

## **'Circle of Friends' said to be successful**

Written by Elizabeth Barrett  
Friday, 17 May 2013 14:22 -

---



### **Social skills mentored through program**

With a light agenda, Dist. 20 board members spent most of their Monday night meeting learning about a new mentoring program.

Called "Circle of Friends," the social skills program matches high school and elementary peers with students with disabilities.

"They then interact with students with learning disabilities, autism or those who have trouble with peer relationships," said speech language pathologist Erin Feather.

Special education teacher Heather Franzen said the students meet much of the time over the lunch hour. Peers often interact with students through games.

Sherry Damrow, a special education teacher, said the program is in its first year.

The high school program received a \$1,000 grant to implement Circle of Friends and the grade school \$650 for the first year.

Damrow said she started with two target students, noting that the number has grown to five such students and 11 mentors.

She noted that teachers have applied for a second grant through the Autism Action Partnership

## **'Circle of Friends' said to be successful**

Written by Elizabeth Barrett  
Friday, 17 May 2013 14:22 -

---

to continue the program next year.

The board did enter into a 15-minute closed session to discuss contracts with certified staff but took no action upon reconvening.

On another matter, members were reminded of summer projects that include the remodeling of K-1 elementary bathrooms and installation of upgraded outside lighting, north gym floor renovation and installation of north football bleachers.

In other business, the board

approved option enrollment requests from two Cozad students who want to attend District 20.

They are kindergartner Karlie Hale and second grader Kayden Hale.

were told that results of the NeSA writing exam will be made public May 24 and that the overall testing process went well.

learned that the school's nutrition services served a complimentary breakfast and steak dinner to seniors their last week of school.

heard that summer school for high schoolers is June 3-28 and July 15-Aug. 2 for elementary students.

were informed that 378 high school students have served detention so far this year compared to 328 a year ago. Saturday School numbers fell with 105 this year and 142 in 2012.

## **'Circle of Friends' said to be successful**

Written by Elizabeth Barrett  
Friday, 17 May 2013 14:22 -

---

found out that fifth graders will be at Halsey National Forest Tuesday and Wednesday (today) and second graders will go to the Doug and Stephanie Block farm Thursday for activities.

discovered that, for the Southwest Conference cup—based on how students score in activities—that the Minden girls and Cozad boys won.

The Swede girls were third and the boys fifth. Minden girls have won the cup the past four years. Swede boys have won last year and in 2010.

became aware that Gothenburg Public Schools and other smaller schools might leave the Greater Nebraska Schools Association because of under representation in the organization which is made up of several large schools.

GNSA describes its mission as promoting advancement and equitable education funding and providing a voice concerning state aid equalization.

[ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com](mailto:ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com)

308-537-3636