

September 2013

Well, the busses are running (mostly on time) and the viaduct is open once again. We have had a great start to the school year and I can't wait for the Gentlemen of the Road Tour! This month I want to address an area that seems to be a buzzword for many—transparency.

It seems that all public agencies at one time or another hear a charge that they lack transparency. Upon my arrival last year, I heard some claims of such by community members regarding Guthrie Public Schools. I can tell you what I found met both the letter and spirit of the law with regard to transparency. The district already provided a tape-delayed broadcast of Board of Education Meetings along with posting of the annual budget, estimate of needs and the annual independent audit on the district website. These items are public but not required by law to be available on the district website.

I have worked with our staff and the Board of Education to enhance the public transparency of Guthrie Public Schools well beyond what had already been accomplished. Shortly after I started in Guthrie, I placed a copy of my contract with GPS on the district website. Since then, we began including the entire packet the Board of Education members receive for a meeting on the website. This packet includes all documents considered by the board each month including a listing of financial encumbrances and personnel actions.

Last year, we established three committees: Property, Finance and Curriculum. These committees have three board members on them and allow our staff to provide much deeper communication regarding the items and programs for consideration by the Board of Education. Minutes of these meetings are also included in the packets available to everyone on the website.

Our Long Range Planning Committee is another example of transparency as those community members continue to work toward the formulation of a facility plan that the community can support which will address the needs of the district. The committee has toured all district facilities, undergone a crash course in school funding, toured facilities of other school districts and delivered a list of priorities to the Board of Education. They are now possibly more informed than any citizens in this community with regard to our needs. With the recent selection of a new bond advisor and architect, the committee will soon reconvene to formulate the next plans for the district.

Some items we have already accomplished to assist in transparency for this school year include new purchasing controls for district expenditures and a method to improve communication between the Superintendent's office and staff. The purchasing controls are above and beyond any requirements by the Oklahoma Competitive Bidding Act and require quotes be obtained for most purchases. I will have monthly meetings with a Staff Communications Committee comprised of representatives from each school site. The representatives can bring anonymous questions to the meeting and the minutes of the meeting including answers will be provided to all staff members.

I've always believed that trust must be earned by demonstration and nothing is of greater importance for the role of Guthrie Public Schools in this community than to earn the trust of its patrons. If someone says that Guthrie Public Schools lacks transparency, I would encourage you to ask the person to explain their statement. My guess is they are unaware of our efforts to be transparent and to earn the trust of this community.

The documents I've spoken of are available at [www.guthrie.k12.ok.us](http://www.guthrie.k12.ok.us) along with activity calendars for each school site and the most up to date district information. GO JAYS!!!