



The Bluebird

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School Boards, Consolidation and Unification: The Establishment of USD 411

School board members are the unsung heroes in communities throughout the country. They establish the vision and goals for the public schools in their district, and they set standards for the performance of schools and superintendents. School board members must be registered voters in the school district and cannot be an employee of the board on which they are a member.

Currently, the Goessel USD 411 school board consists of seven locally-elected members. But it hasn't always been this way. In 1926, the Goessel Preparatory School closed and Goessel Rural High opened. With this change, a board of directors, consisting of three members was established for the new Goessel Rural High School. Individuals who served on the first board of directors were Abraham Schmidt, Isaac Fast, and H. J. Loewen.

In 1959 country schools throughout the community were encouraged to consolidate and form one district, Goessel Elementary School. After the consolidation took place the two entities continued to have their own board of directors. The individuals who served on the board of directors for the elementary school were Roland Krause, Richard Banman, and John W. Frey. This arrangement stayed in place until the state passed bill No. 377 in 1963. With the passing of bill No. 377 all districts were to establish unified school districts. The bill indicated each district must have 400 eligible students enrolled, in grades one through twelve. This meant that Goessel could no longer operate under the title of Goessel Rural High School and Goessel Grade School.

In 1963, a study group was formed that explored the possibility and feasibility of forming a district with Moundridge and Hesston. The proposed plan allowed each of the three towns to have their own elementary school and junior high, with a centrally located senior high school between the three towns. An alternative was to become part of the Hillsboro district. The Goessel Gazette, published in November 14, 1963, stated that Goessel voted in favor, Moundridge voted against the idea, and Hesston failed to vote.

Goessel began to look for other options. After some research it was determined that Goessel could file a request with the state for the unification of the Goessel Rural High School District, Goessel Grade School District and the fringe areas surrounding Goessel.

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School Board and Consolidation— Continued

A meeting to inform the patrons was called. A straw vote was taken, resulting in a 55 to 11 vote in favor. They also planned to divide the district into three areas with two members coming from each area. This would create a six member school board elected by the entire district with a seventh person appointed as treasurer.

On December 26, 1964, an application was filed with the State Department of Education, including a list of 405 eligible student names. A decision from the state needed to be made before February 22, so board member candidates would have the opportunity to file for office. The school was notified on February 15 that the application had been approved.

On June 3, 1965, thirty-seven patrons attended the last annual meeting of the Goessel Rural High School. The board at the time consisted of Ernest Goertz, T. P. Nikkel, and Jacob Koehn. The Goessel Elementary School Board met for the last time on June 4, 1965 with eighteen patrons in attendance. Board members were Arnold Voth, Randolph A. Schmidt, and John Frey. Both of these boards were dissolved, but the six members from both boards served in an interim position until the school board election was held. Plans were made for the attendance area to be divided into three districts, with two school board members representing each district. In December the six member interim board met and officially hired W. O. Schmidt as superintendent, Ray Frey as assistant superintendent, Elsie Schmidt as secretary, and Viola Ratzlaff as treasurer. After the election in April, Herbert P. Franz, Harvey Schmidt, Ernest Goertz, John H. Reimer, T. P. Nikkel, and Arnold Voth were voted in as board members. This group began serving on July 1, 1966 and were responsible for Goessel Elementary School, Goessel High School, and Sunrise School.



Raymond Frey, Asst. Superintendent; T. P. Nikkel; Herbert P. Franz; Mrs. Wilber Ratzlaff, Treasurer; Harvey Schmidt, Vice-Pres-

ident; Ernest A. Goertz, President; Mrs. Wesley D. Voth, Clerk; John H. Reimer; Arnold H. Voth; W. O. Schmidt, Superintendent.



Scott Boden, High School Principal, Sara Hiebert, Bryant Miller, Patrick Flaming, Leslie Duerksen, Treasurer, Ben Schrag, Vice President, Kelly Booton, President, Joni Smith, Clerk, Kyle Funk, Maynard Knepp, Mark Crawford, Grade School Principal and Superintendent .

The board continued to operate as a six member board, with a secretary and treasurer until the 1969-1970 school year. At this point district 7, an at large position was established. The secretary position was retitled clerk of the board. The dynamics of the board has remained the same since then.

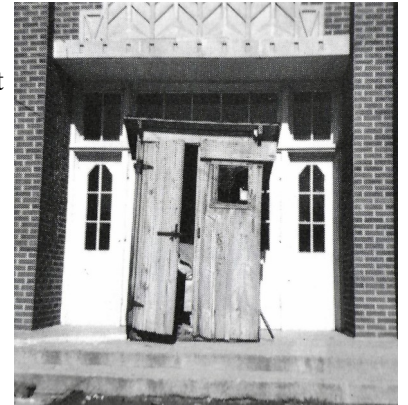
Pranks: A Rite of Passage

The word prank is defined as a practical joke or mischievous act. It seems as though pranks have been a part of Goessel High School since the very beginning. Through the years individuals have shared some of the pranks they played while in high school.

