



Davis County students scan on and off buses



Davis County students scan ID cards as they get on and off the bus. The transportation department began using Saas (Software as a Service) to keep track of students riding buses.

Parents of students in the Davis County School District will soon be able to track their children from the time they get on the school bus until they reach their destination.

Last week, the transportation department of DC Schools began using SaaS (Software as a Service), a cloud-based service, to keep track of students being transported by bus.

School personnel and bus drivers for years have struggled to keep track of students who had to board different buses to go to a friend's house, grandma's house, or a different destination after school. That job became easier last week with the implementation of SaaS.

Rosters of students assigned to each bus route have been programmed into the system, and the bus driver pulls up the list as students board the bus. As students step onto

the bus, they scan the bar code on their ID card. The child's picture pops up on the screen. If for some reason the student is not to be on that bus, the driver is notified and the child is put on the proper bus.

Chris Bunnell of UniteGPSx said the data in the system can be used to look up a child and learn what time she boarded the bus and what time she got off the bus. Parents will be issued a mobile app (on the basis of registration) that allows them to log into the system and see what bus their child is on and know whether their child has been safely delivered to their destination.

Bunnell said mobile apps will also be issued to teachers and administrators who supervise bus departures. "If someone asks 'Where's Ally?' they can search and see if she is on the right bus or not," he said.

Bunnell related another advantage to the system. If a bus has a wreck, it can be located and help sent immediately.

"A district north of Davis County had a bus go into a ditch recently," he said. "The driver radioed the transportation office and said there was a wreck, but communication was lost.

"The SaaS system is like air traffic control for schools," he said. "It knows where every vehicle is, even if the driver can't say where he is. The transportation office saw there was a van driver nearby, radioed her and she became a first responder. Fifteen minutes later transportation arrived for the stranded students.

"Meanwhile, the transportation director pulled up a list of

SEE SCANS, PAGE 2A

School, public wrestle with four-day week decision

By Karen Spurgeon, Publisher

The Davis County Schools hosted its second public forum Saturday morning to gather public input on the question of implementing a 4-day school week next year.

Around 50 people attended, asked questions, and shared their opinions as the discussion revealed the diversity of opinions that exist in the county.

Following the uncertainty and negative opinions expressed during the Feb. 13 Town Hall meeting, elementary teacher Kristy Miller led off the discussion Saturday morning on a more positive note by presenting research on the 4-day school week conducted by Oregon State University. That research looked into 4-day school schedules in six states, including Iowa, and revealed that 4-day students learned as much as 5-day students.

She also noted Iowa schools must provide a minimum of 1,080 hours of instruction per year. The two calendar options being considered by Davis County Schools, if a 4-day week is implemented, provide 1,112 hours of instruction or 1,119 hours of instruction. The 5-day calendar currently provides 1,117 hours of instruction.

"In listening to the panelists from WACO and Moulton-Udell during our panel discussions (via Zoom), it is also clear there are positive impacts on school attendance, discipline and overall school climate with the 4-day week," Miller said.

Miller also pointed out that more and more businesses nationwide are implementing a 4-day week. "There was a study done in which 1,300 U.S. businesses were asked if they were exploring unconventional options in their work week," she said, "and many already have. Twenty-seven percent have already switched to a 4-day week, and others said they haven't started the planning process, but that will happen in 2023.

"Eighty-four percent of these businesses believe the 4-day week will give them a competitive edge in recruiting quality employees, and 53% of the businesses made the changes to reduce employee turnover and employee burnout," Miller reported.

Davis County faculty members were polled several months ago and 79% stated they liked the idea of studying the 4-day week.

Miller told the crowd there are several reasons why the community should consider a 4-day school week:

· "Teacher stress is one of the main factors that has been pushing many out of the profession and pivoting to other careers.

· "While teaching has always been stressful, it's been exacerbated by challenges many educators experienced due to COVID-19 and the rise in student behavior (problems) since then.

· "Students are coming to school with new behavioral challenges that have shifted teachers to acquire a new skill set to meet the needs of those students.

