



Just So You Know

Growing a Beard

When I was in the first year of my teaching contract in the Nebo School District, the principal allowed the student council to hold a beard-growing contest between male faculty and male students. As I recall, it was to last through the first few weeks of the fourth term of the school year but ending in time for everyone to clean up for the end of school. The principal's permission was necessary because facial hair was forbidden on students and faculty as part of a strict dress code. I was all over getting into the contest and getting an early jump on my summer beard which was allowed in my job with the US Forest Service.

I don't remember the outcome of the contest, who the overall winner was or who won novelty prizes for longest beard, thickest beard, greyest beard, thinnest beard, ugliest beard, etc. I liked my beard and chose to keep it although when the contest ended, the beard should have ended too. When I got my final performance evaluation from the principal a few days before the end of the school year, I received high marks in every category, except one: personal appearance. At that point, the beard became symbolic for me as a human right and a matter of free speech. On the final day of school that year, I staged a solo protest by keeping the beard but wearing my best leisure suit to the final consultation with the principal. It was my effort to say "Look how good I look in this suit. How can you criticize my appearance?" Despite my lame argument, it was a cordial exchange as we each offered our points of view. In the end, I kept the beard and my job for the following year, but only if I reported to work in August clean-shaven. The principal, on the other hand, maintained his low-rating assessment for my personal appearance, despite the awesome leisure suit.

These days, I've seen many men who don't usually sport facial hair with beards and longer hair. I have fallen into that category, and again I defend my appearance in symbolic and practical ways. The beard began on the first day of soft closure in March and has run amuck since. To me it represents the chaos in the pandemic world, the juxtaposition of past, present, and future, and the reminder of how our school system has been taken apart and put back together as something new and strange, but effective. I also like not having to shave every day.

Regarding the ungroomed hair, hair salons and barbershops are just now starting to come out of the darkness of COVID-19 restrictions, and I do plan on a trim soon, but like my beard, I view it as a personal preference although some may sit in judgment of when others need a haircut. In my first year as principal at Canyon View Junior High School, I worked hard to develop relationships with all stakeholders. One mother I had met with a few times regarding the misbehavior of her child said on one occasion as she was leaving my office, "I think you're doing a good job here. I appreciate the help you are giving my child." She then took a couple of steps through the door, turned, and walked back into my office. "You really need to get a haircut though."

There was nothing symbolic about that.

Superintendent Davis

Vision Statement:

"Education is a collaborative effort of home, community, and school. Students experience success on a daily basis and excel in performance through applying knowledge to real life situations. Schools are student-centered, guided by educators who possess excellent leadership and educational skills. Education expands beyond the classroom walls through the use of technology, and the curriculum meets the highest standards of an ever-changing world. Graduates are prepared to enter the workforce or continue their formal education at an advanced technical institution or a college or university. The Emery County School District believes that learning today provides leadership for tomorrow."

Administrative Goals 2019-20 revisited

Going into the 2019-20 school year, members of the Emery School District Administrative Team set new goals for the school district. Benchmark updates of the progress in advancing each goal have taken place throughout the school year in Administrative Team and Administrative Council Meetings. Following are the five adopted goals and updates on each as the school year comes to a close. It is important to understand that progress has been stifled in various ways by the soft school closure.

Establish a building/facilities replacement plan: Under the chairmanship of Business Administrator Jared Black, the district created a Facilities Committee in January with the task of assessing district building needs, including remodeling and new construction. The committee reviewed previous assessments, visited district schools and other facilities, and also toured new schools in several other school districts. Last winter, the committee established a priority list for initial investment toward remodel and new construction as follows: Emery High School, Ferron Elementary, Huntington Elementary, and the district office. Most recently, the committee reviewed rough drafts for an informational bonding brochure to be released to the public. Also, the committee will discuss the hiring of architects and construction managers in the June meeting. The committee's task is to make recommendations to the Emery Board of Education which will make the final decisions regarding bonding and priority needs.

