

Mustang News March 2020

Jeff Dicks, Superintendent

From The Desk of Mr. Dicks

School Calendar - Late Start Proposal

We are in the process of developing our school calendar for the 2020-21 school year. One area that is under consideration is enhancing our opportunities for professional development for our teachers. In the past two years, we have committed to sending over half of our staff to training on the implementation of Professional Learning Communities(PLC) throughout our district.

As part of that process, teachers will begin to develop common assessments and in the ideal environment, meet weekly to evaluate the effectiveness of not only teaching practices but how students performed on the common assessment. One of the ways under consideration is to have a 1-hour late start every Wednesday. This would allow the dedicated time for our staff to meet on a consistent and timely basis.

While we understand this may present some challenges for our families, we believe it is key to the continual improvement of our learning environments. On each Wednesday, there would be no activities so that our teachers can be present for the team learning process. Our bus routes would run 1-hour late and students in town would be allowed in the building at 8:30 for breakfast and school would start at 9:20. The board of education will approve the school calendar at our April board meeting.

While we have tried to consider all of the effects on a schedule change like this we need to hear from you. Please contact me with your input by email at dicksj@newell-fonda.k12.ia.us or (712)272-3324.

Christopher Feldhans, HS Principal

Do your children ever argue? with each other? with their friends? with you? Do you ever listen to your children as they are arguing and wonder to yourself, what are they thinking? Let me ask you this question. Have you ever spent time with your children talking about how to argue, or as I prefer to frame it “debate”. Arguing, in my mind, has a negative connotation and elicits thoughts of chaos and anger. Debate feels much more civilized. If you have, that is great. If you have not, you should. I will, however, caution you that the middle of an argument is probably not the ideal time to provide a teenager with feedback on their argumentation and debate skills.

In today’s world of political debates, what is being modeled for our youth is that whomever talks the loudest and the longest wins. This is not at all what I want kids to believe that debating is. I also want our kids to know and understand that just because you disagree with someone on a certain topic, that doesn’t mean that you have to hate them. I have many friends and even family members, whom I love very much, that I do not see eye to eye with on several topics. I often find myself trying to help young people understand the importance of being able to articulate their thoughts and feelings in an effort to help others understand their perspective.

I believe that it is critical to help people understand that when things are not going as planned or there are topics that they are passionate about, it is absolutely ok to engage in conversations or debates around that topic. Let your kids know that spending time preparing for a debate is time well spent. It is always good to take the time to self reflect on what you believe and why you believe it. It is good to take time to think about why people may disagree with your point of view. The more you know about the school of thought that opposes your view point, the more prepared you will be to give an educated response to those concerns. As much as we would always like to have the opportunity to prepare for these conversations or debates, many times these situations arise spontaneously and we find ourselves reacting more than articulating a prepared argument. This is why I believe that it is so incredibly important to help young people understand the importance of being a good listener. Listening to someone does not mean that we agree with them, it simply means that we respect the fact that they have value as a human-being. Truly listening to someone can help you to understand the “why” in the argument. Knowing why someone feels the way that they do can help you better understand the reason behind the passion and their point of view. When given the opportunity to be heard, most people tend to be willing to share what drives them and their beliefs. A great way to help kids become better listeners is to model that behavior for them and then talk with them about what you were doing as you listened to them. Say things like; “Did you notice how I let you speak and didn’t interject or interrupt you?” “Did you notice that I made eye contact with you while you were talking?” “I was very intentional about not looking at my phone while I was listening to you.” Sometimes as adults we take these things for granted but we need to remember that we must teach the behaviors that we would like to see in our children. As a general rule, when people feel as though you have really listened to them they are then willing to listen to what you have to say. It is, however, critical that once you have their attention that you do not waste their time. Help your children to understand that their argument needs to be based on actual facts and not just feelings or emotions. Don’t get me wrong, feelings and emotions have their place in a well designed argument but it will be the factual information that your argument is based on that will change minds or help people understand your point of view.

