



THE CHARGER

District hires new staff; existing staff take on new roles

FULLER TO TEACH SPECIAL EDUCATION, COACH BASEBALL

Eli McDaniel | **Social media editor**

New WHS special education teacher Lance Fuller is already playing many roles in the district.

In addition to teaching, he is the head baseball coach and assistant junior high football coach.



Fuller

Fuller, who grew up in Ottawa, attended Kansas City Kansas Community College for two years, Barton Community College for one year and got his Undergraduate at Fort Hays State University.

During his years at KCK, he played baseball for 1 year (Outfield). He decided he wanted coach when he was still in high school and knew he wanted to be “involved in sports.”

He spent a few years looking for a P.E. job, and during that time he was hired as a Para. It was during his time as a para that he realized he wanted to teach in the special needs program.

Fuller is entering his eighth year of teaching, coaching baseball each of those eight years. He taught for three years at Pratt, three years in Ottawa

and one in El Dorado.

When he isn't teaching he spends his time with his family, and during the winter season he officiates basketball.

AMER ADDS COUNSELING POSITION

AJ Grutsch | **Podcast editor**

After working as the WHS Spanish Teacher for two and a half years, David Amer is adding another role in the district this year.

Amer is now also a mental health liaison for WHS through Crosswinds, an organization focused on giving therapy to those who need it within the school run by the Kansas Department of Education.

This program is not just for the students of WHS but rather the entire district, including Maple Hill and Alma Elementary and Paxico Junior High. “I hope to help all of our lovely students,” Amer said.

Amer will be the “intake” for students looking to improve their mental health, meaning that he will be the first person the students talk to and decide which students should seek further help. “We pull you in to talk, see what's going on, and find out what level of help you need,” Amer said.

Different levels of help could range from talking with the school counselor, Mr. Sullivan,

STAFF ADDITIONS/CHANGES

- Kevin Sullivan - WHS Counselor
- Kristin Berroth - WHS Library / Media Tech
- Jessica Imthurn - Athletic Secretary (Former Secretary at WJH)
- Jeron Weisshaar - WHS/JH activities director (Formerly just WHS)
- Diane Breiner - FCS Teacher
- Miriam Barton - Assistant cheer/ pep club sponsor
- Jordan Dunn - PRE K - 8th counselor, head cheer coach / pep club sponsor
- David Amer - District Mental Health Liaison (still WHS Spanish)
- Jamie Rodgers - WHS Guitar teacher (new class)
- Shannon Leitsch - AES SPED Teacher

- Charmin Miller - Covid Coordinator
- Brandi Stanley - AES Secretary
- Hillary Lowery - Elementary PE Teacher, Asst. JH Volleyball Coach, Head JH Track
- Jennifer Eastman - JH Secretary
- Krista Talley - JH Library/Media Tech
- Emily Gehrt - AES 4 th Grade
- Michelle Gehrt - Transportation Secretary
- Chloe Smith - JH Math Teacher, Head JH Volleyball Coach
- Amy Dunbar - Head Wrestling Coach
- Tyler Douglass - Asst. Wrestling Coach
- Kylee Sopoci - MHE Librarian/ Media Tech
- Gary Blanton - Maintenance Director

or speaking with an employee of Crosswinds, like school based case manager Melissa Watson. This is all in an effort to simplify therapy and make connections from students to mental health professionals from inside the school. “Anyone can come see me, not just for crosswinds but any student that has something to say, be it good, bad, or ugly. My door is always open and I usually have snacks,” Watson said.

Amer said he is enthusiastic to take on the new role. “I feel excited for this new opportunity and fortunate that I still get

to work with our students.”

Amer is still teaching Spanish as well, although his course load was reduced to two periods.

Amer also wants students to be aware that they are free to stop by his office for a chat or tour of his new room, which is located across the hall from his Spanish classroom. “Don't be a stranger,” Amer said.

DISTRICT HIRES COVID COORDINATOR

Justin Carlson | **opinion editor**

USD 329 has a new face

this year with the addition of Charmin Miller to the staff as Covid Coordinator. Her duties this year as Covid Coordinator are to educate the students and staff on covid safety guidelines and to oversee testing of those who have been exposed to the virus.

This year WHS has been able to relax covid policies due to availability of vaccines and covid consent forms which allow for easier access to testing and results for students. One such result of the relaxed policies is the option to wear a mask in class.

The majority of students have opted out of masking so far, although some have been asked to mask up again if they have had contact with someone who has tested positive. “Those that are wearing masks don't have to be quarantined or anything if they have had the shot,” Miller said.

