

Lisbon Superintendent of Schools' Annual Report
To the Board of Education
For 2019-2020



Submitted by:

Dr. Steven L. Johnson
Superintendent
July 14, 2020
School Board
2019-2020

Mark Qual, President	7354 134 th Ave SE Lisbon 683-2115 (Appointed 02-08-11)	06-21 Rural
Liz Anderson, Vice President	6937 140 th Ave Milnor 427-5883 (Elected 06-14-11)	06-20 Rural
Chad Johnson, Director	611 Lincoln St Lisbon 683-4647 (Elected 06-07-17)	06-20 City
Matt Webb, Director	1301 Webster St Lisbon 683-5274 (Elected 06-04-13)	06-19 City
Brenna Welton, Director	12547 HWY 27 W Lisbon 683-4319 (Appointed 9-9-15)	06-19 Rural
Lori Lyons, Business Manager	13543 69 th St SE Lisbon 683-5362 (hired 04-04-88)	

As we complete the 2019-2020 fiscal school year, it is time to highlight our accomplishments, needs, concerns, and future of the Lisbon Public Schools. Because of COVID-19 pandemic, I believe the 2019-2020 school year will go down as one of our most unusual years in the 135-year history of the Lisbon Public Schools. As I start my 28th year as Superintendent of Schools, I feel fortunate to having worked with such effective staff members, principals, supervisors, faculty, board members and students. This past year could not have been possible without their support and abilities. I realize that great students and great staff members make for great schools! This can only be accomplished through a collaborative effort that includes our school board, administrators, teachers, parents, students and community.

I believe my administrative style has allowed the school board to make objective, informed decisions when dealing with school policies, while at the same time; the integrity of the chain of command has remained intact. Please recognize that not all issues within a school are yielding. Never lose sight of our mission as a school, **"All students will learn, experience success and be good citizens."** We need to work with the people that we have been given and find solutions to problems by working together to resolve our issues. The 4 C's of education for the twenty-first Century are Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity and Collaboration. As we move our staff toward the "project based learning" method of instruction over the next few years with our middle school SmartLab®, more personalized learning, STEM and other professional development opportunities, I believe we will better prepare our students to the transition to the world of work and advanced training. This spring (March 15, 2020), we moved to complete distance-learning grades pk-12 as required by Governor's order. With the help of our staff, community and students, we completed the school year through distance-learning. Our staff, students and community allowed us to be as successful in meeting our mission as possible.

The following are areas that I feel should be highlighted over the course of the 2019-2020 school year:

- 1.) Our New Strategic Plan for the Lisbon Public School #19 2020-2025**
(reviewed by the school board on June 9, 2020) Mission Statement: "All students will learn, experience success and be good citizens." NDCC 15.1-07-26 requires that all public schools develop strategic plans that address the following four areas: 1. Academic and Extracurricular Programs, 2. Instructional and Administrative Staffing, 3. Facility Needs and Utilization, and 4. District Tax Levies. Our Three-and Five-Year plan is posted on our website at www.lisbonpublicschools.com
- 2.) Academic and Extracurricular Programs** – fall k-12 enrollment trends are shifting to stable instead of declining enrollments found over the past two years. Student enrollment must be monitored closely. I would suggest that we look at the “Smart Decline” research in providing the best opportunities we can for our students without overextending our resources. Focus on what we do best. Our students will need effective staff members with flexibility to provide course offerings to meet the demands of the 21st Century skills. Student interventions and remediation for students who need remedial coursework has remained at about the same at 5% of our students. Student assessment data indicates that although our students are higher than the state average in some areas, we are lower in others. Our ACT results are slipping below the national average. We are still ahead of the state Workkeys tests have a higher rate of seniors who qualify for the ND Merit Scholarship. Student services and success indicators like extracurricular activities, counseling programs, gifted and talented programs, early childhood education, library, and special education have a number of indicators for student success. Our student participation in junior high activities is good but we see trends of students dropping out of activities as they get into high school. Questions remain on curriculum to meet the 4 C’s of the 21st Century – Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking and Creativity. We have professional development to increase the project-based learning, innovative learning, SmartLab ®, student centered learning, social/emotional learning, choice ready, MTSS interventions, and meeting the technology needs of our students and staff. We must continually ask four critical questions about learning – 1. What is it we expect our students to learn? 2. How will we know when our students have learned it? 3. How will the staff respond when student have not learned? 4. How will the staff respond when our students already know it? We developed a rural partnership with VCSU, which offer more dual credit courses for our students at a lower cost while providing more advanced credit offering to our faculty to update their credentials.
- 3.) Instructional and Administrative Staffing** – Instructional and administrative staffing continues to be a concern. In order to fill positions, we must compete with the larger urban district for qualified staff members or with local private businesses. To take Lisbon School District to the next level, we must find ways to attract, retain, and educate staff members to Lisbon. We need staff

members, who have a shared mission, vision and values who will work in collaborative teams that will create continuous improvement for our schools and their classrooms. The quality of our education system cannot exceed the quality of our teachers. It may be best to look at those effective staff who work for us to move them into curricular areas that had better meet our needs through a grow your own program. We continue to look for teachers who are classroom ready, school ready and community ready. My hope is that with proper supports our new staff members will blossom and grow. We have also been working with VCSU on moving some of our current staff into classes to keep them approved to teach dual credit courses. Dual credit courses give our students, parents a value added high school experience, and lowers their expenses when they do attend college. Mr. Adair also worked with VCSU and added Intro to Teaching for our juniors/seniors as a dual credit course. We hope that we can get more high school students in becoming teachers. Like a successful farmer, we need a succession plan for our administration and school board. Educational leadership both administratively and on the school board is an important key of keeping our community strong. We need to keep our wage and benefit packages competitive with similar positions in other larger schools and the private sector. The essential question we need to discuss as a community is – “how do we work together to strengthen the recruitment, preparation, placement and retention of our outstanding rural teacher-leaders?”

