

By KEELEY MOREE • Leader & Times More updates may make their way to classrooms at South Middle School if members of the USD No. 480 school board vote to accept additional school improvement grant funding at tonight's meeting.

The Kansas State Department of Education is offering 1003(g) School Improvement Grant funds for a total of \$1.3 million dollars, which amounts to \$300,000 dollars more than previously offered for the 2012-2013 school year. Approved spending of the additional grants must be made by Sept. 30, 2013. Another grant – the 21st Century Community Learning Center supplemental grant – may award an additional \$19,307 dollars for the Project BEST after school programs in place at Cottonwood and Sunflower Intermediate. If accepted, funds would be used to expand equipment, materials and supplies needed to improve enrichment activities for the programs. An emphasis will be placed on providing enrichment activities related to science.

Finally, board members will decide upon using funds to support a number of initiatives already set forth by the district for the 2013-2014 school year. One of those initiatives, Capturing Kids' Hearts, will require a summer training session for teachers and new staff. The training comes at a cost of \$24,800 dollars, which is being funded through an anonymous gift to the district.

Consultant visits and professional development services will also be considered. The Literacy First initiative, which serves Pre-K through 12th grade students, will require visits by consultants for a period of four to five days at a cost of \$198,800 dollars to be paid through Title IIA, Title III and Focus/Priority funds. Consultations for programs related to math will also take place if approved at a cost of \$96,000 dollars to be paid through Title IIA and Focus/Priority funds. Another consultant, Dr. Brad Witzel, will visit each middle school and Liberal High School where he will spend four days per building working with special education courses. The total cost for Dr. Witzel's services is \$35,000 dollars.

Tonight's school board meeting begins at 6:30 inside the Education Service Center located at 624 N. Grant.