As we look to help our children grow into caring adults it is important that we let them know that it is ok to disagree with someone. We just need to help them understand how to “respectfully” disagree. We also have a responsibility to make sure that kids know that it is ok to walk away from a conversation or debate when it gets to the level of unhealthy. Sometimes the best outcome of a debate is when both parties can end with a willingness to agree to disagree.

We live in a world with a lot of different approaches to living our lives. The art of debate becomes critical as the real work of being a community is to figure out how we can effectively communicate with those that we do not always agree with.

Dick Jungers, PK-8 Principal

Situations at school that may give you a broader perspective on dealing with conflict and students -

Student A comes from a family where it is ok for the many siblings to rough house and use verbiage such as “you’re stupid, what a dummy,” and other similar statements that is perfectly acceptable to use at their house. Student B comes from a home environment where negative verbiage and rough housing is not allowed or acceptable. However, non-verbal communication such as eye rolls, telling hurtful secrets (that others are not supposed to hear), and lobbying others to not play with students that like different things from them or think differently is ok.

What happens at school when these two students interact or have a conflict at school, on the bus, or on the playground?

In elementary, Student A will tell his/her parents or his teacher that Student B is being mean. They are not really able to communicate what “mean” is (they recognize how they feel but do not recognize what is making them feel that way) or (they feel ostracized because Student B is lobbying other students for their attention at the expense of Student A). Student B will tell his/her parents or teacher that Student A is being mean. Student A is calling me stupid and dumb, and they pushed me down at recess today for no reason.

A couple of considerations: Is there bullying going on? If I am a parent what should I focus on to help create a viable resolution? What teachable moments exist for parents and teachers alike?

As a school, we work with all students to continually train on being a better friend. What is allowed at home we see at school on a daily basis. What is allowed at home is not the concern of this article. What is a concern is building that capacity for understanding and problem

solving. We work with students on being a better friend, and we help them make sense of each student's individual differences, and we work on the mannerisms that create conflict at school. When students come home and talk about what is going on at school, there are a few hints that will help the process of problem solving and understanding.

- 1) Remember that there are always two sides to every story, and kids tend to focus on what the other student did wrong and not to share how they contributed to the situation.
- 2) If you want a better idea of what is going on, it is always a good idea to communicate with your child's teacher to get a broader perspective.
- 3) Focusing on training your child to problem solve, understand what they contributed to the situation, and to advocate for themselves is a valuable life long skill.
- 4) Ask your child what good things happened at school that day. For most students, each day has 100 great things that they don't talk about and maybe 1 or 2 negative things that they focus on because of the lead into the conversation.
- 5) The key here is that in life we all have conflict. Focusing on problem solving, understanding others, and recognizing that most people are good intentioned and want to make right is what we should put our energy into.

Recommended actions for parents:

- 1) Keep a non-judgemental attitude when discussing these issues with your child.
- 2) If the concern cannot be solved by talking with your child, encourage your child to report to the teacher when issues come up. (More times than not, teachers are not aware if the child doesn't report it to them). We spend a lot of time training staff and students on this very aspect.
- 3) If your student is still struggling after talking to the teacher, it is recommended that parents reach out to their child's teacher to get a broader perspective.
- 4) If things are not getting better, it may be a good idea to talk to the guidance counselor or the principal.
- 5) Avoid victimizing your child by posting on social media. In the examples above, both sets of parents could claim their child is being bullied.

Staff Updates

Jill Johnston, Special Education

First of all, I want to give a huge shout out to the staff at Newell-Fonda. I work with the best teachers, associates, substitute teachers, bus drivers, janitors, secretaries, and administration. I could not do my job without all the amazing associates that we have, and I thank all of you for the hard work you put in each day. I also want to thank the substitute teachers for being willing to come in to cover all of us. I am so thankful for all the people that I get to work with everyday!

