Stout to reimburse district for doctorate support

By EARL WATT • Leader & Times With a staff expansion plan looming and a demographic study being conducted to examine the need for more classroom space, Liberal USD No. 480 Superintendent Dr. Lance Stout has been working closely with USD No. 480 Board on the needs of the district. Stout's announcement that he has accepted the Deputy Superintendent's job in Independence, Mo., Monday in a special meeting adds another job for the School Board — finding a new leader for the district.

"I am disappointed that Dr. Stout is not going to be leading our district," Board President Delvin Kinser said. "He has done an outstanding job. He has worked more than 20 years in our district as a teacher, principal, deputy to superintendent. He has done it all at every level. He has done it with excellence. He has been a great leader. I am sad to see him go. We have great things ahead, and I would have loved for him to be a part of it. I am happy for him on a professional level. This will be a new challenge for him. I wish him and his family all the best. I trust he will have success where he is going. It is sad for us, he had been an outstanding superintendent and a great cheerleader." When the Board accepted Stout's resignation, they also accepted an agreement that Stout would reimburse the District for half of his doctorate degree. Three years ago, the District agreed to support Stout financially in his quest to earn his doctorate from Wichita State University. Part of the fees were in lieu of a pay raise, and the remainder of the cost were in exchange for a three-year commitment.

Stout has served a year-and-a-half of that commitment, and will be reimbursing the district around $5,000.

Stout's annual salary is $135,128.

The Board will decide Monday on what process they will use to fill the vacancy.

"That has not ben determined yet," Kinser said. "It is possible to put together a search committee and hold some meetings where we talk about that."

Kinser said he had not been approached by anyone within the district who is interested in the position, but that those within the district and those outside would be encouraged to apply.

"I have not heard from anyone specifically who has expressed an interest," Kinser said. "When it became official, we instructed the district to put the vacancy on the Kansas State School Board Association web site. It will be that we have a vacancy. From there, we will determine the

process. His resignation is effective on the 30th of June. The best case scenario is to have someone ready to go July 1."

Kinser said the district's plans are a tam effort, and that the Board will still consider the expansion plans as they always have.

"The requests have been based on not just the superintendent's recommendation but the entire administration," Kinser said. "They brought that to the board for us to consider. I don't think the fact that he is going to be leaving us has changed anything about the way we will address that. We will look at it and determine if it is needed as requested that will be considered on my part without what it means at the superintendent level. It was a team effort to come up with the proposal. Dr. Stout did not come up with it on his own."

After the recent election, two new board members will be working with the new superintendent, although neither were included in the announcement of the superintendent's resignation. Neither were present at the executive session where the announcement was made. It was not clear if the two new board members, Crystal Clemens and Matt Friederich, would be involved in the replacement process that the current board will use. While they have already been sworn in, they do not officially take their seats until July.

"I wish Dr. Stout and his family the best of luck in Independence," Friederich said.