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Reporter: Shay Burk

Clay Center school merger moves forward

Plans to merge Sandy Creek Public Schools with Clay Center Public School are moving forward after two unanimous votes Monday.

At its monthly meeting, the Sandy Creek Board of Education voted 6-0 to pursue talks about the proposed unification of the two schools.

In the same meeting the 12-member South Central Nebraska Unified School District No. 5 board also voted in favor of moving forward with talks of unification. The unified board is made up of members from both the Sandy Creek and Lawrence-Nelson schools.

With a unanimous vote from all three boards, Clay Center Superintendent Lee Sayer said this morning the next step will be for the school boards to hold a formal meeting together for the first time.

“One of the important things we want is to make sure the board members know each other,” Sayer said.

Then it will be time for the boards to start nailing down the details of the merger. Sandy Creek Superintendent Kent Miller said.

During Monday’s meeting of the South Central Unified board, there was also a public hearing to discuss the idea of possibly co-oping more of the athletic programs between Sandy Creek and Lawrence-Nelson.

Miller said there is already a cooperative arrangement between the two schools for cross country and wrestling programs on the high school level, while all junior high programs are shared.

He said the next step is to address concerns with the declining population on the Lawrence-Nelson football team.

By the 2010-11 school year, Miller said the school will need to make a decision about the options to stay as an eight-man team, decrease to a six-man team or join with Sandy Creek’s 11-man team.

“Many schools across the state are having these discussions because of declining numbers in rural areas,” Miller said.

Monday’s discussion touched on other sports, as well, because as Miller said, once the door is opened other areas are also looked at.

No decisions about the football team or other programs have been made. Miller said Monday’s discussion was simply a chance for the patrons to share their opinions on the issue.