Maker Week is always a highlight in the middle school, and it was another great week. I had the “Battle Bot” group again, where we borrowed Lego MindStorm Robots from the Buena Vista County Iowa State Extension Office. I had a group of nine boys that were so creative this year. Some worked in teams and some worked individually. The first day, they put the Lego Robots together following the instructions. Once they got done, they could change it to look however they wanted. On the second day, they had to learn how to code and then complete challenges. These challenges included going forward, backward, in a circle, stop at two points, stop at three points, and move around lines of tape. After they completed all the challenges, they got to start programming for battle. On the third day, we set up a bracket and competed against each other. This is always everyone’s favorite day! Overall, it was a great week, and I think I had as much fun as the kids.

Kari Mahler, 6-8 Social Studies

Middle School Social Studies at Newell-Fonda has been full of interesting topics this year. We’ve participated in two youth straw polls, dug into the history of the Iowa caucuses, and followed along with the impeachment trial of the President. Specifically in 6th grade we have been studying ancient civilizations and their connections to the five themes of geography as well as comparing the geography, natural resources and climate to that of Iowa. 7th grade has explored units on media literacy and the 1st Amendment rights along with fake news and a unit on World Trade and the UN. Currently we are in a unit about the civil rights movement. 8th grade has been studying the history of the United States from the 13 colonies through the

American Revolution. We have spent time on the Constitution, Bill of Rights and branches of government. We will continue to go through US History through the end of the Civil War. Since it's important for students to know what is going on around the world, they report on a current event each week. They explain what they learned, facts about the current event and any questions they may have.

Marcia Kay, Guidance

Preparing for the Future

The FAFSA or now studentaid.gov is a way for students to receive federal or state help to finance their college journey. The students may be eligible for many different types of grants and scholarships. Some of these are based on family income while others may be based upon the career and/or college choice of the student.

[ICANsucceed.org](https://icanucceed.org) is one resource to help parents and students sort through this process. An expert from ICAN will come to Newell-Fonda on March 19 at 6:00 to meet with junior parents and juniors about what to expect in upcoming year. This is an overview to help parents and students prepare for the expenses of college and learn more about how to pay for college. Then in Oct., ICCC financial aid experts come to Newell-Fonda for one night and help parents and students complete their FAFSAs. Students do not need to be planning on attending ICCC in order to come and complete their FAFSAs with the ICCC experts.

Another obstacle that may present itself in the FAFSA process is a verification request by the college. It is critical for the students to watch for emails from the colleges to which they sent their FAFSA and are planning on attending. The college may require verification of the information. ICAN states that one out of every three applicants is randomly selected to be verified. Reading the request carefully will explain what documents are necessary to submit and how to submit them. It is very important to get these submitted as quickly as possible, so the financial package from the college is able to be finalized.

Other upcoming information that students and parents of graduating seniors need to know is that, if the students took any ICCC courses they want transferred, the students will need to request this from ICCC through a form that is found on the ICCC website. The students should also print their unofficial ICCC transcript and take it with them to orientation. The transcript will help the seniors to get into the correct college classes at the summer orientation when they select their fall classes to begin their on campus experience.

These are just some odds and ends that are helpful for students to move from high school to college. If you have questions about any of this, please contact me at the school.



Beth Olsen, FCS

The Family and Consumer Sciences classroom has been buzzing this semester. I offer three Culinary classes. Foods and Nutrition is the first level and they are finishing up their Food Safety and Sanitation unit. Students are learning about the importance of handwashing and thawing food safely, never out on the counter but in the refrigerator or in the microwave. We will move on to our Kitchen Basics unit where we review and learn about kitchen tools, measuring and cutting recipes down. A favorite of this unit is making No-Bake Cookies, first with horrible directions and then with a well-written recipe comparing the results. In Advanced Foods, students are wrapping up their review of kitchen basics and created some really fun “Tasty” type videos, the type you see on Facebook or other social media where a recipe drops in from above and is wrapped up in under 90 seconds. Students enjoy demonstrating their skills in this type of project. See my Twitter feed @BethOlsen06 for the final product. My top-level class is Food Practicum and they are getting their business plan together to open their coffee shop. We are testing new recipes and hope by the time you read this to be in business.