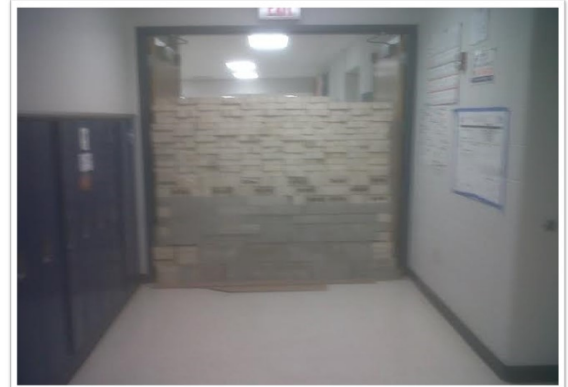
After the new high school building was built, the Preparatory School building remained as a shop classroom. Many pranks were played in that building. Dan Bergen, class of 1964, remembered when some students nailed a fellow student into a hope chest and then forgot about him until 7th hour.

In the early years of the high school, outhouses were often used as pranks. It wasn't all that unusual to be greeted by an outhouse on the steps of the high school or on some other area of the high school grounds.

Many of you may remember the southwest corner room of the original high school. At one time, around the mid to late 1940's it was used as a science room. It was equipped with goose neck type faucets and lever water handles. One hour before class started some boys hooked up rubber tubing to the faucets and rigged them to fit over the door. They were planning to hose the teacher. When the door opened, they flipped on the faucets, and to their surprise it wasn't the teacher that walked through the door, but Prof. Schmidt.



Sometimes teachers would come to class, and find their classroom door blocked by chairs and desks. In 2011 seniors kept it interesting and blocked off the entrance to the main hallway in the high school.



While the town was asleep they spent the night hauling in brick and cement blocks. Administration and students were greeted the next morning with a partial wall.



At the end of the 2023 school year, the seniors decided it would be fun to block off all of the entrances to the high school. Some were blocked with trucks, others had picnic tables stacked in front of them. At some entrances, as teachers or students tried to enter, seniors were positioned on the roof above the door and dispersed water balloons.

Generally, the pranks students have pulled haven't been destructive and administration usually goes along with the fun, knowing it is a rite of passage as students pass through the school system.

Baseball and Softball

There was a time when baseball and softball were played as a competitive sport at Goessel High School. The Goessel Rural High School Report indicates there was a team as early as the 1926-1927 school year.

The 1929 Bluebird Annual states that some sort of fall sport should be played because the sudden change from muscular activities to quiet study could cause physical difficulties if not properly watched. With this thought, the school became part of the North Marion County Baseball League for the first time. As a result they played six games in fall and four in spring. The results were not that encouraging, but the players didn't give up and progress was noticeable.



Baseball, and or softball was offered periodically throughout the next few years. As the boys became better, more thought was given to uniforms. In 1948 the team wore a shirt with the mascot, the Bluebird, pictured on the front.

1957 was the first year Goessel played baseball. It was also the first year, the team was able to purchase uniform shirts with the word Goessel across the front of the shirt. By 1963 community members were interested in pursuing football. After much discussion between community members and the school board it was decided that the last year of organized softball would be 1963. The next year football was introduced as a regulation sport for Goessel High School.

This summer a complete softball uniform was donated to the Etc. Shop in Newton, Kansas. The uniform was placed on the silent auction. Because of donations the alumni association has received from alumni, I was able to purchase the uniform and bring it back to the high school.

Individuals and classes often ask if they can donate to the alumni association. The answer is yes. There have been several classes who have gathered money when they had class reunions and have made a donation. The donations are used in a variety of ways. They have been used to purchase specialty drinks from Lincoln Perk at Bethesda Home for the staff on in-service days. Honorariums have been paid when alumni have come back and participated in the Alumni Partnership Day. Storage boxes, folders, files, really any type of archival storage containers have been purchased with donations.



Goessel High School will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2026. Funds will be needed for this special event. If your graduating class would like to donate funds to the alumni office, feel free to contact me. I am also usually available for tours of the high school if that is something your class chooses to do.

USD 411 is an outstanding educational institution. Students are expected to work hard, persevere and do well, plus develop integrity to do the right thing. It is these qualities that enable students to become successful individuals who not only represent the Goessel High School but also the Goessel community. Contact me if you would like to support the Goessel Alumni Association.