of driving with an instructor. So far all of the classes in the upcoming months March, April, and May are already full.

NAEP Testing

By Caitlyn Cadotte and Julia Wiedmeier

Eighth and fourth graders at all Rapid City Area Schools will be participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Test today, March, 6. Students will either take a math or reading assessment; the assessments usually take 90 to 120 minutes for most students to complete. The results of the students’ test score will not affect their grades; the information is used for statistical purposes only.

In a letter to parents, Southwest principal Robin Gillespie said NAEP is used “to help policymakers improve education”. The assessment results are released as “The Nation’s Report Card”. Students have been told the time and location of the test; half of the eighth grader will test at 8 a.m. and the other half will test at 10:30 a.m. If students are unsure where to go or have questions, they could contact their English teacher or the office. For more information, go to this website: https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/
Early Release Coming to an End?

By Katie Collins, Jessa Simpson, and Ella Barnard

The rumors going around Southwest that early release Wednesdays are coming to an end are true. Early release Wednesdays are days where students are done at 1 p.m. Teachers then have time to meet and collaborate with the goal of improving student achievement. The superintendent, Lori Simon, has proposed a plan to the school board that eliminates early release Wednesdays. When hearing about her favorite day of the week changing, eighth grade student Cinnamon Collins started tearing up. She believes that the day gives students a break from the stress of the week. Thinking of her high school career starting in the fall, she said high school students should have early release. "Yes, I think high school students should have early release because they have more stress and responsibility so they need a break in the middle of the week."

Seventh and eighth grade science teacher, Ross Hunter, said he felt indifferent about the change because he sees good and bad in the current system. Hunter said he worries about how students will react. "I don't think they're going to like it. I think that kids are going to miss it more than anyone," said Hunter.

The Rapid City Journal recently reported that instead of early release Wednesdays, teachers would have full day training days on October 6, November 9, January 4 and 5, February 16, and March 26 and 27. In each of these cases, the teacher training days will extend regular holiday breaks for students but not for staff. The Rapid City Journal reported that the school board will be voting on the proposed calendar at their next meeting in March. The next meeting will be on March 13.

Calling All Talent: Talent Show Try-Outs

By Britney Pitman and Ashley Luna

The Talent Show is on March 23rd, and students are already practicing for their acts because tryouts are this week. Eighth grader Daryn Meyer hopes to perform “Your Song” at this year’s Talent Show. Meyer said, “I am nervous because I don’t want to mess up”. Last year she sang “Lost Boy” with a friend. Eighth graders Bailey Evers, Schyler Grant, Kaylee McMacken, and Ella Barnard will also be trying out this week with the song “Viva La Vida” by Coldplay.

Try-outs are Tuesday and Thursday after-school in the band room. The signup sheet for tryouts are posted on the bulletin board outside the office.

Teacher Spotlight: Irene Nicandro

By News Team

This week’s Teacher Spotlight shines on Irene Nicandro; she’s a special education teacher for grades sixth through eighth. Nicandro has been teaching for nearly three years in special education; all of these years have been spent at Southwest Middle School. Prior to this, she spent two years as a preschool teacher and about four years as a substitute teacher. Nicandro said it was her two kids who inspired her to become a teacher because both of her kids have Autism. “I felt the only way I could advocate for them was by becoming a special ed teacher by myself,” said Nicandro. She added that being in special education means she can advocate for all other students too.

Nicandro was born in Manila, Philippines. She earned degrees from the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Nicandro’s first career was not as a teacher. She worked in information technology doing database and systems administration and then software development. “I was once head of the computer operations division for Philippines Securities and Exchange Commission,” she said.

Nicandro has eight siblings (four brothers and four sisters). Her husband was also a programmer and her sons mentioned before are now teenagers. Nicandro said in her free time she likes to travel and “discover new places”. She also plays the piano and prays to “cleanse” herself and her surroundings.

Overall, Nicandro said her “favorite part of my job is the knowledge that my students left my class smarter than when they entered my class”.