- 4.) **Facilities needs and Utilization** – The Lisbon School will maintain the structures and the campus we have and budget enough money to keep it in good shape has been the goal of the school board since 2003. We will look for effective ways to complete current facility needs and maintenance of our facilities. Last year, the school district committed to a \$4.2 million capital project for the remodeling and additions for the elementary and middle schools. The project bid opening was on March 12. This multi-prime bidding project of general, mechanical and electrical came in about \$450,000 below projections. This cushion should give us plenty of home to meet the issues that may happen throughout the project and could help finance future projects on our priority list. We sold \$3 million of limited building bonds on May 12, 2020. We were very happy with the sale as we received a premium on the bonds at the very low interest rate of 1.95%. For the elementary, this project would create one main secure entry, additional classroom space, storage space, library space, administrative offices, and additional handicap entry on the northeast. For the middle school, this project would create one main secure entry (ADA Compliant), administrative offices, and small group meeting area, remodel existing office area, and update code requirements. The project schedule is proceeding on time with completion date for all but some minor outside issues to be August 17, 2020.
- 5.) **District Tax Levies** – Since I arrived in 1993 our average three high enrollments and our average three low enrollments for k-12 is about 150 fewer students. That is sizable! We need to be “Smart” with our enrollment to ensure our fund balances have enough money to meet our educational

goals for our students. In comparison to the state school districts, Lisbon School District is 49th out of 135 high school districts for total mill levy at 95.49. Most school districts do not have a building fund so if you take those 20 mills out we drop to 96th out of the 135 school districts. Our per pupil expenditures continues to increase at about the same rate as inflation. In the rank order of high school districts' our average cost per pupil is low. We only have five districts with a lower average cost per pupil. Our foundation payment per student will increase by another 2% next year. This year's 2% increase was the first increase we have seen in foundation payment per student for four years. Our taxable valuation has seen some growth especially in our agricultural production land, which is a majority of overall taxable valuation. The Lisbon Public Schools is currently in great financial conditions as long as we continue to live within our means we should be in good shape for the future.

The State of North Dakota will be facing many issues in k-12 education in the coming years such as declining enrollments in 45% of our rural districts; booming enrollments in the urban centers; wages to attract and retain teachers and other school employees; school buildings and housing in areas that are seeing the enrollment increases; reduction in federal funding of mandated programs like Title I; ESSA; Special Education; ever increasing cost of funding North Dakota's retirement systems TFFR and PERS, and healthcare. I worked hard working with the 66th Legislative Assembly and I look forward to the 67th Legislative Assembly, which will begin in January of 2021.

The 2019-2020 Budget year has put our district on track to meet our fiscal goals. The school district is currently as fiscally sound as it as been in recent years. As planned, our fund balances for working capital have increased within our goal of our strategic plan. The combination of our special reserve, general fund and building fund balances gives us a more workable reserve for our district. I will make recommendations for our 2020-2021 school budget during our next three meetings.

North Dakota demographics are changing drastically with increased population of the elderly and student enrollment shifts from the rural areas of our state to the larger urban centers. How will these changes affect the Lisbon Public School System? What are the characteristics of a community and school that survive these population shifts?

What am I the most proud of for the 2019-2020 school year? As of today, we have filling all teaching positions for the 2020-2021 school term. The building project including the remodel and additions to the elementary and the middle schools and the financing of the project. The Lisbon High School Football Team made it to the semi-finals of the Class A Eleven-Man tournament finishing the year with only one loss. Their success came after a number of losing seasons. The Lisbon High School Wrestling Team finished their season as State Individual

and Dual Team Champions. This was their 4th State Individual Championship in a row and their 2nd Dual Team Championship in a row. The SmartLab® Learning project that continues to grow, many successful grants written by staff including the Sources of Strength, improvements in our high school music department, The Village School-based mental health, Bronco News, Fine Arts committee, Lego Robotic League, scholarships, Place-based grant which will connect Parkside residents with 4th grade students on history of Lisbon winning the Long-term Care Association Volunteers of the Year. All of these projects came within budget using numerous funding sources without increasing local property taxes. I am also very proud of our students and staff for all the successes they have had over the 2019-2020 school year. In a sense, we get to celebrate those successes each month with our POP moments. I believe strongly in the value of our rural community and the role our school plays in our sense of community.

We are doing a great job of educating the youth of our district, at a reasonable cost. We must continue to work hard to keep the Lisbon Public School district one of the best systems in the State of North Dakota. The Lisbon District presents me with many rewards and challenges. As I start my 44th year as a North Dakota educator, I look forward to meeting the District's future needs. The terms and conditions of my contract expire on June 30, 2021. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at the office.