

## **DOTHAN CITY SCHOOLS**

### Superintendent's Report, April 2019

The month of April begins with Teacher of the Year Celebrations. We honored the nominees at the March meeting and the dinner will be held at the Dothan County Club on Thursday, April 4, 2019. We are very proud of our Teachers of the Year and are pleased to take every opportunity possible to thank them for their work. Special thanks to the staff, specifically Ms. Alicia Hales, who worked tirelessly on the celebration with the wonderful leaders of the Dothan Education Foundation. Thanks to our Chairman, Mr. Mike Schmitz, for his continued personal and financial support for so many events; such as this one.

With a few months until the end of school, we are working hard to close out the year and at the same time plan for a new school system design. I have consistently shared the task lists each month since December 2018 and these have been followed carefully. Each department head also has their own lists which they are working to complete. A new Task List is attached for your review and the public's review.

Note that we continue to have the normal highlights of the current school year, planning for graduation at the 2 schools, testing schedules continue, hiring for next year, building the budget and supplement lists, as well as plan accordingly for the change for next year.

As soon as humanly possible, the various departments will move into action. You may not see all that is going on but I can attest to the fact that so much is being done right now.

Our focus shifts from getting personnel into the right places to continuing the outreach effort at each school for parents and children; as well as focusing now on the actual movement of materials, books, desks, computers and so on.

I will ask the Department Directors of Technology, Maintenance and Transportation to speak briefly to you at the Work Session about their timelines for movement.

In terms of approvals, I continue to bring key pieces to you for your action. This month, there will be a number of items for your approval.

Among them, you will see two items for approval of companies for work through a very strong bid process. This work was explained in detail to you at a previous work session. We have been following through with the team of individuals to pace this work. We are on a short timeline to bid and get approvals so work can begin.

Several submissions have already been made to the Alabama Building Commission and we are keeping to our schedule to make sure changes are completed for each school that remains open for 2019-2020.

You will also review at the work session and I will ask for approval of new school times and bus schedule for the next school year. Our Transportation Director has a great deal of information for you and I believe will attest to the fact that in the last six months, he has worked with his team and an additional expert in the Transportation field to find a better way to transport our students. At the core of any transportation plan is the way to safely and effectively transport our students; with as little wait time as possible. Mr. Bruner and I are happy to answer any questions you may have following the work session.

I will also lay out the process for School Choice for next year at the Work Session. Staff has been working on the proper forms for use by Principals and we hope to have this process solidified by the end of April 2019.

The Choice process also changes some of the existing processes for school transfers (within the school system). The Board and I should also have a discussion about the entrance of individuals to the Dothan City Schools, who do not live in the city.

Our new Facility and Maintenance Director will also address you with his plans to create a different system for cleaning the buildings. He has a great deal of experience and has already addressed many issues. Our students deserve a quality school environment, which is why we are working to fix buildings and also to ensure that we use proper products; as well as check playground equipment and fix environmental issues.

Technology has the usual work to do annually with the equipment and software but this year is different and they also have a plan that they are working to achieve. Again, the goal is that when school opens, every teacher and Principal will have what they need to do the critical work of educating our students.

I have been meeting with a committee on textbooks and instructional materials. I would like to thank Diane Bradford, Curriculum Consultant, assisting the system as we bridge the gap from this year to next in the position of Director of Curriculum.

I am thankful to Lee Jacobs, Nikki Burns, Lori Shaughnessy and Debra Wright for looking carefully at the existing materials and the use within the system. They are preparing, with my input and direction, a final version of what materials we will use in the system as well as what textbooks and materials we should target to order for next year. I am dismayed by the seemingly lack of attention paid to keeping up with textbooks and materials adoptions as many materials are extremely old and out of date. Unfortunately, we are not assisted by the continued changes at the state level in the areas of assessment but also the attacks on standards, which are not necessary. That being said, the system will need to spend more than half a million to try to put a dent in getting the proper materials.

I have selected a Director of Curriculum, Mrs. Maria Johnson. Mrs. Johnson has a distinguished career with Dothan City Schools. Mrs. Johnson has a B.S. Degree from Troy in Special Education and holds a MS Degree and an Educational Specialist Degree from the University of West Florida with an emphasis on Leadership and Reading. Her work experience includes special education teacher, Title I Reading Coach, Assistant Principal and Principal, most recently at our own Beverlye Middle School, for the past 15 years. I have found her to be well-read, with a passion for research and curriculum. I believe that the best indicator of how well a person will do in a new position is the way they have handled their current position. Mrs. Johnson has the respect of her colleagues in Dothan and has earned accolades across the state.

The school comes first and Mrs. Johnson and I have discussed that she will stay as the head of Beverlye until the end of the year. We will immediately form a committee of teachers and parents to search and interview for the new Principal for the upcoming school year.

Since we have much to do before the end of the school year, I may need to ask for an additional School Board Meeting either in April or May so we can accomplish our tasks and personnel approvals. I hope we can find two dates to consider.

We expect teachers and staff will receive a 4% raise but as the CFO told you, we have to wait until the end of the session to be sure. In addition, I hope to be able to find a sub finder service for next year and certainly will be seeking costs and services from providers. By the tightening of the sub issue process, the system has saved over \$350,000. This is down from approximately \$750,000 last year. As I explain to teachers and others, if we work together to close the sub use as much as possible, then I hope to be able to use savings to make this much needed change for teachers. Naturally, we have to work within the budget to do this but it is a priority. I would also like to see Dothan City issue "cards" to teachers for their supplies at the beginning of the school year. The CFO is researching this now.

The High School Personnel continue to solidify the key placements and selections of positions such as Band Director, Head Basketball Coach and Head Baseball Coach. We opened the positions, as we did for Head Football Coach. As soon as decisions are made, we will bring the recommendations to the School Board.

Special thanks to Wired and the Wiregrass Church, for agreeing to partner with us for the movement of equipment and materials.

As always, we attach good news that comes to us from the schools or the system.