Mitigate social/emotional barriers to academic success: With funding from grants from the Teacher and Student Success Act and the Mental Health Act, as well as support from each of the 10 district schools, the Emery School District was able to add two full-time social workers going into the 2019-20 school year. The two, Felicia Jeffs and Greg Daniels, were assigned to elementary and secondary schools, respectively. The new social workers were also assigned to the district Social/Emotional Learning Collaborative Team which also includes Elementary Counselor Ashley Jensen and District Social Worker Jennifer Thomas. The team has been tasked with providing individual and group counseling to student's whose school work is compromised due to social/emotional issues. The team also provides proactive mental health training for all students, especially in elementary school. Each school, as well as the school district, set social/emotional improvement goals for the 2019-20 school year in both their TSSA Plans and Lands Trust Plans. Renewal of the grant funding and the continuation of SEL is underway now for the 2020-21 school year.

Advance responsible growth of CTE Pathways K-12: The current school year began with the re-establishment of the District CTE Pathway and STEM Ed Committee which monitors existing CTE/STEM programs, evaluates the addition of new programs, and explores funding options for program expansion. During the school year, the district received funding from the Coal Country Strike Team as well as the USBE to advance CTE Pathways and computer science courses. The funding has been earmarked for faculty training to support teachers interested in teaching computer science courses and other CTE classes. Some courses will be ready to start in the fall. Also during the school year, Emery High and Green River High were able to add a Certified Nursing Assistant program. Plans are in the works to add carpentry and vocational agriculture classes at Green River High School.

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Emphasize communication as vital to effective system management: The efficiency and effectiveness of district communication has been tested during the soft closure as teachers are using eLearning, online instruction, email and other means of moving education forward while also limiting personal contact with students. As the school year comes to a close, schools are gearing up to launch “catch-up” programs for students who have not been able to pass classes during soft closure. During this process, it is essential that all planning is focused on equity, equal educational opportunities for all students. Each student taking part in a catch-up program must have access to the technology necessary to complete assignments and communicate with teachers. Because the district has been in soft closure since early March, and during that time schools and teachers perfected use of technology for home-bound student work, it follows that our district will be postured to continue that successfully into the next school year. The schools, the school district and school employees have done a much-improved job of communicating irrespective of soft closure. Websites now include essential information for stakeholders as well as “good news” reports. The district newsletter has been a valuable source of timely information, and the use of social media in positive ways has increased awareness of what is taking place in our schools and school district. Schools and the district office have banners advertising their websites. Also, parents and students have access to the district APP with Aspire information. The district IT Department offers training on how to download and use the APP. During school soft closure, the district has transitioned from in-person meetings to online meetings for larger groups. Several meetings, however, were either canceled or postponed.

Accept student academic growth as the highest measurement of success: In the summer of 2016, the Administrative Team began working on the first Digital Teaching and Learning Grant for the Emery School District. While the grant involved extensive technology components, the team set academic goals to measure the success of the program and use of grant funding. The goals were as follows: 1) Over the life of the grant, the district will see a five percent increase in student proficiency as measured by annual state summative testing (SAGE, RISE). 2) Over the life of the grant, the district will realize 11th grade ACT scores at or above the state average. Over the four years of first grant, a lot of unexpected inhibitors occurred which stifled progress in some schools as well as the district overall. These include the compromised test data from 2018-19 (RISE), no test data in 2019-20 (school soft closure), and some district-level issues that include the transition of 6th graders to middle school and 9th graders to the high school for the 2017-18 school year. There was also widespread change in teaching assignments. With all that stated, the district and most schools managed to meet or exceed academic growth goals. Out of 30 school-level categories, the Emery District Schools met 14 while also improving in an additional three categories. Out of 16 district categories, the Emery District met 11 with two areas showing improvement. It is important to note that the data also identifies the areas of strength and weakness for schools as well as the district. The most effective way to deal with academic concerns is through the district PLC/Collaborative Team process which has also become an effective means of enhancing student educational needs. Going into the 2020-21 school year, elementary Collaborative Teams will have weekly embedded PLC time for collaboration. Secondary teams will add time through common prep periods. The district calendar will continue to provide PLC days at the end of each term, and the midterm minimum day for afternoon collaboration will also continue.



TEACHER OF THE YEAR: Above left– Superintendent Davis presents the Emery School District Teacher of the Year Award to Justin Thornley. Right– Mr. Thornley’s wife Tisha, also a teacher at EHS, joins her husband in celebration of the award.

