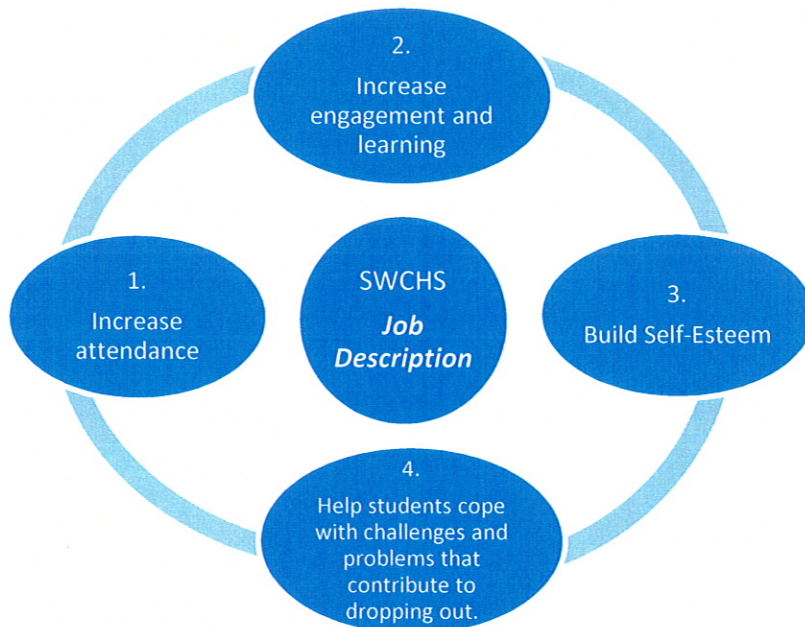# Southwest Community High School- Board Report Nov. 17, 2014

Overview

Southwest Community High School (SWCHS) is currently in its 13th year of operation. The SWCHS staff focus on individualized instruction for each student, allowing us to meet students' needs on a student by student, skill by skill basis. SWCHS embraces the philosophy that by being relentlessly positive to students and teaching responsibility and character development on a daily basis will enable students to find success as well as have an enriched school experience. The individualized instruction allows staff to keep students academically accountable, as well as holding students accountable for their behavior. In 2013-2014 staff SWCHS has summed up its purpose in a daily job description. All staff collaboration and in-service decisions operate around how we can best accomplish this job. The following is SWCHS daily job description.

Student Enrollment for 2014

Southwest Community High School currently serves 23 students from Dickinson and the surrounding areas. SWCHS serves a population of students who are failing or at risk of failing, as well as offering credit recovery opportunities, for students that may not fit into the traditional grades 9-12 high school setting. SWCHS is limited to 23 students due to capacity and staffing restrictions. SWCHS students must be between 16-21 years of age in order to attend. Currently, less than 50% of the student population is made up of referrals from DHS. Students are placed on a waiting list after a discussion with Mr. Hepperle about what SWCHS could do for them and then are placed in SWCHS when an opening exists. In the 2014-2015 school year so far the waiting list has been up to 16 students. Operating with a waiting list is not an ideal way to solve students dropping out in our community, but it is currently the best way to keep SWCHS at capacity while offering students an opportunity to attend alternative education.

SWCHS Staff

The staff at SWCHS are responsible for facilitating and instructing over fifty courses throughout a school year, in addition to offering support to students in need. The staff is made up of a core group of very dedicated teachers. These teachers include: Carrie Ziegler (Science & Math), Janette Foreman (English), and I, Jay Hepperle (Social Studies/Principal). These staff members are the main reason SWCHS is successful at keeping students enrolled that may otherwise choose to drop out.

Coursework

The coursework at SWCHS continues to be organized into individual pacing guides that promote student responsibility and enable students to finish in a timely manner. A student has the opportunity to finish most classes offered at SWCHS within 21 days. However, science classes require 26 days. SWCHS is also in its 5th year of offering expanded core and elective classes through Jefferson County Eschool. Eschool

allows SWCHS to offer expanded course options to students that otherwise could not be offered due to staffing restrictions.

Collaboration

The SWCHS staff works closely with DHS administration and counseling staff to properly identify and aid students who are in need of another option such as SWCHS for their educational needs. DHS administration works closely with SWCHS to ensure placement in SWCHS is based on the needs of the individual students. DHS and SWCHS also collaborates on curriculum development whenever possible.

Accountability and Parent Communication

SWCHS has developed a graduation planner through EduTech's PowerSchool. This plan enables parents and students to access their "Graduation Plan" from SWCHS. This plan allows for parents to track their student's progress towards graduation. The plan allows parents and students to see their current grades, classes that they are currently enrolled in and classes they have already taken. It also gives students the exact number of credits needed to graduate. The program is updated immediately when a credit is issued. This allows parents and students to see their progress towards graduation immediately when a course is finished. Student attendance reports are sent out on a tri-weekly basis in hopes to engage parents in the students' progress at SWCHS.

At SWCHS this year.

Character Content Courses

At the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, SWCHS was developing a curriculum that is specifically designed to help teach Character Content to students. This has continued to have a positive impact on helping us address #3 of our Job Description *Build Self-Esteem* and #4 **help *students cope with the challenges that can lead to dropping out.*** Staff at SWCHS have identified Character Traits that we feel

are essential for students to learn in order to find success in high school, college, or careers. Staff alternate teaching short mini-lessons on those characteristics at SWCHS on a weekly basis. Examples of Character Content lessons can be found at www.mrhepperleshomreroom.wordpress.com.

Parenting Resources:

 SWCHS has been partnering with Stacy Kilwein from the Parent Resource Center to provide Child Care Curriculum for students at SWCHS that have young children, or are living in the household with a young child. Currently 30% or the students that are served at SWCHS have, or are currently with a child. This increase in demographics has prompted us to provide parenting lessons twice per week as well as a monthly parent lunch for students to bring their young one to school for the lunch period and learn the importance of play and interaction with their child through lessons taught by Mrs. Kilwein.

21st Century Technology @ SWCHS

We currently have 12 laptops that students have access to use in the curriculum at SWCHS. SWCHS staff have spent a great deal of time finding ways to use technology to engage its students on a daily basis. Each staff member is developing an interactive website (blog site) that allows students to engage and respond to material placed into the site from the teacher. Student comments posted on the site are sent to the teachers via email. This allows SWCHS to help promote student engagement via 21st century technology. It also allows teachers a real time response to students when they post to an online thread or comment on material put on the site by the teacher. It allows teachers to get into better dialogue opportunities with students which will lead to a better depth of knowledge for the individual student.

Here is one of the websites being developed now:

www.mrhepperleshomreroom.wordpress.com