

Bridging educational gaps with distance education



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Education officials say distance education is an answer to South Dakota's teacher shortage, but not the answer.

"Our goal is always to have a quality teacher in front of the students. Distance education is a second option if you can't find that quality person," said Rob Monson, executive director of the School Administrators of South Dakota.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Teachers and Students showed its support for distance learning in its final report addressing the state of K-12 education in South Dakota. Its 29-point proposal to the South Dakota Legislature last month included a \$1 million investment in "statewide innovations in learning"—essentially, the use of technology, including distance education—"to ensure that every student has access to equal educational opportunities and high-quality instruction."

Whether or not the Legislature follows that suggestion, technology is already connecting students across the state with remotely located teachers, either to cover required classes or to expand course offerings.

"Some places are using distance education more than others—some out of sheer need," Monson said.

Arlington (S.D.) High School used e-courses to fill a clear need two years ago, when several students opted to pursue math classes offered via distance education. Students who opted not to take the online class had to make do with an uncertified teacher.

Distance education filled the Faulkton (S.D.) School District's need for a Spanish teacher after its instructor retired. Eight students there are taking Spanish remotely from the Statewide Center for e-Learning at Northern State University in Aberdeen, S.D.

"We are hiring the best applicant for the vacant position as we can," Faulkton Superintendent Joel Price said, but distance education is filling the void, because "South Dakota is in a teacher shortage that won't go away any time soon."

Other school districts, such as Agar-Blunt-Onida in central South Dakota, are using distance education to offer students classes that would otherwise lack funding or a teacher's time or knowledge of the topic.

"It gives us a real opportunity to

are "the high-achieving, upper-end kids who are self-motivators," said Britton-Hecla (S.D.) Superintendent Steve Benson.

Layna Darling, an ABO High School student who has taken several distance-learning courses, agreed that distance learning is not for everyone. "It requires a lot of independent (learning) and time management," Darling said, "which can be difficult for some students."

Students who require more interaction with teachers, or who learn best from interactions with other students, may do well in some distance-learning classes but not others, because the amount of interaction varies greatly from one course to the next.

"Last year, I took a history class online that included a lot of student-teacher involvement," Darling said. "I interacted with the teacher and my fellow students directly through discussion posts and online chat rooms." In contrast, her math class this year has little student-teacher interaction, she said.

Scheduling some distance-learning classes can provide an additional challenge.

The Spanish class offered to Faulkton students is "synchronous" (all participants are "present" at the same time). Because the instructor and other students' schedules differed from Faulkton's by 10 minutes, some students had to arrive late or leave early.

"Asynchronous" courses (students can access course materials on their own) offer more flexibility for students, but also have less teacher oversight.

Some classes are a hybrid of both models. And some also offer "dual credit," or simultaneous credit for high school and college requirements for the same work.

Teaching challenges

While distance classes may seem "hands off," somewhere a certified



expand class offerings," said Jeremy Chicoine, ABO secondary principal. "The opportunities out there are limitless."

Students must decide if distance coursework is a good fit for them

Chicoine said distance education works better for the students of the 21st century than their elders may expect. Because students today are "digitives"—or "digital natives"—navigating technology is intuitive to them, he said.

"Those of us not raised with it struggle to grasp it. But for digital natives, there's no intimidation factor compared to those of us raised in a traditional classroom," he said. "The kids have really embraced it, have really run with it, and we've had a largely positive outcome."

But tech skills are just the first requirement. The kids who really thrive in remotely taught classes

Educational gaps (continued on page 8)



Dashing through the snow...

▲ In a one-horse open sleigh

...o'er the streets we go, laughing all the way. Bells on 'Brownie' ring, making spirits bright. What fun it is to see Mel and Libby on the streets of Clark tonight.

The Jingle Bells song came to mind last Monday when Mel Shortzman of Clark and his granddaughter, nine-year-old Libby Glover of Yankton hitched up grandpa's Welch pony named Brownie and took her for a ride to the local cafe for some hot chocolate and

a homemade cookie.

"I've had those bells for about 40 years," stated Shortzman who moved to Clark from the Scotland area. Approximately 50 bells on Brownie's harness made for a very Christmas season sound as the pony trotted along pulling the one-horse open sleigh - a treat for the eyes and ears of passers-by on the streets of Clark that day.

No Farm and Home Show in 2016

The Clark County Crop Improvement Board of Directors, at their December meeting, decided to forgo having a 2016 Clark County Farm and Home Show because of low booth numbers.

Said Clark County Extension 4-H program director Kim McGraw, "We only had 10 booths that showed interest for this year's show. The Crop Improvement board felt with the lack of support and the amount it costs to put on the Farm and Home Show, the 10 booths would not cover it (the cost), so it would be best to cancel the 2016 show."