Justin Thornley named Emery District Teacher of the Year

When Justin Thornley came to the Emery School District a dozen years ago, he was charged with upgrading the Emery High School ag science curriculum and taking the FFA Chapter to a first-class state organization. He has done that, and much more.

Because of his leadership, pedagogy, innovation, and all he has done for kids during his tenure at Emery High, Mr. Thornley was named the Emery School District’s Teacher of the Year last week. The announcement and presentation were made at Emery High on Thursday, May 14, with district office personnel and members of the EHS faculty and staff on hand.

Mr. Thornley currently teaches floriculture, animal science, ag science, and ag leadership while serving as the adviser to the Emery High FFA Chapter. He also is on the Emery High wrestling coaching staff.

Superintendent Davis made the presentation to Mr. Thornley and praised him for advancing the ag science curriculum at the school and building the FFA program to one that is elite statewide. The Emery Chapter has had state championships in recent years while participating in national competitions.

Superintendent Davis said that the Emery School Board has appreciated Mr. Thornley for bringing FFA members to board meetings for demonstrations and informal competitions involving milk and cheese. He also noted that the Emery FFA Chapter and ag science programs are serving as models for the advancement of a CTE Ag Science Pathway at Green River High School.

Mr. Thornley is also active in the Junior Livestock Show, working with the FFA students in preparing their animals for judging and auction each sum-

mer.

The proclamation letter from Superintendent Davis to Mr. Thornley announcing the award, begins, “In all the uncertainty of the world we are currently living in, it is gratifying to know that some of our most important traditions in the Emery School District are continuing, specifically, honoring our outstanding educators. For many years of dedicated service as an ag-science teacher, FFA adviser, and coach at Emery High School, you have been named the 2019-20 Emery School District Teacher of the Year.”

One of the nomination letters for Mr. Thornley, states, “In working with him, I saw love for our students and his willingness to put in extra time for the development of student knowledge... He loves his students.”

Employees, volunteer honored by Emery School District



CONGRATULATIONS: Above left, then clockwise– Tracy Rowley, with wife Shellet, accepts the Classified Employee of the Year Award for his work with the transportation department. Next– Bridgit Grimm celebrates with her family after being named the District Elementary Teacher of the Year. She teaches kindergarten at Cleveland Elementary. Next – Green River High School Principal Kayce Fluckey, left, pays tribute to Tawni Jensen, a math and music teacher at GRHS who has been named the District Secondary Teacher of the Year. Next, Superintendent Davis presents the District Volunteer of the Year Award to Misti Bastian who has provided support to both Book Cliff Elementary and Green River High School for several years. The award presentations were made on Thursday, May 14 at each school and job site. Selection of the award winners was made by the Emery District Administrative Team after review of nominations made by various stakeholders. The awards included a proclamation letter, gift basket, and plaque. It was noted in the presentations that the plaque is traditionally presented to recipients at a meeting of the Emery Board of Education. However, face-to-face board meetings are currently not being held, so the decision was made to include the plaques at the time of the award announcements.

District retiring employees



DISTRICT RETIREES: Three long-time employees in the Emery School District were honored last week by the district office Administrative Team. Receiving the traditional retirement clock with engraved recognition of their years of service were, above, left to right: Marilee Cox, chorus and theater accompanist at Emery High School; Diane Carter, language arts teacher who began her district career at San Rafael Jr. High before transferring to Emery High School; and Denise Chapman, shown with her husband Gregg. Denise taught for 42 years at Huntington Elementary.

Facilities Committee selects financial advisor

The work of the Emery School District Facilities Committee made a significant advancement last week with regard to finalizing construction plans and establishing pathways to bonding.

Committee Chairman and District Business Manager Jared Black announced Friday, May 15, that Zions Public Finance has been named the district's financial advisor through the bonding process. The announcement came after a Facilities Committee subcommittee evaluated proposals for the consultation contract. Chairman Black was joined on the subcommittee by Jackie

Allred, Kerry Lake, Yvonne Jensen, and Bryant Snow.

The subcommittee used specific criteria in selecting the financial advisor, including: experience as a financial advisor for Utah School Districts, in rural Utah areas, for Utah bond elections, and a demonstrated commitment to rural Utah.

