

It is hard to believe we are near the end of the 2021-22 school year. I continue to be amazed at the resilience our students, teachers and families have developed over the past two years. Thankfully, this year has allowed us somewhat of a gradual return to normal in many ways. We continue to navigate through many challenges none of us could have anticipated on March 13, 2020. We have accomplished much and developed an understanding of a new normal where we take much less for granted.

I continue to be genuinely concerned for our students and families as we have seen a sharp increase of behavioral issues this year. In many cases, the students who are acting out, were receiving education in a much less structured environment during the 2020-21 school year than what we provide. In visiting with colleagues across the nation, this problem is not unique to Guthrie. I fear this is part of a greater problem we currently see in society as a whole. I am hopeful as we gradually return to what we remember normal to be, there will also be a return to increased civility. In most cases, the behavior modeled by the parent is transferred to their children and is then brought to school. Ultimately, we must all work together for the outcome we desire which is educating our students and preparing them to be productive members of society. That work requires collaboration with students, parents and the school.

As we look to the summer months, we have a large amount of work that will commence. Most of the work will be at the Junior High and High School. This work will likely continue into the fall. We have met with the contractors for the projects and will continue to work with them to minimize disruption to learning next fall when we begin the school year. The most noticeable project will be a reconfiguration of the lobby area in our High School Gym. This will allow for better student flow during class changes as well as a much more open feel in the lobby spaces during ball games. The other work is the final phase of our complete replacement of all heating and air conditioning systems in the Junior High building.

I wanted to share with you that Guthrie High School and the Class of 2022 has a National Merit Finalist in Dawson Sallee. There are approximately 15,000 declared finalists in the program which represent the top 0.5% of the Class of 2022 from across the nation. This is an example of a highly driven student who relied on the collaboration of the faculty and staff of Guthrie Public Schools, Meridian Technology Center and an incredibly supportive family. We are very proud of his accomplishments and know he has a great future ahead.

I want to thank the staff of the Lazy E Arena for allowing us to move graduation into that fabulous facility. While we all love Jelsma Stadium on a perfect night in May to honor our senior class, we also know a perfect night in May is definitely something outside of our control. I've heard horror stories from previous classes who were forced to move their graduation into the High School Gym and were provided only two tickets. Even with the recent improvements to that facility, the capacity remains approximately the same. This move allows us to ensure the ceremonies will happen as planned regardless of the weather in a climate controlled facility without limiting capacity.

As we close out the 2021-22 school year, I want to thank our dedicated teachers and staff. They have worked through more challenges over the last 26 months than we could ever imagine. Through all of the rough waters, we have maintained our district culture of placing the needs of our students first. This is a testament to the determination of our staff as well as our community. As we say congratulations to the Class of 2022, let it be known that wherever they go, Guthrie will always be home and they are forever Bluejays. Finally, as I close out this column, I can once again hear in the hallways across the district the Alice Cooper classic "School's Out for Summer"!