

SCHOOLnews



Inside this Issue

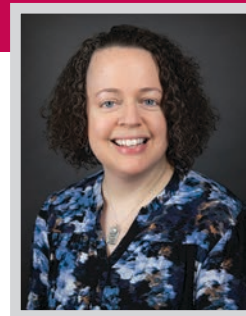
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From the Board President 2
From the Superintendent:
Bond Projects Update 2-4

Auburn-Washburn Therapy Dogs.. 4
School Highlights 5-7
Therapy Dogs (continued)..... 8

From the Board

Jacquie Lightcap, Board of Education President



Even though I've been out of school for quite a while now (longer than I may care to admit), the school calendar still seems to rule in our household, as I'm sure it does in yours. There's something special to me about fall, though. Fall is my favorite. From "Unpack your Backpack Night" to parent-teacher conferences to holiday classroom parties, those four months are jam-packed from beginning to end—and that's not including all the learning going on in each of our classrooms every single day. It's been a busy few months!

Our School Board started this semester with some changes. David Hines resigned in late summer after 11 years of service to Auburn-Washburn. We're so grateful to David for sharing his time and talents with us for more than a decade. He is missed. In October, the Board selected Jeremy Wiltz to fill the empty seat. We are glad to have Jeremy on board, and we hope you get a chance to meet him soon.

Dr. McWilliams will share a full update about the bond-funded construction in his column, and there is a lot to share! All of us on the Board greatly appreciate the count-

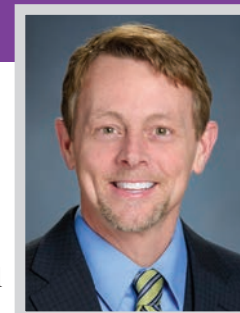
less hours already given by everyone involved in these projects—the architects, construction managers, school administrators, and district staff (and more!). The final results will be stellar, and that's a credit to our district's commitment to Innovation. Opportunity. Excellence. We are so excited to see these projects progress and look forward to the days when our students and staff will finally be able to take advantage of these new spaces.

Please reach out to us if you have questions. Our email addresses are on the district website, and you are always welcome to attend our board meetings on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month at 6:30 p.m. You can also catch them on YouTube, either live or any time after that.

On behalf of the entire Board, I wish you and your families a wonderful new year. Thank you for all that you do to make the Auburn-Washburn community truly special. ★

From the Superintendent

Dr. Scott McWilliams, Superintendent of Schools



The Auburn-Washburn School District passed a bond election in April 2022. Over the next four years, capital improvement projects will be completed at every school. The theme for every capital project completed will be: Innovation. Opportunity. Excellence. The following three capital projects were selected to go first due to their scope of work and length of time to design, build, and complete: Pauline Central Elementary School, Middle School #2 (a new school), and Washburn Rural High School. We have been making steady progress on each of these three projects since the bond passed and each project will go out to bid early in 2023.

Pauline Central Primary

There is a tremendous need to provide additional high-quality early childhood opportunities for Auburn-Washburn families. Today, the school district turns away nearly 50% of the applications received for early childhood due to a lack of space in our elementary schools. To address this need, an Early Childhood Center consisting of six class-

rooms will be built on the east side of Pauline Central. These six classrooms will create a new, updated look to the front to the school as well as making the main entrance more prominent. It is important to note that the Early Childhood Center located at Farley Elementary School will continue to exist so we will be operating two Early Childhood Centers as well as a classroom or two in each elementary school once all bond projects have been completed. The goal is to double the number of students enrolled in early childhood.

The comprehensive plan at PC also included a new Parents as Teachers room that will serve as an early childhood collaboration space as well as a community room where families can find needed resources like clothing, computer access, or food. In addition, dedicated sensory

continued on page 3



Superintendent's Message: Bond Projects Update

continued from page 2



suites, resource center amenities, collaboration spaces, and numerous capital upgrades will be included in this project.

The PC capital project will go out to bid in January 2023. New construction on the new Early Childhood Center as well as work on capital upgrades within PC will begin late spring 2023 moving into summer 2023. It is anticipated that the new Early Childhood Center will be open for the 2024-25 school year.

