

# *Holdrege Middle School*

## *September 2011*

### *Children – Our Community's Investment*

[www.thedusters.org](http://www.thedusters.org) Russ Baker, Principal P.O. Box 2002 • Holdrege • Nebraska • 68949-2002

#### **From the Principal's Desk**

The school information program that we use is called Infinite Campus. There is a parental information system included in this program. On this information system you will be able to check your child's grades, attendance, and lunch balance. Parents that do not have a password to the information system may call me at the school at 995-5421 to receive one. Parents are welcome to come into my office and have an account set up in person. The portal to the information system is on our home page at [www.thedusters.org](http://www.thedusters.org). The web site is also a great way to see upcoming events by clicking on the activities button. There is also information about where the activity is and directions on how to get to the event if it is an away event. The web site also has several different stories about programs in the district and activities students are involved in.

#### **Lunch Program**

It is important to note that students who are on free and reduced lunch do not receive free seconds. They need to pay for those seconds, thirds, and so on. It really helps the school if we keep the students' lunch balances in the positive instead of the negative. Once a student gets below \$0 in their account, they will not be able to get a main dish but instead will be allowed to have a peanut butter sandwich and milk. A limit of 5 times will be allowed throughout the school year.

#### **Newsletter by e-mail**

The monthly newsletter is now sent via email or sent home with your student. If you would like this electronically and we do not already have your email address, please send me your e-mail address at [rubaker@esu11.org](mailto:rubaker@esu11.org).

#### **School Safety**

In the interest of safety for your child walking to school, please remind them to use the crosswalks where we have adults monitoring the streets. When you drive to school, be alert for students walking to school, as they sometimes do not pay attention when going across the street.

Holdrege Middle School has a safety plan that is in place for all emergencies. In the event of an emergency it is important that you observe the following procedures:

- Do **not** telephone the school. We understand and respect your concern, but it is essential that the telephone system be available for emergency communications.
- Tune your radio to **1380 AM (KUVR)** for emergency announcements and status reports. You will also receive instructions on where you should go and how/when you may pick up your student. The Blackboard Connect calling system will be used to contact parents in emergency situations.
- Do **not** come to the school until instructed to do so. It may be necessary to keep the streets and parking lots clear for emergency vehicles. If evacuation is required, students may be transported or walked to a location away from school. You will be notified of this through the media bulletins.

- Talk to your students and emphasize how important it is for them to follow instructions from their teachers and school officials during any emergency.
- Carefully read all information you receive from the school. You may receive updates about our safety procedures from time to time.

### **Weather Emergencies**

When weather or emergency issues arise, we often cannot plan for them. **Please make a plan with your children as to what to do or where to go if school has to be closed early with little warning.** It is a concern that students do not know what to do in such a situation. Phone calls and messages are difficult to dispatch at these times. It helps if your child has an idea of what he/she is to do in these situations ahead of time.

### **Activities**

The high school and middle school have begun their sports schedules. We encourage students to participate in these activities whenever possible. Research tells us that students who are involved are more likely to be successful in the classroom. However, we need to remember that the participation in activities is a privilege and not a right. We expect all of our students who are involved in activities to maintain their grades first and to be held to a higher standard of citizenship because of their visibility.

Students may purchase an activity card in the office for \$25. This will allow your student to attend any school activity held in Holdrege except for certain tournaments. This pass is good for the whole year. If your child goes to several activities during the year, this is a great bargain. Also new this year is the requirement of an activity card for every student athlete.

**I would appreciate it if you would talk to your children about behavior at the games.** We would like students to come to the games to support the teams playing. We do not, however, want them to come to the games and run around. For the safety of your child, we will not allow this type of behavior or the playing of street-yard football games on the side of the stadium. Students who do not follow the guidelines of the school will be asked to leave the premises.

### **Help your students be successful**

Research shows that there are several things you can do to help your child be successful in school. Here are a few of the most important ones that can be done at home:

- Make sure that your child gets something to eat before he or she leaves for school or have them eat at the breakfast program at school.
- A quiet place to study at home.
- All students have a planner. Check it every night to see what homework is due the next day.
- Make homework a priority.
- Reading makes the brain work harder than sitting in front of the TV.
- Emphasize education and how it opens doors for the future.

### **Personal Property**

When students bring personal property to school, it is the responsibility of the student to make sure that property is secure. When property is taken, I will try to investigate as to what happened to it, but it is difficult to investigate these types of matters. It makes it easier on the school, and the student, if valuables are left at home. Things that are taken to school that are costly, like bicycles, should have a lock on them.

### **Blackboard Connect**

Blackboard Connect is the computerized telephone service of the district. I will be using this service to contact parents about important events, low lunch balances, and emergency situations.

### **Voice Mail**

We have voice mail at Holdrege Public Schools. When you call the school, you may get a recorded message. If you wish to leave a message, you may do so by following the commands. For your convenience, we have included a list of extension/voice mail numbers in this mailing.

### **Phone Usage**

Phone use at school for students is limited to emergency use or for students to call parents if they have to stay after school. If a student has to stay after school, they will call from the teacher's room where they are staying.

