

Summer day camp comes to Pipestone

By Jen Burris (May 20, 2015)

This summer a new day camp will be available at Minnesota West's Pipestone campus.

For the past year and a half, Paige Thompson, social worker for Hill and Brown elementaries, has been working with Jess Robinson, speech language pathologist at Brown, and PAS school psychologist, Dan Bultsma, to create the camp for Pipestone area students through SW/WC Service Cooperative.



Thompson and Robinson, both Coop employees, will run Camp Aspire for three sessions this summer at Minnesota West in Pipestone.

Camp creators were inspired to name the camp, Camp Aspire, for the definition of the word aspire, which is, 'to direct one's hope or ambitions toward achieving something.' The goal of the camp is to offer something that's academic, enriching and socially rewarding for students in the summer, according to Thompson.

The camp is open to children entering kindergarten through sixth grade. It will target five core areas — social-emotional development, character and values, community, academics and exploration — to help develop the entire child.

"I have a lot of parents that will say I want my kids to do well in school, but I also want them to be good human beings," Thompson said.

The creators wanted to replicate more expensive summer camp experiences without the cost or the need to travel out of town, Robinson said. Each day the students will have an activity like theater, music, sports or technology for the first 30 minutes, followed by an hour of academic activities, a snack, 30 minutes of character and friendship activities and 45 minutes for a field trip, followed by lunch.

Thompson and Robinson have partnered with Hill Elementary third grade teacher Lisa Evans for the academic portion of the camp.

"She's very passionate, humorous and fun-loving," Thompson said. "I think she's going to do a really nice job of coming up with ideas for the academic part of camp."

The academic portion of the program is designed to help with regression seen in students after a summer off from school. By spreading those sessions over the course of the summer, students will learn and advance throughout the season.

"It's important to review earlier in the summer and not just at the end," Robinson said.

The field trips the students go on will be in and around the Pipestone area and will teach them

about different businesses, organizations and people within the community. There will be a different field trip for every day of the camp this summer, adding up to 15 different destinations.

“It was one of those things that once we started that conversation people had all kinds of suggestions,” Robinson said.

Field trips to places like the vet clinic and the water treatment plant could also help students discover their own interests.

“A big part of it is aspiration, creating that interest for them,” Thompson said. “It’s helping them realize their dream.”

Thompson is excited to offer a new summer activity not usually available at the local level.

“A lot of the summer programs are sports-based, which is great, but if your child isn’t interested in swimming lessons or sports, it’s hard,” Thompson said.