

Just recently, I attended a public event at Charter Oak Elementary where a group of Guthrie High School students called the Pied Pipers performed for younger children. It was the first truly public event to be held in the building. This group normally performs at Central Elementary but on this day, they chose Charter Oak. Interestingly, I saw some new faces in the crowd. Several of the attendees live in close proximity to the school. When we chose the site for a new elementary school, our goal was to reduce ride times for our students. The location also provides an opportunity for this region of the school district to have a focal point in creating community.

Soon, our Board of Education will decide the next steps in moving forward with our school district facilities. I recently had a discussion with a local businessman who has served on both long range planning committees. We both reflected on the progress that has been achieved in a process that began almost six years ago. That group was encouraged to dream big about what GPS could accomplish and what our children and community deserve. Thankfully, in May of 2015 our community approved the first bond issue for our school district in almost ten years. This led to a progression of changes and improvements for our district and ultimately our students.

At our last Board of Education meeting, I mentioned a reduction on discipline infractions at the elementary schools when compared to previous years. I'm amazed at the improved climate in each elementary school. Parents are more engaged and focused on assisting teachers in their mission and students are working with their teachers to grow academically. This trend is encouraging as we look to continue our objective of providing growth for our children.

Now that the election cycle is behind us, I wanted to welcome the new legislators that represent the footprint of Guthrie Public Schools. Garry Mize and John Talley will join John Pfeiffer in the House of Representatives and Chuck Hall is our new Senator. All of these individuals sought my insight regarding issues associated with public education during the campaign. Knowing the character of these men, I'm very excited about the future.

Some of the Guthrie traditions during this time of year are priceless. You can go back to a time when our state was in its' infancy and Guthrie was at the center of the activity. It all starts with Opening Night followed by the Victorian Walks. With all of these great activities you could almost forget that some children are less fortunate and for them the holiday season can be a harsh reminder. I would be remiss if I didn't mention all of the efforts to make the lives of our children just a bit better during the holiday season. This is the time of year when our local Kiwanis Club buys a countless number of coats and shoes for our students. If you were walking through Walmart recently and noticed members of the Guthrie Police Department with Santa hats and baskets full of toys, you witnessed Christmas with Cops. One local church provided well over 200 gift bags for students identified by our staff as at risk for not being able to enjoy the holidays due to financial hardship.

It has been a first semester filled with dramatic change for our district. I want to thank the community for their patience as we worked out some rough edges. As we look toward 2019,

I'm more optimistic for our school district than at any time in the past. Happy Holidays and Go Bluejays!!!