· "There have been rising concerns over personal safety and the safety of other students due to these behavioral issues becoming more disruptive and violent. This is a factor increasing the stress in teachers," she said.

Bob Closser commended Miller on her research, but said, "You can always find research on both sides."

Closser was present for the first town hall meeting and reiterated his complaint that some students get on the bus at 6:45 a.m. and get home late. With longer days in a 4-day schedule, Closser said some students "won't see daylight."

SEE 4-DAY WEEK, PAGE 7A

Home schooling requires heart



Laurie Bartle shows off the home-school library in the basement of the school district's Central Office building which also serves as headquarters for Davis County's Home School Assistance Program.

By Karen Spurgeon, Publisher

Davis County families may not find it easy to transport their children out-of-county to a private school, but a Home School Assistance Program (HSAP) is available to parents who are seeking an option to public-school education.

Davis County's Home School Assistance Program was begun in 1995 when Laurie Bartle, a teacher with Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Education along with a reading endorsement, made the decision to home school her own children but wanted to work with other home schoolers as well.

She began the Home School Assistance Program at Davis County under the direction of Curriculum Director Joyce Montgomery with an enrollment of 17 students.

Today, Bartle, along with fellow teachers Jill Watson and Paige Carroll,

have 90 students in the HSAP including students from not only Davis County, but Centerville, Ottumwa, and Van Buren as well.

Bartle said the families involved do not have a grudge against public schools, but choose to home school to instill family values, choose their curriculum, and for the joy of home schooling.

"There are so many things we are able to do with the kids to promote first-hand learning," Bartle said. "Families take field trips and vacations so children can learn on site."

When it comes to choosing curriculum, Bartle said some parents choose to stay with one publisher, others may pick and choose. The teachers work with the parents on selecting the curriculum that best fits their children's needs.

"Our job is to make sure the children are

learning," Bartle said. "At the end of the year we must state whether children are making progress or not. Rarely do we have a student who is not making adequate progress, but if that happens, we talk about other options — such as bridging them back into the public school.

"I have really awesome families. They are so committed to making sure their kids learn," she said.

The HSAP sponsors activities where families learn together. Bartle emphasized HSAP does not provide a drop-off service, but families go to the lower level of the Davis County Schools' Central Office for activities where all learn together.

"We model teaching as we do activities," she said. "Moms and dads observe as we model different teaching and learning strategies. We try to provide a lot of opportunities to learn in a fun way."

Iowa law requires 148 days of schooling in the home-school program versus 170 or 180 in the public-school program. The reason for that, Bartle said, is the children move at their own pace and don't have to wait for other students to learn a concept or complete a task before moving on.

The teachers evaluate student progress once a quarter. "The bottom line is we have to see progress," Bartle said.

SEE HOME SCHOOLING, PAGE 3A

Attorney General Brenna Bird holds local forum



SIEC General Manager Greg Proctor and Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird at local forum.

Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird was at Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative Friday to hold a forum with Davis County residents.

Bird introduced herself as being a farm girl raised near Dexter who was home-schooled from 8-12th grades. Leading up to her position as state attorney general, she was a county attorney and served as legal counsel for former Governor Terry Branstad. She became acquainted with Gov. Kim Reynolds when Reynolds was a county official in Clark

County.

SIEC General Manager Greg Proctor began the forum by questioning Bird about the recent statement that Bird would have the ability to prosecute cases — if appropriate — without referral from county officials.

Bird said, "The Attorney General's office has statewide criminal jurisdiction and, if the county wants help, we would get involved."

Bird explained there could be times when the county wouldn't have time to prosecute

a murder case, or in certain instances there is a fear of showing partiality. In those cases, the county attorney could choose to have an appointed prosecutor at no cost.

"The state has always had this jurisdiction, but it was not really used," she said. "The law goes back to the 1800s."

Bird said her office has seven prosecutors in the office that can help. "We used to have 11," she said.

Commenting on the decrease, she added, "We don't have enough to do marijuana cases. That is one of the issues. We even have a Polk County attorney who said he wouldn't do this."

Davis County Attorney Rick Lynch was in the audience and said, "The Attorney General's office is good to work with. The biggest problem is there is not enough staff. They are good to help when things are out of my league. The system does work well; we just need more of them."