### **Messages for Students**

We understand that emergencies arise on occasion. We can deliver messages, but class time is interrupted. Please plan ahead as much as possible.

### **Retakes and 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Class Pictures**

The Lifetouch photographer will be here Friday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, to do retakes and 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade class pictures. Students wanting retakes need to return their original picture packet to the photographer. Students who missed the original picture day may come to the office for an order envelope. 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will be given order envelopes for class pictures.

### **Absences**

Wednesday is the day that we report to Two Rivers Health Department how many students are absent from school due to illness and what the symptoms are. Please let us know your child's symptoms when you call in their absence. Your help is appreciated!

### **HOP**

HOP, which stands for *Homework Opportunity Program*, is a program that was started four years ago to help students who are not turning in their homework. On Friday of each week, the teachers will turn in a list of students that have not turned in their work. We will send out letters on Monday advising parents that their child will be staying after school on Wednesday from 3:30 to 4:30 to complete the work that was not turned in. This program is not meant as a punishment for students but a way that they can stay after school and receive teachers' help to complete assignments they have not turned in. This way we can keep students from failing that otherwise would fail a class because they are earning poor grades from incomplete work.

### **Medication administration at school**

In order for school staff to administer medication at school, parents must fill out a medication consent form. This includes **prescription and non-prescription medication**. Additionally, prescription medications must be in the original labeled bottle or container from the pharmacist with the child's name, name of medication, and dosage. Non-prescription or over-the-counter medications need to be in the original labeled container/bottle. This is in compliance with Nebraska State law. The forms are available on the Holdrege Public Schools' website, [thedusters.org](http://thedusters.org), under the health and wellness tab at the top. Thank you for abiding by this policy. If you have any questions, please call Abbie Soneson, RN, our school nurse.

## **NeSA Results**

Holdrege Public Schools students performed very well on last year's statewide reading and mathematics assessments according to the results released by the Nebraska Department of Education in late August. The percentage of HPS students meeting and exceeding the state standards was exceptional compared to local districts, the Central 10 Conference schools, and statewide percentages. The percentages are of students that were tested as proficient on the test.

### Holdrege Public Schools Percentages compared with Statewide Percentages

#### NeSA-Reading Proficiency

Grade	3	4	5	6	7	8	11
Holdrege Public Schools			71%	93%	79%	84%	75%
State	71%	75%	70%	74%	74%	71%	67%

#### NeSA-Math Proficiency

Grade	3	4	5	6	7	8	11
Holdrege Public Schools			61%	75%	74%	84%	68%
State	67%	68%	66%	63%	61%	61%	54%

Students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 participated in the NeSA-Reading and NeSA-Mathematics assessments along with students all over the state in the spring of 2011. NeSA is the Nebraska State Accountability system responsible for administering the high stakes tests required by the state legislature with the passage of LB 653 in 2007-2008. Nebraska's new single, statewide testing system replaces STARS, the former local assessment system. NeSA-Science will be added to the program in the spring of 2012.

Improving reading for all students in all curricular areas is the school improvement goal for Holdrege Public Schools. The elementary schools, middle school, and high school are developing instructional strategies to improve reading for all students. These NeSA-Reading scores will be one piece of data that the district will use to measure student progress as teachers adapt reading instruction with the goal of improving student reading skills. HPS teachers will continue to use student data in their Whole Faculty Study Group (WFSG) meetings on Friday afternoons to improve student learning.

While the family of each student participating in the test will receive a report on their child's performance, the child's teacher will continue to be the best source of information on how well an individual child is learning. Multiple assessment results should be considered when determining a student's progress. National test results and the child's classroom test results are just as important as the NeSA. The challenge for all schools is to use the results to show improvement over time

# Help Our School!

In this day of ever increasing costs and decreasing budgets, there are five easy ways that you can help our students through programs offered through the Holdrege Middle School Media Center:



## Labels for Education

Save the UPC barcode labels from any Campbell's, SpaghettiOs, Pepperidge Farm, Swanson, Prego, or Franco American products, and the plastic caps from V8 juices. The points acquired from collecting these labels can be used to order merchandise for our school. There is a collection box in the Media Center where you can drop off your labels.

## Our Family Labels for Learning

Bring in the labels from any Our Family products and help us earn money for needed materials. Our Family Labels for Learning will donate \$.05 for every Our Family UPC barcode turned in. For example, for every 500 labels sent in, we can receive \$25.00 for purchasing educational materials.



## Recycle Printer Cartridges

Used printer cartridges from your home or business can be brought to the HMS Media Center. With cash earned through the recycling of used laser jet and ink jet cartridges, we purchase Accelerated Reader tests as well as other items.

## Scholastic Book Fair

The Scholastic book fair will be coming to HMS each fall and spring. Next book fair is October 19-26. The Media Center receives a percentage of the money from all items sold during the book fair. This money is used to purchase new books for our Media Center.



## Box Tops for Education



Clip and save Box Tops for Education coupons from various products. Each Box Top is worth 10 cents toward purchasing needed materials for our school. Help make a difference for our school One Dime at a Time.