

‘Westview Ready’ gets boost with nearly \$55K in grants

By SHEILA SELMAN | Jan 26, 2017

Westview School Corporation is one step closer to being “Westview Ready” with the recent award of almost \$55,000 in the form of two competitive grants.

These grants — \$25,000 from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development and \$29,467 from Lilly Endowment Inc. — will fund program planning initiatives.

Michelle Grewe, director of curriculum for the school corporation, explained that the funds will be used to pay for meetings of the Westview Ready advisory committee of parents, staff, business representatives and community representatives. The group will identify future education programming goals for students who are not college bound and how Westview will accomplish that.

The grants will cover the cost of those meetings and the development of those programs, Grewe said.

Plus, it will pay for advisory board members to travel to other schools, who have already implemented similar curricula. Advisory board members can hear what has and has not worked, and how those schools blend the state requirements with what the community says it wants.

Westview faces a special challenge in this area, Grewe explained. Not only are educators preparing students to graduate from 12th grade, but they are also serving Amish students, who graduate in the eighth grade.

Grewe said, “Forty-nine percent of our eighth-graders are Amish, so they are finishing their formal education this spring.” Westview, she added, has to have adequate plans to transfer them into the workforce, as well as its 12th-graders.

Although Westview’s educators watch to make sure every student meets every graduation

requirement, Grewe said, she’s not sure the school is doing justice to students who will go into the workforce instead of college.

“That gap right there,” she said, is the purpose of Westview Ready.

Grewe said educators know what the state wants them to teach to the students. But what the advisory committee would like to learn is what should Westview be offering beyond the 3 Rs to help students transition into the workforce.

The advisory committee will bring business representatives to the table to give their input on what they would like to see improve in students’ educations. “We want to pair and work with them to adjust those needs,” Grewe said.

Although it’s not documented in any way, she said it’s surmised that 50 percent of Westview

graduates will only go to one year of college.

“The state has pushed us to prepare for college,” Grewe said, but she doesn’t believe the state has provided adequate programming for students who are not college-bound.

“We have a wonderful program,” she pointed out. But this issue needs to be addressed so Westview can “do everything we can to help them bridge that transition.”

Wednesday night was the first advisory committee. “From there we hope to identify leaders in certain areas kind of thread from and come up with subgroup,” Grewe said. “Businesses will be a huge one.”

Representatives from LaGrange County Economic Development Corp. and the Department of Workforce

Development are teaming with the committee.

Grewe said their involvement is important because it “adds validity and strength because of their contacts that already exist with the businesses.”

“We want to make it a winning situation for the students, a winning situation for the employers and for the community at large,” she said.

Implementation will be gradual as programs are developed.

“It will be interesting to see where it all goes,” she said.

About the grants

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development awarded \$25,000 to the corporation to address the employability skills gap through the development and adoption of community

and employer-recognized work ethic programs.

Westview was one of 18 recipients from the 42 grant applications representing 132 school corporations from across the state.

Westview also received a planning grant of \$29,467 under Lilly Endowment Inc.’s Comprehensive Counseling Initiative for Indiana K-12 Students.

The aim of the Counseling Initiative is to increase the number of kindergarten through 12th grade students in Indiana public school corporations and charter schools who are emotionally healthy, realize academic success, graduate from high school, obtain valuable postsecondary credentials, certifications and degrees necessary for meaningful employment and are prepared to compete and prosper in the global society in which they will live and work.