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Bowling teams compete at districts

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RECORD: From Page 4A

charges of sexual exploitation by school employee and assault with intent to commit sexual abuse were dismissed.

Luke Cal Jefferson Fowler, Bloomfield, charged with driving while barred. Preliminary hearing was waived.

Travis Dylan Nelson, West Grove, charged with driving while barred. Preliminary hearing was waived.

Michael Stephen Moots, Selma, charged with probation revocation. Revocation hearing set for March 31.

Clayton Dean Cloke, Eldon, charged with probation revocation.

Police Calls

Feb. 15, 8:51 a.m.—Police assisted a motorist at 100 E. Jefferson St.

Feb. 15, 10:39 a.m.—Police assisted a motorist with unlocking their vehicle in the south parking lot.

Feb. 15, 1:29 p.m.—Police assisted a family at 404 N. Madison St.

Feb. 15, 4 p.m.—Police responded to harassment in the 700 block of S. West St.

Feb. 15, 5:55 p.m.—Police responded to lost and found at Brothers Market.

Feb. 16, 9:09 p.m.—Police responded to a welfare check at 7 Deborah Drive.

Feb. 17, 9:12 a.m.—Police assisted a motorist with unlocking their vehicle at Sinclair Tractor.

Feb. 17, 9:35 a.m.—Police responded to harassment at US Cellular.

Feb. 17, 1:29 p.m.—Police

assisted an ambulance at 103 Nevelle Ave.

Feb. 17, 2:44 p.m.—Police assisted a family at the law center.

Feb. 17, 4:19 p.m.—Police responded to an animal complaint at 205 South View Dr.

Feb. 17, 9:43 p.m.—Police responded to a utilities hazard at 407 W. Poplar St.

Feb. 18, 3:10 a.m.—Police responded to a medical call at 202 S. Madison St.

Feb. 18, 11:29 a.m.—Police assisted with a funeral escort to Highway 2.

Feb. 18, 2:19 p.m.—Police responded to a traffic accident on Highway 2 and Columbia St.

Feb. 19, 1:54 p.m.—Police conducted an investigation at the Iowa Theatre.

Feb. 19, 8:38 p.m.—Police conducted an investigation in the 600 block of W. Franklin St. Luke Cal Jefferson Fowler, 44, of 919 W. Walnut St., Bloomfield was arrested and charged with driving while barred.

Feb. 20, 8:25 a.m.—Police responded to an animal complaint at 103 N. Pine St.

Feb. 20, 3:01 p.m.—Police assisted a motorist with a disabled vehicle in front of Carquest.

Feb. 20, 11:58 p.m.—Police conducted an investigation of stolen property-possession-fencing etc. at Cobblestone. Police arrested and charged five juveniles with theft-first degree.

Feb. 21, 4:29 a.m.—Police responded to an alarm at 506 S. Washington St.

4-DAY WEEK: DC is part of consortium for special classroom.

From Page 1A

“The point is, what is the point of the community going to a 4-day week?” he asked.

“What about kids hitting a teacher? What about young students cutting their wrists? The 4-day week is a short-term fix. We need to address the issues. The 19 other students in a classroom have rights, too. The 4-day week is a band-aid, not a fix. Once we go to a 4-day week, going back is impossible. “I don’t feel there is enough research out there to affirm this (the 4-day week),” he said.

Supt. Dan Maeder told Closser kids are not on the bus more than an hour, but Closser said later he knows of instances where children get on the bus at 6:45 a.m., get to school at 8 a.m., but are not allowed to disembark until 8:10 a.m.

Reinforcing Kristy Miller’s viewpoint, SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) Instructor Ashley Tuvera said, “I love my job but school and children are not the same as they once were.

“The CDC came out with its Youth Risk Behavior Survey last week, and the statistics are concerning,” she said: In 2021 42% of high school students experienced persistent feelings of hopelessness. In 2017, 31% reported these feelings and that percentage rose to 37% in 2019 — and this was pre-COVID, she noted.

