By RACHEL COLEMAN • Leader & Times The “best schools” list compiled by the magazine “U.S. News & World Report” is famous for fueling competition between colleges nationwide. Harvard, Princeton and Yale routinely swap spots in the top three, and public colleges and universities vie for regional rankings.

Now Liberal High School has earned a spot in the high school category of the prestigious list. LHS ranked seventh among the state’s 369 high schools, and was among the top 10 percent nationwide, out of more than 21,000 public high schools evaluated by U.S. News. “This is a great honor,” said LHS Principal Keith Adams. “It’s always nice to be recognized for the positive things going on in our school.” The ranking, he noted, “is well deserved and representative of the amazing students and staff who have worked hard to meet academic goals.”

Superintendent of schools Lance Stout agreed. He said the honor is especially sweet given the fact that, five years ago, LHS was in danger of being listed as a failing school by federal standards.

“When we were bottoming out, we realized, ‘We’re going to have to do something different,’” he recalled. “We did a lot of research and saw that what we needed was not 100 different initiatives, but three or four pillars that would turn things around.”

Among the tools the district chose were Literacy First to emphasize the critical importance of reading mastery; the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program that intentionally positions students to move on to college; and Capturing Kids Hearts, a behavior-modification method designed to create a cooperative learning environment.

The high school also opted to increase its Advanced Placement (AP) class offerings.

“Over the past decade, there has been an increase in the number of AP courses from two to 12,” said USD 480 board member Dan Diepenbrock, who recalled forming a task force to examine the issue in 2006.

Top Ranked KS Schools

To be eligible for a state ranking, a school must be awarded a national gold or silver medal.

#1 **Sumner Academy of Arts & Science**
1610 NORTH 8TH ST, KANSAS CITY, KS 66101

#2 **Blue Valley North High School**
12200 LAMAR AVE, OVERLAND PARK, KS 66209

#3 **Blue Valley High School**
6001 WEST 159TH ST, STILWELL, KS 66085

#4 **Olathe Northwest High School**
21300 COLLEGE BLVD, OLATHE, KS 66061

#5 **Northeast Magnet High School**
1847 NORTH CHAUTAUQUA, WICHITA, KS 67214

#6 **Gardner Edgerton High**
425 NORTH WAVERLY, GARDNER, KS 66030

#7 **Liberal Sr High**
1611 WEST 2ND, LIBERAL, KS 67901

#8 **Fort Scott Sr High**
1005 SOUTH MAIN, FORT SCOTT, KS 66701

#9 **Maize Sr High**
11600 WEST 45TH ST NORTH, MAIZE, KS 67101

#10 **Louisburg High**

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