

VHS

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The total number of students that participated in fine arts, per year, are 137 in 2007-08; 137 in 2008-09; 148 in 2009-10; 153 in 2010-11; 141 in 2011-12; and 132 in 2012-13.

Student athlete numbers per school year are 204 in 2007-08; 197 in 2008-09; 193 in 2009-10; 187 in 2010-11; and 188 in 2011-12, and 198 in 2012-13.

"To me, it seems very consistent as far as our numbers go, being that our enrollment has changed slightly," Huska said.

The data show that, percentage-wise, student participation as a whole in student activities varies little each school year. In the six school years from 2007-08 to 2012-13, the percentage of Vermillion students participating in fine arts has been 33 percent, 34 percent, 36 percent, 39 percent, 36 percent, and 36 percent, respectively.

Yearly student athletic participation during that same time period has been 48.6 percent, 49 percent, 47 percent, 48 percent, 48 percent and 54 percent, respectively.

High school enrollment has declined those six school years. Annual enrollment totals, from

2007-08 to 2012-13, are 419, 402, 409, 389, 388, and 364.

Athletic activities include football, volleyball, boys' and girls' basketball, boys' and girls' cross country, boys' and girls' golf, boys' and girls' tennis, boy's and girls' track, wrestling, and gymnastics.

Fine arts activities included in the review include band, vocal, yearbook/journalism, student council, debate, drama, and oral interpretation.

The data indicates that youth programs in some activities are having a positive influence on some Vermillion High School activities. Wrestling numbers, for example, totaled 23 in 2007, when total high school enrollment was 419. This year, with a total VHS enrollment of 354 students, there are 26 wrestling participants. The wrestling squad doubled in the last year.

"We have good numbers in the youth programs and at the middle school and JV levels, so I think that (stronger numbers) will continue to stay consistent," Huska said. "Those have been in place for awhile, and I think that's key. We've had those programs in place, and we're starting to see that climb – a couple more kids every year stick with it."

Weighing in on teacher pay in SD

By Rep. Ray Ring
District 17

Legislative activity picked up a bit in the second week as we started hearing testimony and voting on bills in committee and on the House floor.

So far, we have mostly dealt with resolutions and minor changes, eliminating obsolete laws that are no longer relevant or clarifying questions of interpretation that have come up since last year. A somewhat controversial disagreement between the House and the Senate did come up this week – more about that below. Things should get more interesting next week.

In last week's column, I mentioned that Gov. Daugaard's State of the State speech ignored some matters that I think deserve more attention. I mentioned Medicaid expansion; more about that in a later column. This week I want to say more about education.

The Rapid City Journal recently ran a story pointing out that "South Dakota once again ranks last in teacher pay." Our \$39,580 per year is 70 percent of the national average of \$56,383 per year. Of surrounding states,

North Dakota comes closest to South Dakota, paying its teachers an average of almost \$8,000 more. Nebraska outdoes us by more than \$9,000, Iowa by almost \$12,000, Minnesota by nearly \$17,000.

The governor's spokesman responded that South Dakota "has the lowest cost of living." Let's look at the data. US Census Bureau data do indeed show that South Dakota's cost of living is the lowest in the nation, at about 83 percent of the national average.

That means that after we adjust for living costs, our teachers are still paid about 85 percent of the US average. Because surrounding states' living costs are only slightly higher than South Dakota's, cost adjustments don't make a lot of difference for comparing our state to surrounding states. (Wyoming is the one exception, and I expect North Dakota's costs to grow because of oil and gas drilling there.)

For example, without cost adjustments, Nebraska's average teacher salaries are about 24 percent above South Dakota's; with cost adjustments, Nebraska still outdoes us by about 22

percent. Minnesota bests South Dakota by 42 percent without cost of living adjustments, 39 percent with cost of living adjustments. No wonder superintendents testifying before this summer's Interim Education Funding Formula Study Committee cited so many problems finding teachers.

At the request of the Interim Education Funding Formula Study Committee, a group of State Representatives and Senators introduced House Concurrent Resolution 1002, "recognizing the teacher shortage in this state and the difficulties school districts in South Dakota face in attracting and retaining qualified teachers." The House passed this resolution 49 to 18, with Republicans casting all the "nay" votes but one.

To the surprise of many, the Senate defeated this resolution, 15 to 19, with Republicans casting all "nays." How can anyone deny the difficulties of hiring and keeping good teachers when surrounding states pay our teachers 20-40 percent more, even after we adjust for costs of living?

Defenders of the way we pay teachers also point to South Dakota's low taxes.

My very rough estimate is that sales, residential property, and personal income taxes in Iowa are about \$2,000 higher than in South Dakota. That narrows the after-tax gap to about \$10,000 – still worth moving a few miles. The Iowa tax gap is the largest between South Dakota and surrounding states.

The Education Funding Formula Study Committee also recommended that state aid rise by 3.8 percent this year in order to bring the per student allocation back to where it was in 2008. The governor's budget recommends only a 3 percent increase.

At some point state government policy makers should take their heads out of the sand and do what our teachers and our children deserve.

I definitely need to know your views on these and other issues. Please contact me at Rep.Ring@state.sd.us or (605) 675-9379. Cracker barrels are scheduled for Feb. 1 and March 1 at 10 a.m. in the Vermillion City Hall, Feb. 15 at 10 a.m. in the Irene Community Center, and Feb. 15 at 1:30 p.m. in Viborg.

Please come to share your views.

FIRE

From Page 01

equipment for the department, Draper said.

The cameras were priced at \$9,000 each, he said, pointing out that when thermal cameras were first released in the 1980s, they cost approximately \$30,000.

The older cameras weren't nearly as efficient, though – not even the ones made slightly more than a decade ago.