The Clark County Farm and Home Show has been a staple in the county since the late 1950s. The site rotated between Clark and Willow Lake and this year it was to be Clark's turn in the rotation. The

Farm and Home Show moved from mid-March to mid-January about a decade ago.

"We sent letters to all the booth people and I am now in the process of letting all the groups involved in the show know our plans," said McGraw.

McGraw was quick to note that the Crop Improvement group would re-evaluate for 2017 to see if there is or would be more interest and support. "We are not opposed to having the Farm and Home Show in 2017, but we need interest and support, as all involved want the Clark County Farm and Home Show to continue to be a quality event," she stated.

McGraw said all involved are looking at trying to get it back in place after taking 2016 off, as to a

date change or booth commitment. "If there are only 10 to 12 booths, we just can't cover this event," she ended.

WEATHER

Ryan Eggleston - Official Weather Observer

	HI	LO	PR
Dec. 22	35	18	0
Dec. 23	28	15	0
Dec. 24	22	14	0
Dec. 25	20	14	.25
Dec. 26	20	-3	tr
Dec. 27	10	-3	0
Dec. 28	14	1	0
2015 precipitation to date	22.50"		
2014 precipitation to date	16.17"		

A look back - 2015 in review, the first five months

As the new year approaches, the Courier takes a look at the past year in Clark County. 2015 revisited is not an all-inclusive, but rather a summary of events that took place in the first six months of the year. The second six months of 2015 will appear in next week's Courier.

January

Richard Reints is elected chairman of the Clark County Board of Commissioners for 2015 during the January meeting. Violet Wicks is elected vice chairman.

Raymond Post Office reduces hours to two hours daily starting January 10, due to U.S. Postal Service Post Plan review process.

New construction in Clark County for 2014 is reported totaling \$41,472,900.00 of which a large portion is due to the completion of the Oak Tree Energy-Clark Wind Farm. Eight new homes and nine home additions add to the total in the county's construction total.

Clark Area Jr. Snow Queen Laney Ulschmid is named Miss Congeniality at 2015 SD Jr. Snow Queen contest in Aberdeen.

Willow Lake School Board holds special informational meetings on proposed building improvement projects for the school buildings and an additional gym.

Cyclone girls basketball player senior Mackenzie Huber scores her 1,000th point at Lennox game.

Dr. Glenn E. Ullyot featured noting significant role in developing blood pressure medicine and his legacy in leaving scholarships as well as financing the city hall, community center and library building in Clark, aptly named the Ullyot Building, in his honor.

Clark County Farm and Home show held in Willow Lake in 2015 and winter weather cooperates this year.



Many changes occurred during the 40 years that Pam Dekker drove bus for the Clark school system. She retired in May with an affectionate and grateful send-off from her passengers.

area and building a 13,762 square foot gymnasium to the south of the existing gym.

In honor of Martin Luther King holiday, fifth graders at Willow Lake use portable new iPads to present Rosa Parks' life story to other classes. An iMovie is their next project.

Gage Binger, 18, was sentenced in Clark on January 22 to 15 years in the state penitentiary for a stabbing incident involving a young woman at a residence in Clark in April of 2014.

The KABY television tower located in the Crocker Hills area is taken down and not replaced leaving many without ABC in the viewing area via a digital signal. For safety reasons it was declared of the damaged tower.

Dave Woodring of Raymond invents and patents a frost free sewer vent cover, currently in production near Raymond - a family business.

February

Nathan Nickeson, a Veblen high school graduate, is Clark's newly hired policeman on patrol for the city.

At February's city council meeting in Clark, a resolution was passed going forward with a wastewater treatment system retention pond project with an estimated cost of \$7,000,000. The city will apply for a \$5.5 million grant and loan from the state of South Dakota.

Jane Green of Henry, farm wife, cattle sorter, dog lover and prairie daughter with a good sense of humor, is featured, naming the multiple publications and books she has authored. She's written three books in the series of Plain Jane's Misadventures.

It's 46" on January 28 bringing on a January thaw for 2015.



Allen Smith earned a Purple Heart, a good conduct medal, an appreciation medal from France and four stars on his battle ribbon during his WW II service as a tank driver from 1942 to 1945.



Allison Monson, daughter of Jerry and Brenda Monson of Clark, was elected Governor during Girls State in early June to the rallying cry of "Don't dilly-dally; vote for Ally."

Multiple transportation bills to address deteriorating roads and bridges are dated in the South Dakota State Legislature. Politicians also want to address teacher pay in the state at our schools.

Clark Elementary fourth grade class participates in a Soup'er Bowl of Caring/Tackle Hunger game, collecting 777 food and personal items to donate to the local ICAP office.

Willow Lake second graders host animal and habitat exhibit for school students and parents.

Clark-Willow Lake Boy Scout Troop 23 holds annual fish races in conjunction with their board of review. Clark American Legion is the new charter sponsor for Pack 23 and Troop 23.