Lunch is Served

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<th>Monday</th>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Chicken Patty Sandwich</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Hamburger &amp; Jo Jo’s</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
<td>Italian Dunkers &amp; Marinara Sauce OR Jumbo Cheese Ravioli</td>
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<td>Everyday</td>
<td>Mediterranean Salad or a Baked Potato &amp; Breadstick</td>
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What is the PTA?

By Mikaylee Cyr, Reilly Tschetter, and Jorja Whitcher

Teachers and parents run the PTA; the two co-presidents of the PTA are Niki Studer and Stacie Tschetter. Studer stated, “We put on events for the students: Fall Rally at a football game, golf tournament, talent show, Winter Carnival, Reflections art contest, eighth grade mock interviews, eighth grade graduation lunch, field day, dance and reception. We provide meals for teachers during conferences, decorate for dances, help with book fairs, show teachers appreciation for all their hard work with students with Christmas treats and provide a meal and little gifts for teacher appreciation week.”

The PTA has given many teachers money for their classrooms. Ken Krzyzanowski is a Tech Ed teacher at Southwest, as well as a working member of the PTA. He received money from the PTA to get Legos. He said they really help his classroom. Krzyzanowski said, “We have a fantastic PTA here at Southwest.” The PTA also gave money to Sara Skillman, the Family and Consumer Sciences teacher. Skillman got better knives for the FACS room that prevent injuries. Johanna Sailor, one of the eighth grade English teachers and the Hawks News teacher, as well as a PTA member, is included in the several teachers who have been helped. Sailor said, “Last year they founded our website, which is Southwesthawknews.com.” since Sailor has been at this school, she has gotten hundreds of dollars for her classroom. This year the PTA purchased a new digital camera for te news team that costed about 400 dollars.

Co-president Studer told us there are 74 parents who are members of the PTA along with 20 teachers. Studer said, “We are happy with any number of members, but I think it could be better. We have had more members in past years. The more parent members we have, the less work it makes for everyone. Although the members we have this year are great at volunteering their time to help with events and bringing in supplies for events.” Sailor said the PTA has helped our school tremendously. “If we didn’t have the PTA, cash would be very limited, and we wouldn’t have the resources that we have,” she said.

Eye on the Classroom: Anne Frank

By Dylan Holst and Kaleb Oleson

This week’s Eye on the Classroom features eighth grade English teacher Katrina Rudebusch’s classroom and her Diary of Anne Frank Unit. Anne Frank was a Jew living in Amsterdam during the Holocaust. It included many events like the reading of a play and watching multiple videos. Eighth Grader Jonas Lowery said, “My favorite part was reading the play.” The unit even included “in hiding” days where students were not allowed to talk, leave the classroom, use running water, or even the classroom pencil sharpener. It was like a real life experience of one of Anne’s typical days. Rudebusch said, “I felt like the experience went well. While the students are not in any grave danger, like Anne Frank was, they did get to experience a bit of how hard it would be to be under such strict constraints.”

“I learned how Anne Frank spent her days in the Annex,” Lowery said. Along with journal entries and worksheets, students had to complete a project which included a research paper, drawings, and a summary reaction paper. Many students learned a lot more about Anne Frank after this unit. “Sometimes it takes a conscious effort to put ourselves in another’s position,” Rudebusch said. “But when we take the time to do that, we usually gain a sense of empathy, compassion, and respect for one another.” Rudebusch will likely continue teaching this unit in the future as it links to her curriculum well.

Artist Showcase

By Eighth grader Mikaylee Cyr

Photo of Anne Frank. Photo credit: www.annefrank.org

Congratulations to this week’s Southwest Sleuth Allison Gade. This week’s mystery location was the nurse’s office. The clues were that this place has a couch, it’s a room inside of a room, it has its own private bathroom, and there is a scale in this room. For correctly guessing this week’s clue, Gade received 10 Hawk Awards and a Whatchamacallit candy bar.