The Vermillion Fire Department previously had thermal cameras dating from 1999.

"The old ones were just black and white, and the

contrast of the image was terrible on them," Taggart said. "On these new ones ... the clarity is just unbelievable as far as picking out objects and people, and the heat and all that."

In addition, the old cameras could only be read by putting them directly up to your face.

"It was great for the time, but times have changed," Draper said. "It's the department's goal to put a thermal camera on every main fire truck, so we have three engine companies and one ladder company, and I would like to see a camera on each one, because you don't know which truck will get there first, or which crew will

come across the victims."

Members of the fire department are now also able to utilize three iPads when they go out on calls.

Purchased with grant funding from Wal-Mart, the iPads allow specific information to be pulled up immediately.

"The calls, the mapping for the calls, it shows us where to go, what units are responding," Draper said. "It also pulls up weather and hazardous material information. It very easily brings everything right there into the vehicles. We didn't have that stuff before."

Previously, the firefighters had to rely on radio communication and printed information when going out on calls.

"Now I've got all of the pre-plans, which are a blueprint of a building that tells us the doors, the exits, where the utilities are at, any other pertinent information," Draper said.

Additionally, the iPads provide a map that shows the address where the fire is happening.

"It makes it a lot easier, because before, I used to have to come into the station, get the address, look at the paper map that's on the wall, try to figure out where we're going, the best route, and then try to remember that," Taggart said. "Then getting dressed, when all the commotion is going and getting in the truck.

"It was really easy to forget where you're going," he said. "Or with the rural addresses, they have such a numerical address, now I can just look at the iPad, and it pulls that information up for me."

The iPads also utilize a program from lamResponding.com that shows how many firefighters are responding to an emergency.

"It would have our name and an estimate of how long it would take us to get to the station," Taggart said. "So, as I'm sitting in the truck waiting, I could sit here and see (who's) coming. That really helps with who's going to drive, and

at the same time, (it lets me) know who my experienced guys are in the back. Those are all things that I have to play out in my mind as we're going to the scene."

Taggart can use the iPads to make his report at the conclusion of an emergency, as well – a process that used to take place exclusively on paper.

"This iPad has been and will be a great asset through the course of my years left here," he said.

Draper said both the iPads and the cameras are a great asset.

"The old way ... still works, but we're just finding that this is much more efficient," he said.

CLAY COUNTY SHERIFF'S PRESS BRIEFING

01/19/14 14:03 – A vehicle was observed traveling at 73 mph in the 55 mph zone on University Road. The vehicle was stopped and the driver was cited for the offense.

01/20/14 21:54 – A deputy stopped a semi with no trailer lights. The driver was able to get the hazard lights to work. The driver was lost so the deputy assisted him with directions.

01/21/14 15:39 – A deputy, assisted by a DCI agent, investigated a report of an adult having sexual intercourse with a 13-year-old girl.

01/22/14 00:35 – A deputy assisted Vermillion police officers with searching for a missing juvenile. The boy returned home on his own.

01/22/14 01:48 – A deputy responded to a burglar alarm call at a Vermillion business. There were no problems found.

01/22/14 07:43 – A vehicle was stopped and

the driver was cited for running a stop sign on Frog Creek Road.

01/22/14 13:38 – A Burbank resident reported a lost dog to see if anyone had reported finding it. There had been no recent reports of stray dogs there.

01/22/14 16:04 – Deputies responded to a report of a burglary near Wakonda. It was later learned that a man had requested permission to enter to retrieve his own property. Investigation is ongoing.

01/22/14 18:52 – Traffic control assistance was provided while a load of cattle was moved from a disabled stock trailer to another after the semi trailer became disabled on Highway 50.

01/22/14 19:02 – A person in protective custody at the jail was transported to the Human Services Center in Yankton for a mental health committal.

01/23/14 02:08 – A deputy assisted a highway patrol trooper with a traffic stop in Vermillion resulting in the driver being arrested for DWI.

01/23/14 11:48 – A female inmate was transported from the Minnehaha County Jail after being arrested on Clay County warrants and a juvenile was transported from juvenile detention in Sioux Falls to Vermillion for court.

01/23/14 14:00 – A student at the high school reported the theft of an expensive pair of headphones from the girls' locker room. The matter is under investigation.

01/23/14 15:54 – A juvenile was returned to juvenile detention in Sioux Falls after a court appearance in Clay County.

01/23/14 18:50 – An Irene resident reported a smell of marijuana coming from his neighbor's residence. Deputies responded but the odor

was no longer noticeable and no marijuana was found.

01/23/14 21:14 – A rural resident reported the theft of a tank heater from a stock tank near Meckling.

01/24/14 01:39 – A deputy responded to a medical emergency in Meckling. The patient was transported to the hospital by ambulance.

01/24/14 12:35 – A deputy received a report of a burglary at a rural Wakonda residence after a Yankton County Deputy arrested a man in possession of items stolen from the Clay County farm. The matter is under investigation.

01/24/14 14:04 – An inmate was transported to a medical clinic for an appointment and then returned to the jail.

01/24/14 21:11 – A deputy mediated a civil dispute over the purchase of hay. The matter was resolved peacefully. The parties were advised to consider small claims court if they felt they needed further guidance.

01/24/14 23:39 – A vehicle was stopped for speeding near Wakonda. The driver was cited for not having insurance on the vehicle.

01/25/14 11:04 – A vehicle was stopped for driving 79 mph in the 55 mph zone on 306th Street. The driver was cited for the offense.

01/25/14 22:55 – A deputy assisted Vermillion Police officers with a large underage alcohol party in Vermillion. Numerous citations for underage consumption were written.

Total Records: 23

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