The subcommittee also looked for individual experience of the organization's personnel assigned to the contract, including years of relevant experience and experience related to providing services to rural Utah and public education.

The subcommittee found that Zions Public Finance also made impressive presentations with respect to references from previous customers as well as advancing a proposal that provides all the pertinent and requested information by the school district.

The subcommittee also concluded that Zions Public Finance scored high in its cost proposal, meeting all categorical requirements listed by the district.

It is expected that representatives from Zions will meet with the full Facilities Committee in June.

Governor's order moves state from "Orange" to "Yellow"

On Friday, May 15, Gov. Gary Herbert made another significant announcement on the status of the state regarding COVID-19 restrictions. In an Executive Order, the governor has moved much of Utah to "Low Health Risk Status," or what is symbolized by the color "Yellow." The order became effective at 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, May 16.

In a press release on the order, it is noted that "while most counties in the state are transitioning to Yellow, the order clarifies that Grand County, Summit County and Wasatch County will remain in the Orange Health Risk Status."

In easing the restriction for most of the state, the governor consulted with local health departments and determined that Salt Lake City, West Valley City, and Magna Metro Township will also remain in "Orange" status.

Those areas of the state, including Emery County, that are in the "Yellow" status will be able to hold gatherings of up to 50 people in areas not controlled by a business or other entity. There will be more flexibility with respect to people leaving their homes to go into the public domain. Also, sports teams will be able to meet in person as long as players/participants are monitored for COVID-19 symptoms and spectators are held to social-



Governor Gary Herbert

distancing standards. However, UHSAA activities remain canceled for the school year.

Regarding the status change and its impact on the Emery School District, Superintendent Larry Davis said that plans for the final few days of the school year remain that same as announced the first of the month. The emphasis at this point, he said, is geared toward helping those students who have not received a passing grade (A,B,P) to get caught up. This could take place before the final day, May 22, or be taken into the summer or even into the next school year.



APPRECIATION: Above, left– Emery High Principal Steven Gordon presents Alayna Ewell, lead cook at the school, with the Emery High School Helping Hands Award for 2019-20. Above right, Alayna works with a school lunch/breakfast distribution team in getting meals out to district students. The award is an expression of appreciation from the school for volunteer work that goes beyond a job description.

Emery School District
Mission Statement:

“The mission of the Emery County School District is to provide a comprehensive education that will prepare students to take a proactive and responsible role in an ever-changing world.”

District Calendar



May 18: Green River High School Mobile Awards Program

May 19: Cottonwood 5th Grade Program, 5 pm... Huntington 5th Grade Program, 5 & 6 pm

May 20: Castle Dale 5th Grade Program, 1 pm

May 21: Huntington 1st Grade Program, 1 pm... Emery High Commencement, 6 pm... Green River High Commencement, 8 pm

May 22: Last day of school... District PLC Day

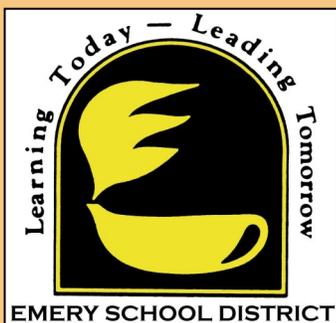
Note: All programs listed have met school, district, and health department requirements for social gatherings.

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District

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STICKY NOTES:



District Office Personnel and Work

Schedules: During school soft closure, hours for district office personnel will fluctuate and include some work hours from home. Regular office hours will be from 10 am to 2 pm Monday through Friday. These changes are in line with social distancing practices as well as safety for vulnerable populations (65+, pre-existing conditions, pregnancy, etc.) The public is encouraged to take care of business with the district by phone where possible rather than coming in person to the office. Someone will be in the office during regular business hours to answer the phone.

District Office Closure for Sanitation and Deep Cleaning:

The district office will be closed for cleaning beginning on Tuesday, May 26 and continuing through Monday, June 1. Office calls will be answered remotely and directed to the appropriate district employee. The public is encouraged to use email correspondence for matters that are not time-sensitive. The cleaning is necessary as part of the state's COVID-19 prevention program.