

Most of my time in education has been spent at the high school level or as a districtwide administrator. During that time, I've learned that the time between prom and graduation, regardless of how many days, goes by in the blink of an eye. On Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, at the Lazy E Arena, we will celebrate the Class of 2023. It is hard for me to grasp this class was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade when I became the Superintendent of Guthrie Public Schools.

I wanted to update the community on the progress of the planned construction project at Cotteral Elementary. During a routine survey in preparation for construction, it was determined that 20<sup>th</sup> street was never formally closed and there are utilities that run through the right of way that would be a part of 20<sup>th</sup> street if it were actually present. Essentially, we have utilities that run through the playground which will need to be relocated before construction can begin. The relocation process has begun and will occur this summer. Additionally, the Board of Education approved my recommendation to seek a new construction manager for the project. We will begin that process immediately. Given the need to relocate utilities before we can begin construction, it is likely the search for a new construction manager will not delay the project significantly. The greatest concern about this project is the highly volatile climate with regard to construction costs. We have used ESSER funding for all eligible projects which were promised as a part of the 2019 bond issue. This strategy has allowed us to have additional funds for the Cotteral project from the original budget for 2019, given the crazy inflation we have seen in the construction industry. We know time is of the essence on this project. Currently, over 800 new homes have been platted to be built inside the city limits of Guthrie. Many more are planned in rural Logan County and inside the boundary of our school district. This has led to overcrowding at some of our elementary schools. While all of these homes won't be built tomorrow and not all will have children that attend our district, we expect the growth in enrollment to continue. Completion of the Cotteral project will provide much needed relief. We believe this is a good problem for our community and school district.

This week is Teacher Appreciation Week. I strongly believe that all staff make up our teaching staff. I never downplay the role of the many support staff and administrators who make a difference in our student's day at school. All who serve our students are educators. Sadly, the recent political vitriol has provided a podium for incendiary comments about educators. I've heard from an elected education official that organizations formed to represent the interests of educators are similar to terrorist organizations. When I heard these remarks, as an educator, I wanted to apologize to any and all members of our community who lost loved ones at the hands of true terrorists in events such as the Murrah Bombing. It is beyond disappointing that an elected official would make such a reference and also share his opinions with members of our state legislature. All political rhetoric aside, we will continue to do what we do best which is care for our students as if they were our own. It is obvious this community truly appreciates the work our educators do every day. Thank you educators for the difference you make in the lives of our students.