

April 2015

I began comparing our community and school district to others long before my family even moved to Guthrie. In fact, I researched Guthrie and our peer districts long before I applied for the job as Superintendent. What I found in the research was a school district with remarkable success in athletics and a community with potential for tremendous growth due to geography and existing transportation infrastructure. I also found a concerning history of failed bond issues. Many local opinions exist on why, including a large population of retired citizens as well as a relatively low average family income level. Regardless of the 'why's', I've said from the beginning that the importance a community places on education is directly reflected in the condition of its school buildings.

As our most recent bond package began to take shape, I reviewed what had changed since the last election on November 4th. There were two distinct differences that should be highlighted. The first is our district has successfully purchased a 25 acre tract of land deep in the heart of the greatest growth near the intersection of Charter Oak Road and Douglas Boulevard. This area has had a virtual population explosion since the last successful bond issue was passed in 2005 and our schools and school buses reflect the explosion.

The second change is Guthrie now stands alone. Many times in recent memory that has been a shining beacon of Bluejay excellence in student competitions. This time it is different, as no 'gold ball' is involved and it is not a badge of honor for our community. In February, one of our peer districts that had similar bond issue failures, McAlester, passed a \$500,000 bond issue that will purchase school buses. Another question on the ballot which would have provided security and technology upgrades totaling \$2.2 million failed by just ONE VOTE! Guthrie now stands alone as the only large school district (class 5A and 6A) in Oklahoma with NO additional funding stream (bond issues or sales tax) to support the district. That fact, coupled with the student growth we have experienced since 2005 when our last bond issue was passed, places us on a collision course with multiple problems and no solutions. Guthrie stands alone but not in a favorable light.

Our district is unique in many ways, but with our rural growth, the ability to provide services to our students has been a concern that has gradually grown. Today, our first student gets on a school bus at 6:06 a.m. That student will begin classes at 8:15 a.m. and will have a similar end to their day. Most students in the farthest neighborhoods of our 232 square mile district, get picked up between 6:20 a.m. and 6:40 a.m. Those buses will get the students to town and then because of our grade center configuration,

each bus must deliver students to six different schools. Most of you know, this provides a traffic jam of our own creation in the morning and afternoon.

Addressing student growth as well as fixing our current buildings is a goal of this bond issue. Public forums have been scheduled on May 4th at the Territorial Capitol Sports Museum and May 7th at the Lazy E Arena. Both forums will begin at 7:00 p.m. The theme of this bond issue is One Plan, One Purpose, ONE DISTRICT. Regardless of where you live, we are ONE DISTRICT. I don't see North or South or 'Guthrie proper' or 'South County,' I only see Bluejays. I'm excited about what this could mean to the entire district. The overriding goal is to NOT have a child boarding a bus at 6:06 a.m. every day. If you think your vote doesn't matter, just ask someone from McAlester. PLEASE VOTE ON MAY 12th.