

It is almost impossible for me to think that we are six weeks into this school year. Maybe the warmer than normal temperatures are contributing to my loss of time! Nevertheless, we have had a tremendous start to the 2022-23 school year. Our fall sports teams are all enjoying success and Bluejay spirit can be found throughout town.

This year we have seen an expansion of extra-curricular opportunities for our students. We have started a volleyball program at the junior high level and an E-sports team at the high school. Given these new offerings and record participation in all of our extra-curricular activities, we truly have something for everyone! I've said many times that participation in a school activity beyond the classroom provides students a great way to enhance their educational experience and work with their peers. I would also be remiss if I didn't mention the dedicated staff members who coach, sponsor and advise our students. Whether it be one of our tradition rich programs such as football or FFA or the volleyball program which is in its infancy, our staff are hard at work making a difference in the lives of our students.

One area of concern is a recent loss of bus drivers. This job is as important as any in the district. Our transportation staff undergo rigorous training to provide safe travel to and from school. We are proposing an incentive package for drivers to retain our current staff. A few years ago, we had a similar situation but the record low unemployment rate has made this situation more challenging. With the recent developments, parents may see changes in the pick up and delivery times if your child rides a bus.

The current construction projects have been moving much slower than we would like due to supply chain issues. The junior high building exterior project is still waiting on a few windows that have been on backorder. During the year, the individual heat and air conditioning units in classrooms will be replaced when they arrive at the junior high. The high school restroom project has been focused on the gym area which we expect to be completed in time for basketball and wrestling season. This was the most complicated portion of the project. The contractor will move to different restrooms throughout the building as the renovations continue.

It appears we will begin construction of Cottler Elementary this spring. Thanks to much of the federal funding received due to the pandemic, we will be able to start almost a year ahead of schedule. With that being said, construction costs have escalated dramatically since the bond issue was presented to the voters and approved in 2019. Current plans call for a building that will support 200 more students than the current facility. The potential for growth with our student population is real. The growth in the southern portion of our district has been a focus during the eleven years I've been your superintendent and Charter Oak Elementary is at capacity. The growth potential inside the city limits of Guthrie is a relatively new opportunity for our community. Currently, there are over 800 homes platted in neighborhoods under construction inside the city limits of Guthrie! Planning for this inevitable growth is an inexact science at best but every effort is being made for our school district to grow with the community.

The smooth start is a product of our outstanding staff and community support. As summer temperatures drag into fall, I hope you can attend one of the many contests or performances by our students. They are amazing!