Considerations of suicide have trended upward since 2011, Tuvera reported. In 2021, 22% of high school teens reported considering suicide. Eighteen percent had a plan, and 10% had attempted suicide, she said.

“Clearly doing things the way they’ve been done for the last 100 years is no longer work-

ing,” Tuvera said. “We need to come together as a community to find something that does.”

Closser asked, “If we continue to see an increase in behavior problems, what are we going to do for that child with problems?”

Maeder explained Davis County Schools are part of a consortium of area schools that have created a therapeutic classroom. “We have two kids going to Blakesburg for this now,” he said. “We didn’t have that three years ago. We also have an SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) program at all levels.”

Closser countered, “With a 4-day week, we’re taking these services away from those kids one day a week.”

Deara Fox commented that adding 20 minutes of those services per day doesn’t equal an extra day of services.

“What about the kids who run around town all day with an unstructured environment?” she asked. “Why can’t we create a program like that (Blakesburg) here for our kids?”

Maeder explained this program requires licensed therapists and several districts are combining financial resources to serve those kids.

Teacher Teagen Padget agreed that Iowa does not have as many services as are needed. “I don’t think we know until we try, but we hear that kids in other schools are more driven on a 4-day schedule.”

Jennifer Rupe Snyder commented, “The mental health problems are going to stay there. Aren’t those students more likely to have suicidal thoughts and more behavior problems on the fifth day?” Snyder asked. “And they won’t have the resources of the school to get through this.”

Miller pointed out that research shows play is beneficial and it can be a benefit for children with problems.

Snyder asked about submitting the 4-day proposal to a public vote. Maeder said the school was planning to poll parents during parent-teacher conferences.

Dan Wiegand said he didn’t believe the district would be preparing students for life if they went to a 4-day week. “It will be more inconvenient to get kids to sports. This will be a challenge we’ll have to overcome if we shift,” he said. There are rabbit holes we’ll have to go down.”

Traci Wiegand, owner of Wigwam Daycare and Preschool, said research shows that after six hours, no new learning takes place for young children. She also reiterated that children need playtime. “So much can be learned through play,” she said. Wiegand commented that 15-20 minutes per day are wasted sitting on the bus before children depart for home.

Maeder and Elementary Principal Kyle Steffen agreed to look into the problem of wasted time.

Asked about course offerings, high school instructor Michelle Grove said she didn’t anticipate changing course offerings, but schedules would have to be changed.

Towards the end of the meeting, Karly Good suggested the community write up their concerns and give them to school officials. “We need to go beyond just hearing the concerns,” she said. “That will make a difference in how this comes together. I think we’re seeing buy-in from all segments of the community.”

Maeder agreed that more and more commu-

nity members are getting involved and he predicts participation will grow.

DCHS Instructor Shane Blake reminded the group teachers are not looking for a day off, but are looking at building more programs and clubs. “I think the 4-day schedule would benefit our kids,” he said.

Closser and others expressed the need to extend the timeline for additional study.

The timeline now calls for one more town hall meeting on Thursday, March 2, from 6-7 p.m. in the DCHS Library. The Study Group will meet on Wednesday, March 15 to finalize their recommendation to the board, and the Board of Education will make the final decision on March 20.

The Study Group and the school board will recommend one of three calendar possibilities:

- a calendar similar to the current calendar which allows 16 three-day weekends due to professional development on Fridays. This calendar calls for 1,117 instructional hours. The school day would remain the same at 8:15 a.m. to 3:22 p.m.

- a 4-day week calendar that would include a 5-day schedule in September and transition to 4-day weeks in October. This schedule would include 1,112 hours of instruction with the school day running from 8:05 a.m. to 3:40 p.m.

- a hybrid schedule that would include many 5-day weeks during first semester and transition to 4-day weeks during the second semester. This schedule would include 1,119 hours of instruction for the year with a school day running from 8:05 a.m. to 3:40 p.m.

SWARM: From Page 5A

to look vertically, to their Creator, God or Jesus Christ. Thirdly, there are horizontal relationships with teachers, parents, and friends. So, they can use their relationship with themselves, and God to build better relationships with others. Ron pointed out that wisdom is best developed in relationships. They will become wise. Hence, they called themselves, The WiseGuys.