Food is not the only curriculum taught in FCS. Another class that students get hands-on skills is ECE 221: Infant and Toddler Education which is a dual credit course through Iowa Central Community College. These students take advantage of the short walk to the Mustang Day Care and practice with the little ones there. We are currently studying how play can be part of the curriculum and taking part in hands-on play activities in the classroom.

In Interior Design we are studying the makings of a home. We began with the zones of a home as well as studied floorplans and symbols. We are currently building a model from the foundation up. As students in this class create this project, discussions are had about the

elements such as studs, insulation, and roofing. Exterior elements of the home such as windows, doors, and dormers are added as the students put on their finishing touches.

In Health we are studying substance abuse. With vaping such a big topic in the news, students are finding facts and sharing them in class and with their classmates. Here are a few that are particularly alarming: According to the 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey (<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/youth-tobacco-use-results-national-youth-tobacco-survey>) over 5 million youth are currently using e-cigarettes and about 1.6 million report using them at least 20 days in the last month. We have also discussed the dangers of vaping including issues with memory, attention and learning. More information can be found here:

<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/public-health-education/think-e-cigs-cant-harm-teens-health>. One of the main goals in Health class is to not dump information on the students but to encourage them to identify reliable sources. There is a ton of information coming at us through the media and social media but Health class aims to help kids sort through the good and the bad and find the facts.

FCCLA: Family, Career and Community Leaders of America has had a particularly busy February. We participate in a project we call Friday February Readers where FCCLA students go to the elementary classrooms Pre-K-3 and read a story aloud at the beginning of the day. FCCLA aims to promote literacy within our school. Our other aims are to promote and support healthy families and career development.

Lisa Christiansen, Preschool



Preschool Registration for the
2020 - 2021 School Year



Tuesday, April 7, 2020

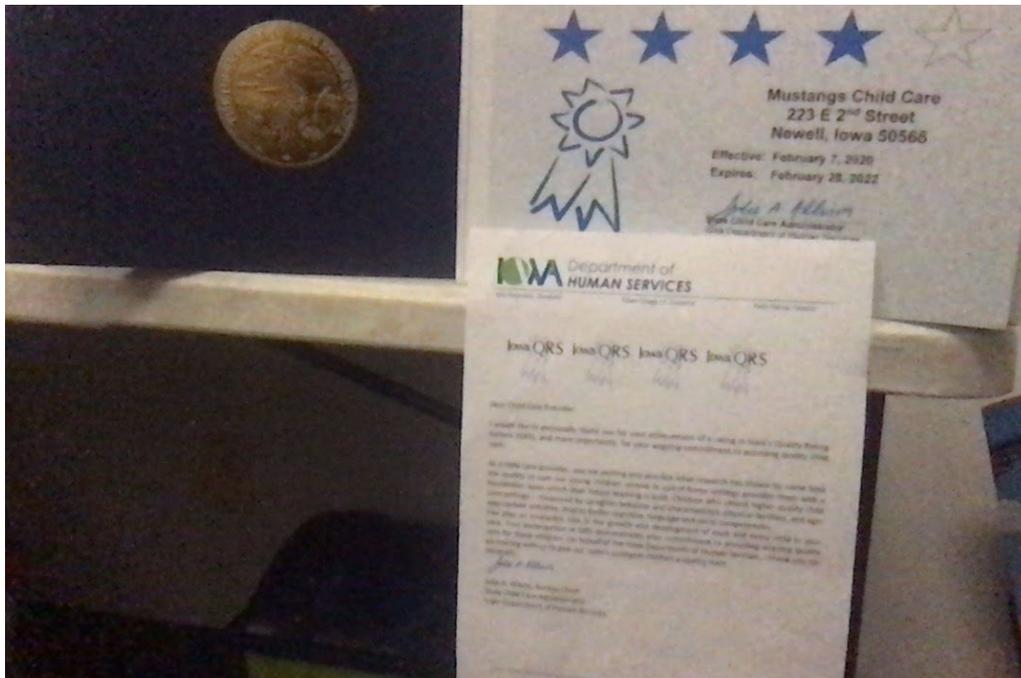
5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