Middle School #2

Our school community has reached the point to transition sixth grade students to middle school for the following reasons. One, WRMS is the largest middle school in Kansas with approximately 950 students. By building a second middle school and transitioning sixth grade students to middle school, each middle school will have just over 700 students. Two, our curriculum is rooted in primary (grades K-5) and secondary (grades 6-12), thus, sixth grade students in a secondary school would align with how curriculum is organized. Three, educators believe sixth grade students are ready for new experiences such as those offered at the middle school level. And four, transitioning sixth grade students to middle school opens up much needed space at the elementary level.

Middle School #2 will be built on the Northeast corner of Auburn Road and 29th Street. The following provides a brief overview of the school:

- It will be approximately 138,000 square feet.
- Each grade level will have their own section of the school.



- There will be a main hallway, referred to as the forest walk, that will house essentials classes, flexible library space, and cafeteria space.
- The main entrance and office will be located on the east side of the school.
- The gyms (main and auxiliary) will be located on the west side of the school.
- The football field, track, and tennis courts will be located on the north side of the school.
- Each grade level will be broken into two teams.
- Getting school bus and parent traffic off of Auburn Road and 29th Street is a point of emphasis in the design.
- Direct daylight into the school is a point of emphasis in the design.
- Access to outdoor learning spaces is a point of emphasis in the design.
- An effort will be made to keep as many trees as possible on the site.

Capital improvements will also take place at WRMS during the summer months of 2023, 2024, and 2025. Most of the focus thus far has been on Middle School #2 but planning for WRMS improvements will begin early in 2023.



The Middle School #2 capital project will go out to bid in April 2023. New construction on Middle School #2 as well as work on capital improvements at WRMS will begin summer 2023. Middle School #2 will be ready to open for the 2025-26 school year, so of course, that is when sixth grade students will transition from elementary to middle school.

Washburn Rural High School

Career Technical Education (CTE) has grown to become an extremely popular program at WRHS with numerous pathways and clusters being served. The need for well-trained students entering the workforce and post-secondary professional programs continues to grow, which has increased the demand for CTE programs at WRHS. An approximately 50,000 square foot addition on the Northwest corner of the school will serve several pathways within the CTE program and will give these programs more exposure to the student

continued on page 4

Superintendent's Message: Bond Projects Update

continued from page 3

body and to the public. WRHS is seeking professional partnerships and mentorships with local businesses to provide students with real-world learning opportunities.

In addition to a new CTE Center, a comprehensive plan for renovation within WRHS has also been created.

Renovation work on the existing building has been outlined in the special education department to address identified needs as well as various classrooms in C and D hallway that will be upgraded to conform to modern technology needs of a classroom space.

Renovation will take place to update the debate and forensics programs as well as consolidate the world language program. A new art suite will be provided in other renovated areas.



Additional space is needed for the newest sport at WRHS, girls wrestling, which is the largest girls wrestling program in Kansas. In addition, physical education space is at a premium at WRHS, which has created the need for flexible space to serve the entire school and its programs. Discussions will continue on how best to meet these ever-changing needs.

The WRHS capital project will go out to bid in February 2023. New construction on the CTE Center as well as renovation work within WRHS will begin late spring 2023 moving into summer 2023. It is anticipated that the new CTE Center will be open in January 2025. ★

Auburn-Washburn Therapy Dogs

Therapy dogs play an important role on the school based mental health teams in Auburn-Washburn schools. There have been a number of therapy dogs in the schools over the past decade with seven currently serving alongside their sponsoring staff member. They include the following (pictured on cover left to right):

- Bentley with Nicole Hinck, Auburn Elementary special education teacher
- Sugar with Matthew Swedlund, Washburn Rural High School social worker
- Lucian with Lindsay Kufahl, Farley Elementary librarian
- Harmony with Susan Ross, Pauline South counselor
- Adaline with Tina Wheeler, Pauline Central counselor
- Margo with Jennifer Lang, Wanamaker Elementary instructional facilitator
- Piper with Hanna Kimble, Indian Hills Elementary Counselor (*not pictured on cover*)

“The most profound impact I have noticed Sugar having with students is when they are in crisis,” said Swedlund. “She really does seem to be able to sense what people need.”



Piper with Hanna Kimble, Indian Hills Elementary counselor

Hinck said, “Bentley is able to connect with our kids that have experienced trauma in a unique way that sometimes our staff cannot.” “Lucian has been a great help when our school was going through some very difficult times this year,” said Kufahl. Kimble says that Piper and other therapy dogs provide a huge help with grief.

