

I normally provide an update sooner than this time but so many great things have been happening that I was waiting for a break in the action! Since the passage of the most recent bond issue in August, we have begun to prepare for the next wave of projects which includes expanding Cotteral and Charter Oak Elementary Schools and construction of a new wrestling practice facility at the High School.

We are getting close to completion of phase I at Cotteral Elementary School. The building will be substantially complete by mid-January and furniture will arrive in mid-February. This time will allow for 'fine-tuning' the building operationally. We will also need to re-route traffic around the building as we prepare for phase II which will begin after Spring Break when classes are shifted to the new facility. This phase will include demolition of the old building so a playground and parking lot can be constructed in that space. We have also begun the work to add an additional four classrooms to the new building.

Plans are in place to add six classrooms to Charter Oak Elementary so we can address the growth occurring in southern portion of our district. This construction is expected to begin after school ends in May and should be completed by the winter break of 2025. This will allow us to eliminate the portable classrooms that were needed for the start of this school year while maintaining smaller class sizes at this site.

The next priority to be addressed is the need to construct an adequate practice facility for our wrestling team. The current facility was built long before we offered the sport for girls or the participation was at our current levels. This new stand-alone practice building will allow for a much larger workout area while providing ample locker room space for boys and girls. Our goal is to begin construction of this facility sometime next fall or winter depending on the construction climate.

Finally, I want to highlight the student achievements this fall. Over the weekend, we completed arguably the most successful fall sports season in memory. Our softball and cross country teams along with our marching band all were placers in state competition, while our fledgling volleyball program had their first season of varsity competition and showed great promise for the future. The culmination of the Fall season was the state runner-up finish of our football team. At every turn, we saw our students compete with the best in the state while representing our community with class and sportsmanship. The lessons learned by extra-curricular activities serve as some of the best training for life. We often talk about building resilience and occasionally I hear people around my age talk about how soft our kids are these days. While some truth might be present in those statements, the same was said about my generation as well as the generation before me. I blame that thinking on the 'grumpy old men and women around me'. Taking an opportunity to find an activity that requires you to work with others, receive constructive criticism and grow as a person is what extracurricular activities are all about. I'm not sure I've ever witnessed a greater example of resilience than the 2024 Bluejay Football team. Given the loss of senior leadership from a year ago, this was likely to be a rebuilding year but leaders were developed, roles were defined and success followed. The lessons learned and the achievements amassed provide all of our students with the confidence to succeed that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

It's easy to be proud to be a Bluejay!!!