The WiseGuys meetings on Saturday nights in Ron’s home office became so popular that once, when Ron and Becky were out of town and had to cancel the meeting, Cal called and said, “The WiseGuys have to meet.” Ron and Becky hurried back so that the meeting could be held.

Each week one of the boys is a facilitator of various topics such as premarital sex, substance abuse, and career goals. Ron stays in the background and lets the boys interact amongst themselves. The meeting may consist of about 1/3 topic and 2/3 girls and football. There’s a lot of roughhousing, cussing and four-letter words. But as Ron points out, the Disciple Peter, a fisherman, no doubt used course language.

Speakers are sometimes invited in. There has been a yoga instructor, guidance counselor, and college professor. The meetings wind down with food and Xbox games on a huge television screen. Zoom is

available for boys who can’t attend in person.

Then the ultimate happened. Two of the boys, Jordan and River, expressed a desire to be baptized. On Sunday, Feb. 19th, at the 2nd Baptist Church in Liberty, Mo., Jordan and River were fully immersed and surfaced as new young men. Reverend Jason Edwards had actual water from the Jordan River in Israel where Jesus was baptized. Rev. Edwards sprinkled a few drops of that water into the baptismal tank. He noted that Jordan and River were being baptized in water from the Jordan River—an “Ah, Ha!” moment, like it was ordained. The WiseGuys attended and observed closely. Another teen expressed a desire to become baptized also. Hallelujah, praise God!

Ron’s overall approach to the guys is one of building a loving relationship with each one of them, letting God’s Spirit do the rest of the work. He continues to be blessed daily in this work. His lay youth ministry is making an impact; a difference in a troubled world.

The WiseGuys’ website is: www.wiseguys.group.

Have a good story? Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-0526, find him on Facebook, email at curtswarm@yahoo.com or visit his website at www.empty-nest-words-photos-and-frames.com.

SIGN UP: From Page 5A

greater than myself as I understood it. I didn’t have to use a specific name or book or way of praying.

After years of being told how to believe in God, I was able to let God teach me how to believe in Him. I first had to determine what God was not. God was not the old lady in the back of the room judging me for wearing pants, and God was not the old man pestering me about getting married since I had a baby.

In the beginning, I wouldn’t even use the word God because I was so put off by it. I would say “Universe” or “Source Energy.” As my journey continued, I let go of my resentments towards the word God and would think it but I still didn’t want to say it, because I didn’t want my friends

to think about me, what I had thought about the other Jesus freaks.

I remember listening to a young man speak. He said, “People think you can’t have swag if you believe in God. My God is dope and I’ve got all kinds of swag!” That was what I needed to hear! My God is pretty dope too. I don’t have to be ashamed to say it.

In my experience, I learned that if you seek the Spirit, no matter your understanding, background, or current character defects, all roads lead to God.

For the folks that have black and white beliefs about God as they understand Him, I celebrate your conviction and the peace you must feel in your heart at not having any doubts. Respectfully, I’m also not really talking to you right now.

I’m talking to the people who are lost, broken, and confused. Simply start where you are and ask for intuitive guidance. God will put people and knowledge in front of you in the ways that you can absorb it at this time in your life. True intervention and guidance from God, will always make you feel better and give you at least a glimpse of hope and peace.

If there was only one way to God, then Bloomfield wouldn’t have 748 million churches. I compare spiritual practices with social media. Each person chooses a platform that feels more user friendly to them. Whether you use Facebook versus Snapchat or Christianity versus Buddhism, the result is the same, contact with friends and family or

conscious contact with God. God knows when you’re talking to him no matter what name you call out.

I also recommend looking for the similarities not the differences when viewing spirituality from a lens different than your own. I can sit through a sermon from any religious affiliation now and always find things that touch my heart and give me that undeniable little jolt of God speaking directly to me through the humanity app.

If I live in such a way that attracts others to God then I do not need to promote God to the people who are not ready to hear the message.

Remember, there are two types of business in this world; God’s business and not your business.


START WITH THE NEWS

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