



Experiments, animals and more at SFT Family Science Night

Like many Santa Fe Trail families, Julie Smith and her children love to do science experiments, but they don't always have the resources or time for them.

Luckily for the Smiths and others, the district will provide everything they need and more at its annual Family Science Night from 6-8 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 7, at SFT High School. (A previous message listed the start time as 6:30 p.m.)

"My kids love doing experiments, but I rarely have the energy to research finding one that is age appropriate for three kids, ages 4 to 9 years, gathering materials, and making it happen," Smith said. "The awesome Science Night team does all the work for me. The experiments are tailored for each grade level. If you've never attended this fun event, I (and my kids) would highly recommend it!"

For more than 10 years, the district has hosted this event as a way to bring students and their families together to engage in fun, hands-on activities with a science and problem-solving theme, said Shelly Robinson, SFT High School science teacher, who helps coordinate the event every year.

"Children are naturally curious and that is what science is all about, using your inquisitive nature to explore an area of interest," she said. "During the event, the idea is to have parents and their children work on these activities together, however, high school students are there to assist with any questions that may arise."

As in previous years, this year's event will include science activities designed specifically for pre-kindergarten-second, third-fifth and sixth-eighth, as well as the opportunity to view and learn about a variety of animals. Families also can enjoy the special "FIRE and ICE" program at 7 p.m.

"I thought working Family Science Night was a great experience because it was cool to see the connection between parents and their kids and see the kids' faces, when they did the experiment



SFT High School students discover how different water levels in empty soda bottles can create high and low "music" (or sounds).

correctly," said SFT High School Junior Kaelyn Watkins, who helped with the event last year.

Her classmate, Marrit Mead, added: "I enjoy Family Science Night a lot because it is very entertaining to watch the kids bond with their parents/guardians through science."

Additionally, to make the night easier for families, the PTO will be selling a pizza and salad dinner. More information will be available soon regarding the cost of this meal.

"I love seeing all the families exploring, learning and having a great time together," said Nicole Mitchell, fifth-grade teacher, Carbondale Attendance Center. "My students come to school the next day sharing about the experiments they did, the animals they saw and about the amazing prizes they won!"

Thanks to all the organizations who have made sizable donations over the years – including FAST LANE, the SFT PTO and most recently the Carbondale Masonic Lodge – the district will be able to continue the event this year and beyond.



A message from the Superintendent



There is a perception in education that school administrators rarely enter teachers' classrooms, unless they are conducting formal evaluations.

This is not the case in the Santa Fe Trail School District. In fact, since the start of the school year, building administrators have been visiting several classrooms for a new and different purpose.

While formal evaluations typically only take place a few times a year and do not give administrators a true picture of the classroom, teacher and students, these special visits are brief and are intended to give them a better overall perspective of what goes on in their schools.

During these visits, the building administrators are using eWalkThrough®, a new technology tool that allows them to observe the class and then provide immediate feedback via email. These observables include, but are not limited to, proximity of the teacher, use of technology, duties of support staff, engagement of students, interactions between students and teacher, and much more. Once the feedback has been shared with the teachers, they are free to have further communication, if needed.

With these frequent observations, building administrators will collect more credible data to help support teachers and students, and the overall building climate. They also will be able to gauge the areas of success and those areas that need improvement within the building.

Additionally, once a month, all district administrators meet in one building and do walk-throughs to observe firsthand the practices and activities taking place in the different buildings of the school district.

In just a few short weeks, our administrators have conducted more than 300 classroom walk-throughs in the district, and not just at their buildings – and will continue to do so for the remainder of the school year.

We hope this new observation strategy will continue to make the district a success for its staff and students.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Pegram". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue background.

Dr. Steve Pegram
Superintendent of Schools

New club encourages responsibility, leadership

This year, several Santa Fe Trail seventh- and eighth-graders are getting an early start on fulfilling their civic duties through a new school club – the Kansas Association for Youth (KAY) club.

KAY is a character-building, leadership-training, service program, which is directed by the Kansas State High School Activities Association. The club teaches students how to assume their citizenship responsibilities by organizing programs, projects and parties, which emphasize four service areas – school, community, nation and the world.

“We are super excited to have KAY at the junior-high level this school year,” said Alicia Amborski, KAY sponsor for SFT Junior High.

“KAY supports all that we are trying to teach in regards to soft skills, leadership and serving our community. Thus, it is a great entity to our school. Learning these skills early on in life will ensure students are set up for connections at the high school setting and later.”

