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For immediate release

Contact Kristen Martinez, Director of Public Relations, 441-2000

USD 470 loses funding for afterschool program

Amidst budget cuts, USD 470 has been dealt another blow toward funding and cutting programs. The grant funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Center project, commonly known as Learning Lighthouse, will not be available this school year.

Over the past three years, Learning Lighthouse has provided opportunity for afterschool and summer school programs for all district students in grades K-8. Grant funds totaling more than \$500,000 per year have provided students educational opportunities beyond the regular classroom. Without this grant, the Learning Lighthouse afterschool program will no longer be available. Summer school 2005 will be funded through General Funds with the scope of the program trimmed considerably.

Loss of the Learning Lighthouse program will affect the academic opportunities of more than 500 students annually. Since the beginning of the program, summer 2001, Learning Lighthouse has become a source of academic enrichment to hundreds of USD 470 students. Many opportunities were offered to students who would not otherwise been able to experience them.

Students have had the opportunity to get help with their homework on a daily basis. They have experienced enriching academic activities in math, reading, science and social studies. Students have learned about their own special skills and talents, how to work with others, and how to make good life choices. Interest groups allowed middle school students to experience learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

Learning Lighthouse has provided new innovative programs for students. The Success Maker program, also called NCL Learn, was primarily provided by Learning Lighthouse. It was initially used in the afterschool program as a self-paced, technology-based, tutorial program. Its success and proven impact on student achievement quickly resulted in districtwide implementation in the elementary and middle schools. Use of those programs will continue in the regular classroom.

The 21st Century Community Learning Center grant program will continue at the federal and state level. Funding from the federal government to Kansas determines the number of grants that can be awarded.

Competition for the grant funds was high. Forty-four schools and community-based organizations presented requests to the Kansas State Department of Education. Funding only allowed six grants to be awarded.

“We won’t give up; we’ll apply again next year,” Aaron Wise, Learning Lighthouse director, said.

“The end of the Learning Lighthouse program, due to not receiving grant money, is a huge loss to students, parents and the district,” Superintendent Dr. Perry L. Perkins said. “This program served many needs, including helping students improve their academic achievement. The district does not have the funds to replace the grant money that has been lost.”