

As the first semester winds to a close, we wanted to take some time to highlight the great work of our students and staff in the last few months. Our MS Girls basketball and Wrestling will be competing this week in their final contests of the season, and our HS wrestling and basketball teams just kicked off their seasons last weekend.

We have found great success in developing great PSAs with animation in elementary and now middle school and high school. Students spent last week in an Hour of Code, which is certainly a high wage, high demand area that we will encourage our students to pursue!

High school staff members and students traveled across South Dakota to gain new ideas about personalized learning, while our elementary and middle school staff traveled to California recently to visit a system that provides mass customized learning for all students from K-12. Both trips provided the district with much to consider as we move forward with our reimagined strategic design for our students.

This past Friday, our high school students and staff took part in a Design Thinking Process activity—which will be useful as students work to design project-based learning experiences for the 2nd semester. During this process, individuals work through the phases of Empathy, Define, Ideation, Prototype, and Test. The goal is to meet the needs of the end user by understanding the user's needs, creating multiple ideas to build prototypes and then testing with the end user, going back in several iterations to get the best design possible. Our goal for 2nd semester is to assist businesses and organizations by matching them up with students in various career interest areas to solve problems or needs that the community may have. This opportunity to apply learning in an authentic way is critical to our students' growth!

As we work to move forward with these experiences for students, we are also aware of our need to take a very close look at all of our operations and budgets for the coming school year. The state is looking at various solutions to the current education budget shortfall, and all districts must review its practices and make some tough decisions for the 2017-2018 school year and beyond. Over the past five years our district has worked diligently to save money for times like these, which will make some of our impending decisions easier. We are working to be at the table when decisions are made at the state level so that our senators and representatives hear our voice and needs.

Wishing everyone a wonderful holiday season to enjoy with family and friends!