

## **Dothan City School Board July Board Meeting 2019 Superintendent's Report – July 15, 2019**

This report is provided to keep the Board informed of the work and issues which have been addressed or arisen in the time between meetings of the Board. No action is requested. This report is for information only.

The last week of June and the first few weeks of July continue to bring major changes to the school system of Dothan City. Most notable and most appreciated, is the work of WIRED at all of the schools. WIRED did a fantastic job of planning and delivering on the scores of moves that needed to take place within the school system. Because of the tremendous planning on the part of the WIRED leaders and on the part of our own employees, such as Sharla Godwin, the volunteers moved into the third day of the week being ahead of schedule. On Friday, they took to the outside of buildings to help with landscaping efforts.

There is literally no way to express my thanks for the work that was accomplished by WIRED students and adults! This school system truly needed an Extreme Makeover and Facelift. The Board undertook a great deal of data and made courageous decisions; including the decision to borrow 15 million dollars for deferred maintenance. The work that was accomplished by WIRED, saved the school system countless dollars in moving and manpower.

No job was too big or too small. WIRED moved desks, furniture, books, painted walls, helped technology with their work and did all this amidst construction at many schools. To be clear, no school system in this day and age can be everything to the parents and students without the help of the community and the leaders of the city and county. I believe that the commitment of WIRED led the way to true community engagement and again, I am thankful for their time, effort and understanding that the public school system and the students who participate in the system, deserve the best that we all have to offer.

These children are the children of the city and will one day take their place in society; hopefully, right here in the community. It should be the Legacy of the city of Dothan and each of its citizens to do all that we can to help our students become the constructive and creative citizens of the future. I believe that Dothan can show the way and follow the path of WIRED by offering to mentor and shepherd the students in the path forward. This is a critical point in the history of Dothan City and the Dothan City School System.

The School System Board Members and Administrative Staff created a direction and mapped out a detailed plan. Each point in the plan was carefully attended to in a timely manner and a way in which one puzzle piece fit into another for a sequence of events. What the staff has been asked to do over the last six months was not for the faint of heart. I have heard over and over that no one likes change and I understand that sentiment. However; I also believe in the saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going".

As I said last year at Opening Day, change can be uncomfortable but it is often through change that we truly grow and reach our desired outcome and destiny. As the eagle goes through a self-pruning process so that it may remain regal and effective for many years; so too does public

education require a true disruption of the status quo. Status quo leads to stale and just doing ok does not help our students.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August, we will host a Mentor Me Fair at the Wiregrass Rehab Center. It will be in the morning from 9:30 until 11:30, I am asking any interested business or group or individual who wants to be part of this change to help every child reach their full potential, please come and sign up. The school Principals will be present and are very interested in accepting your help.

In this change, instruction is key. Instruction can and must improve to keep up with the changes in how students learn. In order to go toward the goal of meeting students where they are and offering them a world class education, professional development for every teacher and administrator is key. Often times, when the economy suffers, one of the first things to be cut is Research and Development or training. We cannot afford to have this happen. Just as doctors must keep pace with new developments, our teachers, our professionals must be life-long learners. Teachers were given the opportunity for training this spring and summer and provided a stipend to attend training. Key to professionalism is the understanding that giving of our time, even when there are so many challenging things around us to keep us back, is a necessary sign of a professional. I was more than pleased to see so many of our staff members deeply engaged in training opportunities.

Construction continues at Dothan Prep and Dothan High as well as the new Early Childhood Center to be housed at Honeysuckle. On July 12th and 26th at 2, Board Members and the City Commissioners have been invited to walk through and see the construction. We will begin the tour at Honeysuckle.

Special thanks to the City Commission for agreeing to partner with us to build a road at Dothan Prep so that traffic does not back up on Oates Street. I will be speaking to the City Commission on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August and hope to give them regular updates during the course of the year.

Construction is necessary as roofs are needed, repairs are needed, elevators are needed and some additional classroom space or altered spaces were needed. It does matter where students go to school and what the environment is that we ask students to remain in for a full day and sometimes beyond regular hours. Safe and Secure as well as inviting surroundings is critical and sends a strong message that we do care about our students.

This time of year is full of personnel decisions by Principals and staff. It is difficult when teachers and staff decide to move or go to a different system at this late date. However; to do the work that we are asking of our teachers and administrators, you have to be committed to the mission ahead. I personally want to thank the new staff at Faine for the work that they put into the school environment. They took their own time and physically painted their classrooms and some volunteered to teach students this summer. You will see pictures of Jeff and his staff physically moving material and equipment all with a very pleasant spirit.

I am thankful to the other staff who were engaged in learning about brain-based instruction and teaching science through the arts at Beverlye and Hidden Lakes. I appreciate the willingness of the Expeditionary Learning Schools to understand that they will be engaged in learning in a

collaborative manner, leaning on each other and learning from each other, as they move forward. Please remember all staff were given the opportunity to attend training specific to their School Signature or at the junior high and high school levels, in the area of expertise with A+ training.

Branding is going on at the new Dothan High School. The gym floors are completed and look very good as well as other areas so the Dothan Wolves can take their rightful spot.

The Dothan Career Technical Academy has added offerings and parents will see many opportunities at both Dothan Prep and Dothan High School.

Both schools have opportunities for sports and extra curricula offerings. It is great to hear of the numbers of students going out for particular sports.

In order for public school to be a place of opportunity, we need to be certain that we provide academic offerings as well as making sure that students become a part of the school in their area of interest.

Transportation is working on streamlining the routes. They are using new transportation software, which while cumbersome to learn, will make things easier in the long run. We are ordering lanyards for all students in K and 1 which will hold their addresses and bus number to ensure that students get on the right bus route at the first of school. Routes will be posted on school websites and Jay's drivers will make their dry runs right before school starts. Bus routes usually settle in the first two weeks of school, as we know exactly which students we need to transport.

Tonya Grier and her staff are making changes to the kitchens and serving lines. She does all this on top of offering summer feedings for children.

Maria and Lee continue to work on the academic markers as you have seen in the recent materials they have developed. I also need to note that they have worked with committees of teachers and Principals on making these decisions.

We move forward with the substitute program with Kelly Services and with the on-line HR system for new personnel and housing existing personnel information. This will make our system much more attractive and easier for people to apply.

This month, I will be asking Board Members for suggestions for members for a Superintendent's Advisory Committee. I expect that this committee will form sometime in August. My goal for this committee will be to share information and seek input on things going well in the system and things we need to improve.

I thank Mr. Faulk for his work in the area of school safety, attendance and discipline. He is always willing to speak with parents and explain upcoming changes. He has a survey out now on the possible changes to cell phone usage, which I am sure he will share with the Board at the meeting. We listened to the parents and the community about policies and student behavior. It

is critical that we set high expectations for instruction and behavior and that we consistently apply discipline and the Code of Conduct throughout the system.

Opening Day is August 16<sup>th</sup>. We will be at Wiregrass Church and we have already secured a speaker for the event. This will be a great kick off for this brand new year. I certainly hope all Board Members will attend.