Although the actual mandates regarding covid are introduced and enforced by the health department and Governor Kelly, Miller is in charge of interpreting and putting the policies into action here at Wabaunsee.

Students and Parents are urged to reach out and ask any questions they may have at camiller@usd329.com or to contact the district office.

Editorial | Charger staff responds to administrative review policy

As the school year begins, the Charger staff is excited to resume its work covering the stories and opinions of WHS students.

But before we begin, we'd like to make our goals for the year clear and address some issues we face as student journalists.

First of all, our mission statement:

“The mission of the Charger newspaper and related media is to inform the students and school community about relevant issues in a fair, accurate and timely manner, to advocate for all students and serve as an open forum for student free speech.”

That's probably a broader mission than some people have in mind for a student publication. We've encountered readers who believe our publication should only highlight the good things happening at Wabaunsee High School. While that's part of our goal, the Charger's goal is journalism, not public relations. Stories that affect students, staff, and the school community deserve our attention — whether on or off of school grounds.

The Charger operates under the guidelines of the Kansas Student Publications Act, meaning students produce the content and make editorial decisions. That freedom comes with a lot of responsibility,

The editorial is the opinion of the Charger staff. Send letters to the editor to whscharger@gmail.com.

ity, but that's what makes the Charger valuable as an educational tool. We get real experience making

real journalism that affects our community.

At the beginning of the school year, administrators presented an action plan to adviser Brendan Praeger that affects the Charger. Here are the relevant pieces of the plan:

“All written publications must be submitted to administration at least two school days prior to publication and must be appropriate for secondary school readership.”

“Communicate regularly with administration regarding all stories at least 2 school days prior to publication and/or broadcast. This would include proposed outlines of topics and questioning/guests/hosts planned for the podcast.

Absolutely no school publications, newspaper issues or school broadcasts may happen outside the student's regular school year (August 17, 2021 - May 18, 2022).”

Even though we don't like it, we recognize that nothing in these guidelines is illegal. The Kansas Student Publications Act allows schools to review publications, although there are strict guidelines when it comes to restraining student speech. The act also gives schools the right to dictate the

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window for publication.

Here are relevant passages from that law:

“The liberty of the press in student publications shall be protected. School employees may regulate the number, length, frequency, distribution and format of student publications. Material shall not be suppressed solely because it involves political or controversial subject matter.”

“Review of material prepared for student publications and encouragement of the expression of such material in a manner that is consistent with high standards of English and journalism shall not be deemed to be or construed as a restraint on publication of the material or an abridgment of the right to freedom of expression in student publications.”

So, while it's all legal, it still makes us uneasy.

Limiting our publication dates means we can't cover things that happen outside of the school year, but life for high school students doesn't stop in mid-May. State competitions, board meetings and staff changes all happen during the summer, as well as all the interesting things our

students do. School clubs and activities aren't forced to shut down when school ends — in addition to our packed weight room, you can ask FCCLA and KAY students, among many others, whether they stop when the last bell rings.

We're concerned that the two-day review period may make it difficult to cover some things in a timely manner, especially with our Tuesday morning deadline to publish the paper in the Wabaunsee Signal-Enterprise. For instance, school board meetings happen on Monday evenings, does that mean we can't cover them for a week?

Our administrators have communicated to our adviser that they intend to be reasonable for stories that require flexibility, and if that's the case, we'll work to continue creating good journalism under the new guidelines.

In a letter of support sent to school administrators earlier this month, Kansas Scholastic Press Association director Eric Thomas wrote “Public school employees — including superintendents, principals

and teachers — are agents of the government. While it is an educator's job to encourage responsible and thoughtful journalism, the law makes clear that it is not the government's job to censor its students' lawful speech. The Kansas law is an important part of upholding the students' rights.”

While the action plan does make it clear that our work “must be appropriate for secondary school readership,” it does not indicate that the intent of reviewing our stories is to censor or restrain our content. If that changes, we intend to use whatever tools we have to advocate for our freedom of press.

With that said, the Charger is intended to represent all students, not just our small staff, so we invite students, staff and community members to interact with our coverage as much as possible. Letters to the editor, story ideas, guest writers and feedback on our work — both positive and constructive — is always welcome.

You can find our paper every week in the Signal-Enterprise, with additional coverage on our website, whscharger.com. Our podcast, Senioritis, is available through our website and other podcast services.

We post links to stories, photos and breaking news to Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, all under [whscharger](http://whscharger.com).