

October 2014

I've had the pleasure of giving 16 presentations to various community members (and more to come) regarding the upcoming school bond election and what it will mean to students as well as taxpayers. Along the way, I've received many compliments for the presentation and the approach our district is taking toward improving our facilities. I've actually only had one "agree to disagree" conversation along the way (I'd consider that ratio a sign of support). Interestingly enough the subject was what the citizen perceived to be a statewide overemphasis on extra-curricular activities and actually had nothing to do with the items which will be considered in the election on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

It is no secret that we are again having a great football season. On October 23<sup>rd</sup> our Bluejays played Southeast High School in Oklahoma City. Southeast is not enjoying the success we are in football. They only suited up 20 players for the game against our Bluejays and don't have the benefit of their own football stadium. When the clock ended Guthrie had a 48-0 victory and that is where the learning begins. I listened to Coach Kelly Beeby tell our team after the game how much respect we should have for the Southeast Spartans as they continue to compete and represent their school proudly with sportsmanship despite having little success. Finally, he told our young men that BOTH teams were going to have a meal together. On that evening kids competed against each other, then had an opportunity to learn mutual respect extends beyond the scoreboard. I always say extra-curricular activities are the best solution for at-risk students to stay engaged in learning. The Bluejays won a football game but both teams learned life lessons in an outdoor classroom that fall evening.

I'm sure many will be surprised that I didn't talk more specifically about the upcoming bond election in this column. Having given so many presentations I felt the need to return my thoughts to our greatest commodity—students. I was recently asked what would happen if the bond election failed. My reply was that we will still work everyday to give our students what they need. I won't attempt a scare tactic with anyone that suddenly Guthrie Public Schools will close or classes will be held in church sanctuaries. The reality is voters in our school district have turned down the five issues placed before them since 2005. We are still serving our students and making the best with the resources we have. That includes buildings with deferred maintenance, students in portable classrooms and computers purchased from another school district when they buy new for their students through their successful bond issues. This bond election could provide a starting point for the future.

Southeast continues to lose on the scoreboard but those proud 20 young men continue to compete with sportsmanship and respect for their opponents. I could draw a parallel to the past efforts of our district with bond elections. Many previous issues failed to receive the required 60% approval from the voters. It is no secret that I was hired as your Superintendent in 2012 with a charge from the Board of Education and patrons of this school district to change those fortunes. I truly admire the community members who have vocally supported the previous bond elections. Those proud supporters who believe in the future of Guthrie Public Schools place a vision of the future over ideologies prescribed by political or personal views of the past. Those dedicated people have learned the life lessons that I hope our student-athletes learn from the Southeast Spartans—when you face adversity you persevere for what you believe in.

Since March 29, 2012, when the Board of Education asked me to be your Superintendent, my family has been "all-in" with this community as we lead the school

district. This is a journey that many have joined and others continue to watch and wait. To answer the person who thinks too much emphasis is placed on extra-curricular activities and those who occasionally say we only care about football, I welcome them to ask our teachers how much we are working to improve instruction. In the meantime, please don't ask me to apologize for the success of our students regardless of where it occurs.

If you would like information regarding the upcoming bond election, you can find my presentation on our school website at [www.guthrie.k12.ok.us](http://www.guthrie.k12.ok.us) . All registered voters who reside within the Guthrie Public Schools boundaries are eligible to vote on November 4<sup>th</sup>. I hope we have done our part to create informed voters and I would encourage you to exercise the greatest right citizens of this county have—to vote.