in the Newell-Fonda Preschool Room

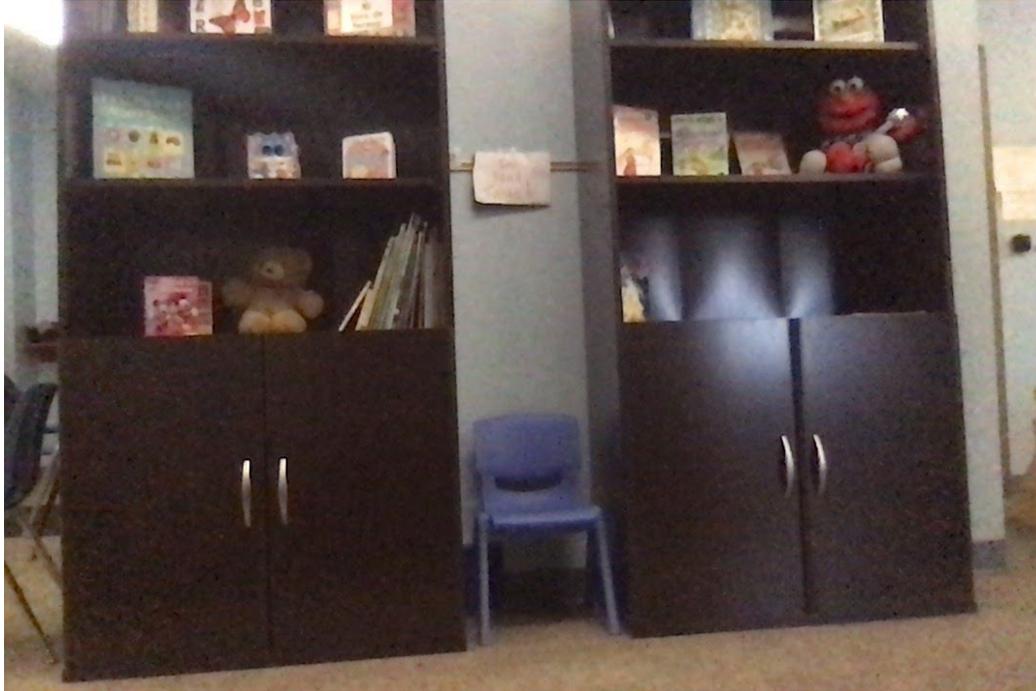
This registration is “come and go” and only takes about 10 minutes. Future preschoolers are welcome to attend, but it is not required. There will be an Open House in the fall for them to meet their teacher and see their classroom.

Children must be 4 years old by September 15, 2020
to attend preschool.

Margo Peterson, Mustang Daycare



(Above: 4 star QRS rating for Mustang Daycare)



(Above: New shelves purchased with grant money at Mustang Daycare)

Jina Wood, ELL

In the English Language Learning (ELL) classroom, our ELPA21 testing is in full swing. This is an assessment that measures the growth of all ELL students in their proficiency of the English language. Students complete computerized tests in four areas; reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This test allows me to know what skills my students still need as they work hard toward becoming proficient in English as well as the growth they have made over the past year. We have been working very hard this year on vocabulary and reading comprehension skills and I am very proud of how hard all of the students work. If you have a student who is in ELL, make sure to ask them about Imagine Learning and Pop!

