

October 2018

To say we have undergone some changes with Guthrie Public Schools this fall would be a drastic understatement. We changed the configuration of our elementary education delivery for Pre-K through fourth graders from grade centers (all students of each grade attend school in the same place) to attendance zones based on where you live. Additionally we opened the first new school, Charter Oak Elementary, our community has seen since 1989. This required our busing system to be completely overhauled. The goal was to reduce the ride times for students with secondary goals of cost savings, improved traffic flow through town and increased parental involvement. We have tweaked some of our routes and still have a few tweaks to be reviewed. While the expected improved parental involvement has occurred, we have also noticed a reduction in disciplinary issues at the elementary level compared to previous school years. Additionally, we have strengthened our partnership with the Guthrie Police Department and the Logan County Sheriff's Office with the ultimate goal of having a law enforcement officer at every school site.

Just this last week, we received approval to occupy the cafeteria at Charter Oak. Students have been eating lunch in their classrooms which is a practice we expect to cease sometime this week. A community wide open house will be announced when work on the gymnasium is completed. You may have noticed new windows being installed at Guthrie Junior High School. That project should be completed before the end of the fall semester. Design work continues on completely renovating the heating and air conditioning system at Guthrie High School. This renovation is long overdue and eagerly awaited by students and staff. The Long Range Planning Committee has been meeting to prioritize the needs of the district that were not addressed in the bond issue approved in May of 2015. Their work is almost complete and they will present recommendations to the Board of Education in November.

On another topic, I've occasionally been asked my thoughts on upcoming State Question 801. This question, if approved, would provide flexibility by allowing schools to use money previously restricted for maintenance, operations and construction on any other purchase allowed by law. The question has puzzling origins. No school organization or agency cried for the help passing State Question 801 would provide. I'm unaware of any school district in our state that has excess building funds. While flexibility in spending is always a welcome option, this question provides NO new funding to education. I also believe it creates potential to increase the disparity that exists between school districts which have a high source of local ad valorem tax revenue versus a district such as Guthrie which relies greatly on state aid to equalize per pupil spending thanks to our state funding formula. According to an article in Sunday's Daily Oklahoman, "Critics of the measure contend that lifting the budgetary restriction could lead to disparities in education quality if districts with the most local property wealth are able to offer higher teacher salaries." My overall conclusion is that State Question 801 is a solution in search of a problem.

Finally, I'm very proud of our staff and students for their efforts so far this year. It has been the most successful fall sports season in my seven years as your superintendent. Our softball team made it to the State Tournament, our Cross Country teams are highly ranked going to the state meet this week and our Football team is off to their best start since the state champion season of 2013. Our band, choral and FFA programs continue to be at the top of our peers and their participation numbers are growing with

the success. With all of the changes that our district achieved, I want to offer a congratulations and thank you to the outstanding GPS staff, students and community that made it happen. Great things are ahead!