



Leaders of Innovative Future-Focused Real World Learning

Dear USD 353 Families and Community,

As we near the end of 2019, I'd like to take a moment to reflect and update you on the progress of this semester. I am proud of our students and their growth in and outside of the classroom. I am also thankful for our teachers and principals for their hard work and dedication. We are in year two of our redesign implementation and our students and teachers continue to make positive progress. Here are some highlights:

Academics- WHS Math and Reading test scores have been trending up for the last two years. In reading, the number of students in Tier 1 (students at or above grade level benchmarks) is at 82%. Two years ago the numbers for this exact cohort of students was at 54% for Tier 1. Math scores are also on the rise. Two years ago this same cohort was at 63% in Tier 1 for math. This year it is at 75% in Tier 1. Also, We have a WHS student who qualified as a National Merit Scholar semi-finalist and 12 WHS Seniors have been recognized as KS Honors Scholars.

Mentoring- We have implemented mentoring throughout the district in various ways so that students are getting 1:1 attention and making meaningful connections. WHS and WMS students are assigned a mentor through their Crusader Connections and Knight Time courses. Each elementary school implements mentoring and character education during monthly family and/or house time. Additionally, WHS students have been in the Elementary classrooms mentoring students in various ways. The WHS debate team as well as the carpentry class have all volunteered time to work with our young students.

College Credit and Certifications and Professional Learning Opportunities - We have partnered with Cowley College to offer dual credit courses and industry recognized certification programs. Over 150 WHS students are taking dual credit courses and 12 are enrolled in industry recognized certification programs. Additionally, 24 WHS students are taking part in Professional Learning Experiences in our community. Students are partnering with local businesses and organizations to work with and learn more about the professions they are interested in pursuing.

Project Based Learning - PBL is happening in all classrooms in our district. Students are learning about the human body and then organizing health fairs, building furniture out of recycled materials, partnering with the local Chisholm Trail museum to help integrate technology to exhibits, and so much more.

I am excited to take this progress and momentum into the new year and the next semester. While we celebrate successes, we also know that every district has its challenges and we are no different. We are tackling these challenges head-on and are committed to a culture of continuous improvement. We are constantly evaluating and adapting to the changing needs of our students and will continue to do so.

Thank you for all of the support you have provided to our students and educators this semester. Our classrooms are incredible thanks to great kids, our fantastic teachers, and staff members. With the support of our families and community, our district will achieve great strides. So, again, thank you for your continued support.

If you have any questions or concerns, I welcome the opportunity to talk with you. Please stop by my office or give me a call.

Have a wonderful Holiday Season!

Sincerely,
Adam Hatfield
Superintendent, USD 353