

# EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE



*Teachers receive training on using technology in the classroom.*

## Students Qualify for All-Northwest Honor Groups

Three Lander Valley High School students were selected to perform in the prestigious All-Northwest band, choir and orchestra groups in Spokane, Washington, February 12-15.

This was high school cellist Jake Klinkenborg's second time performing in the All-Northwest symphony orchestra. Klinkenborg also participated in the 2007 All-Northwest event, which is held every other year.

Also this year, Rebecca Eggli, who plays the flute, performed in the All-Northwest concert band. And Caleb Rohrbacher qualified for the All-Northwest choir. He sings tenor.

The All-Northwest Honor Groups feature students from Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Alaska. Students auditioned for the groups, which are regional affiliates of the National Association for Music Education. While in Spokane, the 550 or so qualifying students rehearsed with some of the best directors and conductors in the Northwest. The students were chosen from a field of about 6,000 applicants.

The three teens all said they were excited to perform in Spokane and enjoyed meeting students with similar interests.



*Jake Klinkenborg, Rebecca Eggli and Caleb Rohrbacher*

## FCSD1 Adopts Excellence Initiative

**“Whether it is test scores or matriculation or dropout rate, we are in a position where the only ‘A’ we get on the report card is for funding. And after that it drops off, and it drops off dramatically...”**

— Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal, State of the State speech, Jan. 14, 2009

**A**re we doing the best job possible to educate our children? What can and must we do better? It is no secret that we all live today in a challenging global economy. Today's students must be ready to enter and successfully complete college or have the skills needed to join the workplace in order to compete and survive in this economy and global market.

This is not just a lofty goal but our mandate under state law. The Wyoming Department of Education requires schools to prepare a student to enter the University of Wyoming, a Wyoming community college or the job market.

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# EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

## FCSD1 Adopts Excellence Initiative, *continued*

How are we doing?

Our school district must accomplish Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks for student achievement, established by the federal No Child Left Behind law. We track our progress in meeting that AYP goal through assessments and testing, including the PAWS test (Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students), developed by the Wyoming Department of Education.

To ensure that FCSD1 meets and exceeds the AYP goals, the Board of Trustees has launched

an Excellence Initiative with the primary goal of supporting each student in achieving high performance, without exception.

The effort begins with the philosophy and vision of the district and it is furthered by a set of goals established by the school board.

Locally, much has already been accomplished in FCSD1's drive to excellence, from increasing staff salaries to implementing the Hathaway Success Curriculum. We believe that college begins in

kindergarten, and that is the starting point for all that we do.

In order for all of our kids to achieve high performance and to close the achievement gap, we require accountability from everyone in the district, including administrators, teachers and support staff. Everyone. As Governor Freudenthal said in his state of the state remarks, we have the resources. There can be no excuses.

FCSD1's curriculum is expansive, in that it is both classic and forward thinking. We concentrate on the basics and we support our staff with the best technology available. Our curriculum is designed to create life-long learners, as education continues well beyond the walls of our school buildings.

The Excellence Initiative requires us to make decisions based on what is best for kids—decisions based on results, not emotions. Test results show that we need to increase students' reading and writing skills, and that is a current focus. Based on frequent assessments, our goal is to facilitate continuous improvement in student achievement.



*Students become teachers during the Arts Alive evening event in the elementary schools. Students teach their parents different art techniques.*

# EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

We firmly believe that the community plays a key role in helping the schools create the knowledge, skills and personal characteristics for our students to be 21st century citizens. That is why this Excellence Initiative seeks to integrate the community into our work.

Before each school board meeting, a listening session is scheduled on a topic of importance, and the public is encouraged to attend and provide input. We encourage all parents to become involved in their schools, and we invite the community to ask our kids how they are doing in school and to participate in school activities and events.

We will do a better job communicating with the community, as well, through more frequent media appearances, a speakers' bureau and an updated Web site. These are your schools; you should know what is occurring in them.

The bottom line is that we want to be accountable. What might success look like under this Excellence Initiative?

Here's a glimpse: AYP will be an afterthought; we'll be



*Students from Pathfinder High School participate in a Ropes Course program in Jackson.*

talking about the numbers of grads and the colleges they attend; lots of our students will become Hathaway Scholars; and patrons' emails will include comments about academics, not coaching decisions. Additionally, when the State Department of Education reports come out, we'll be in the top percentiles.

We will also continue to promote professional development within the district and continue to explore effective ways to better educate our kids.

"I'm confident we are moving in the right direction with the implementation of this Excellence Initiative," said Superintendent Paige Fenton Hughes. "We can't back away from our ethical and moral responsibility to educate every single child to a high level."

## FCSD1 Representatives Attend National Conference

Last fall, ten staff and community members attended a national education best practices conference in Washington, D.C. The group included administrators, teachers, a school board member and several community members.

Newly elected school board member Susan Crane said the Education Trust Conference was very inspirational. "My favorite part was hearing from all the schools that had high poverty and high numbers of minority students yet still closed the achievement gap," she said. "It gave us the feeling that if they can do it, surely we can also do it here in Fremont County."

Crane said she learned that expectations must be the same for all students. "We can not drop our standards and expectations for some kids even if their life is really hard. When we do this, we give them an excuse to fail," she said. "We have to convey to kids that they matter and then give them the tools they need to succeed at the same level as the other achieving kids."

Crane said she came away from the conference believing the principle that "without great teachers, nothing else matters." She said FCSD1 must recruit and keep hard working teachers who are excellent educators and who review their teaching with their supervisors and peers. "Teachers must feel empowered by working in a safe environment where they have a voice and their opinions are respected. We must create this type of environment if we want to recruit and keep great teachers."

