

**To:** USD 253 Staff  
**From:** M. Theresa Davidson, Superintendent;  
Elena Lincoln, Executive Director, Special Services & FHSEC  
**Date:** June 24, 2015  
**Re:** Administrative Changes for USD 253 & Flint Hills Special Education Cooperative

We want to inform you about yet another important change that will affect our schools and the FHSEC in the coming school year.

As you know, the legislature has continued to grapple with the issues surrounding state finance and the funding that will support our schools. As a result, our district, like so many others, is forced to look for “efficiency” in every decision.

Several years ago, the FHSEC reorganized administrative leadership to provide more direct and timely support to participating districts in the form of on-site special education coordinators. We recognized that this position would likely be a “training ground” for new directors around the state. We have, in just this past week, experienced two such departures with Tonya Barnes and Charla Heddin.

As soon as their resignations were submitted, feedback from district leaders at Hamilton/Madison and Chase County confirmed that the coordinator position is critical to outlying districts as an essential element in the FHSEC system of supports. These districts, like most small Kansas school districts, are sorely stretched to manage increasing demands with limited administrative resources. It became clear that if any district could redistribute resources to manage the loss of a coordinator, it would be Emporia.

So, we have asked Monica Duncan to fill the vacancy of Special Education District Coordinator for the Hamilton and Madison School Districts. The Chase County district coordinator position has been posted so that we can begin the search for qualified candidates. In the meantime, we will continue to explore additional options to manage the coordinator responsibilities in the event a viable candidate with SPED experience and administrative licensure cannot be secured at this late date.

Monica Duncan has served Emporia Schools as Special Education Coordinator for the past four years. We believe that she has proven knowledge and skills that will best address the leadership needs of students and teachers serving in those outlying districts. Monica will continue to provide support on FHSEC special topics like co-teaching as needed across the cooperative and in Emporia.

To serve the needs in Emporia, teachers and support staff will report directly to building principals for day-to-day questions and support. Vicki Schweinler, Executive Director of Elementary Schools; Kristen Kuhlmann, Executive Director of Secondary Schools; Elena Lincoln, Executive Director of Special Services; as well as Ryan Karjala, Director of Assessment and Accountability, will provide support to building principals based on the particular area of need.

Clearly, the work in Emporia has not gone away and will need to be picked up by others in our district. However, we believe these changes also bring with them the opportunity to

further integrate the services of special and general education. We fully understand the magnitude of this decision and the emotional difficulty that comes with significant change for our teachers, principals, and support staff.

It is with the best interest of our district and the FHSEC in mind that we make this request of our district administrators, our principals and of all staff members impacted by the change in services. We have great confidence in the resilience our staff will demonstrate in assuring a transition that, in the end, serves our students who will experience their own unique brand of change. We ask for your support for a successful transition to these new roles within the FHSEC and new system of supports in our district.

Theresa Davidson  
Superintendent

Elena Lincoln  
Executive Director of Special Services