To prepare for the new club, Amborski sought guidance

Continued on the back cover.

Say hello to XELLO

New technology helps students meet IPS goals

All too often high school students get asked, “What are your plans after graduation?” And all too often, many students really don’t have an answer.

To help, in 2014, the Kansas State Department of Education approved the Individual Plan of Study (IPS) program. This initiative assists students in grades 8-12 develop a life plan to better navigate through high school and into college and careers.

Santa Fe Trail is in year three of IPS implementation and began this process with student-led conferences, course planners, and career exploration.

“It is important students set goals and create a road map for postsecondary success, said Faith Flory, SFT School District curriculum director.

Each Individual plan of study is unique but will include the following:

- **Strength Finders and Career Interest Inventory** results that are surveyed each year.
- **Course Planners** to help students choose courses based on career interests.
- **Postsecondary Plans** focused on workforce, military, certification programs, 2- and 4-year colleges, and other avenues that fit a student’s life goals.
- **Electronic Portfolio** for college and career application and sharing.
- **K-12 Career Guidance Curriculum** to aid the IPS process with career exposure, curriculum development, and resources to support all grade levels.

To assist in the IPS process, this year, the district has added a new technology tool called XELLO. The tool helps students meet the goals of IPS through discovery assessments and reflection on careers, learning styles, and strengths, as well as manages a digital portfolio to store and manage goal setting, programs, schooling, and experiences.

“As students gain self-knowledge through Xello’s visual road map, they can update and share this knowledge as needed,” said Flory. “Xello allows IPS to grow with our students, as they move through our school district.”

Santa Fe Trail looks forward to giving students more opportunities to be more prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce.

While SFT High School students are familiar with the IPS initiative, they are new to working in Xello, which shows them a visual road map to their futures.



Upcoming Events

Oct. 24: Charger Day, SFT High School

Nov 1: No School, District Professional Development

Nov 2: No School, Teacher Parent/Teacher Release Day

Nov 5-9: KSHSAA High School Buffer Week

Nov 6: KAY Blood Drive, SFT High School

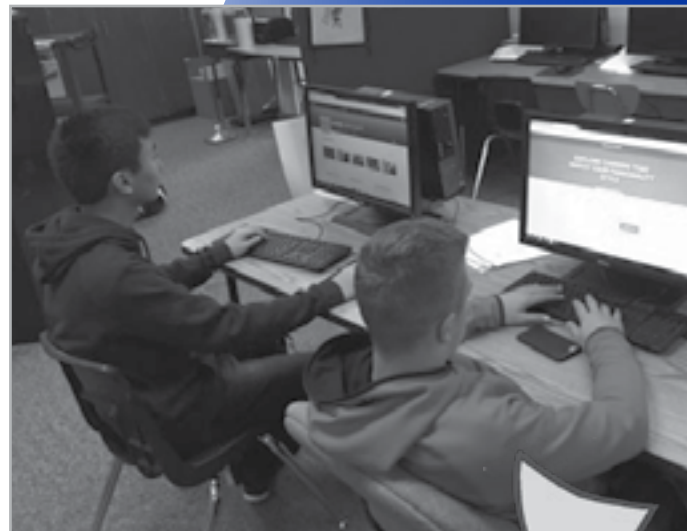
Nov 7: Science Night, SFT High School

Nov 8-11: SFT High School Musical

Nov 12: First Day of Winter Sports Practice

Nov 12: KAY Regional Conference

Nov 14: Charger Day, SFT High School



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In an effort to keep the community informed, the *Charger Connection* goes to every home in the Santa Fe Trail School District, even those without students in our schools. Thank you for your support of your community's schools!

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Our mission is to support individual student needs in preparation for successful lifework.

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from Mary Burgett, long-time sponsor of the SFT High School's KAY club. Additionally, earlier this year, Burgett and she attended a conference with other KAY sponsors from around the state.

While the Junior High club is still in the beginning stages, 23 students have already joined and the club officers will be elected early this month. And throughout the year, KAY members will attend regional conferences, leadership camps, and organize various events and activities.

"It is our hope to be able to fuse our talents in a few service-oriented events," Amborski said. "Please support our students as they strive to do service projects and become leaders in our community."



Alicia Amborski (far left), SFT Junior High KAY sponsor, and Mary Burgett (middle), SFT High School sponsor, work with other KAY sponsors at a state conference.

