• Special to the Daily Leader

and Jessica Crawford

USD 480 Board of Education President Dan Diepenbrock announced early today that the board has offered Lance Stout the position of superintendent.

Stout, who is currently deputy superintendent for the district, will take over for superintendent Vernon Welch, whose retirement was approved by the board Monday evening. Welch will vacate the position effective May 28, after six years of service as leader of the district.

Stout was pleased with the board's decision.

"I am excited about the opportunity and I have been here a long time, 18 years. Liberal is home and so what better opportunity than to stay at home, so to speak, and work for a great school system. I am thankful for that. This is my sixth year, working under Mr. Welch. He is a great guy, and I have learned a great deal from Mr. Welch," Stout said today. "So, I am grateful for that opportunity that I have had as well."

After an extensive interview, according to Diepenbrock, the board reached a consensus that Stout was the person to fill the position and that no further search will be necessary.

“Of course, the board is well aware of Lance’s abilities demonstrated by his service the last six years as deputy superintendent,” Diepenbrock said. “After the interview on Monday night, I think it is accurate to say that all board members concluded that he is the person for the top job in the district.”

Stout, who currently is working on his doctorate degree in education at Wichita State University, has worked in the district since 1992, first as a science teacher and later serving as principal at McKinley Elementary and then at South Middle School. He has been the deputy superintendent working under Welch the past six years.

Stout and his wife Jill, who is director of data and testing for the district, have three sons: Zach, who is a sophomore at Liberal High School; Blake, an 8th grader at West Middle School; and Trey, a 5th grader at Cottonwood Intermediate School.

“I have lived in Liberal for 18 years and I am very excited about this opportunity” Stout said. “Liberal is a great place to raise a family, and I truly love working at USD 480,” he added.

“I look forward to the challenges that are before us and working with teachers, principals and the entire district staff to maximize our children’s educational experiences.”

Diepenbrock stated that the board reached a consensus to extend a two-year contract to Stout, and that he expects a contract for the board’s formal approval will be on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled meeting on Feb. 8.