Students relate to the dogs in a variety of ways. Ross said, “Harmony has reached students who have shut down and who no one else could reach with her unconditional love.” “I love hearing students greet Margo as we walk down the halls,” Lang said. “And I don’t

take offense that I don’t get the same greeting.” “Students will send emails to me that read, Dear Piper,” Kemble said. “Some students feel more comfortable telling Piper how they feel, and I think it’s great.”

Besides helping during a crisis or when students are emotional situations, the therapy dogs bring a sense of happiness to the schools. “I absolutely love seeing her bring joy to everyone that interacts with her,” Wheeler said. “She

continued on page 8



Washburn Rural High School

Nearly 1,200 WRHS students recently participated in the school's second Career & Technical Education (CTE) Career Fair. "Career Fairs expand student knowledge and awareness of opportunities within an industry or in multiple industries," said Teresa Golden, WRHS CTE Coordinator. Students are connected with potential employers and mentors and learn about a range of job and career opportunities available in the community. It allows them to begin building their professional networks.



Golden said that students loved how they were able to ask questions and get to know more about the presenters and what they would need to do if they wanted to work in their type of positions. "From feedback on the event, we realized how important it is to continue to connect our students with our community," Golden said.

Fifty local business and industry professionals representing more than 25 companies served as guest speakers. Students heard about educational and training requirements, entry level positions, and career paths from the speakers who represented a variety of occupations.

"Our hope is that students gained an insight about a career, what education or training is required for that career, and what they can do while they are in high school to prepare to be successful in education or work after graduation," Golden said.

The all new CTE Innovation Center is set to be built over the next couple of years. "As we continue to expand our CTE pathways at the high school, we are looking forward to serving even more students," Golden said. The school is working to improve communication about Excel in CTE and Work Based Learning. More information is available on the CTE website at wrhs.net/CTE.

The Career Fair was presented by McCownGordon Construction and sponsored by HTK Architects, Mammoth Sports Construction, HyVee, and WRHS student business enterprises Common Grounds and The Shack. ★

Washburn Rural Middle School

In her first year of teaching at WRMS last year, Art Teacher Tiffany Munz noticed that many students would often come to class hungry. "I began storing a few snacks in my classroom for those in need," Munz said. "Soon, word had spread among the students, and I was handing out many snacks each day." With her personal costs adding up, she resolved to find help providing snacks to students. That resolve paid off recently when her project, Hungry Kids Can't Learn, received the full amount requested through online education fundraising website, Donors Choose.

"I don't just hand out snacks because kids want them," Munz said. "There are many kids in our school who struggle with food insecurity." About 31% of WRMS students qualify for the free or

reduced lunch program. "I provide snacks for those students who might only get lunch today because there's little food at home. By providing students with a snack, I know that I am meeting at least one of the basic needs that students need to learn," Munz said. She has noticed that kids are more focused and attentive once they've eaten.

"I also have a 'take what you need' bin in my classroom that provides hygiene items like deodorant, lotion, and feminine products to students," Munz said. "This year I was able to get a grant from the Auburn-Washburn Foundation to cover the cost of these items as well as expand the program." Munz has received thank you notes, hugs, and verbal expressions of gratitude for the snacks and the "take what you need" bin.

Other WRMS teachers and the PTO have also been supporting her efforts. "I have found the WRMS staff and community to be so welcoming and supportive, and our student body is made up of really amazing kids," Munz said. "I am so thankful to have found a place that I feel has the best intentions for kids every day and where the teachers put their hearts and souls into everything they do." ★



Auburn Elementary

At Auburn Elementary, each grade partners with an organization to encourage students to be an active and integral part of their community. The 5th grade’s partner is the Auburn Veterinary Clinic. In December, Veterinarian Dr. Karma Loughney visited the classes. She brought in her dog, cat, and bunny to demonstrate things she does at the clinic.

This included checking for dehydration, ear infection, and respiratory infection. She brought in models that included a dog’s heart and the bones and organs of a cow. She also demonstrated the stethoscope and tools that she uses to check horses.

Fifth grade teacher Chloe Stromgren said that Dr. Longhney came in on her day off and took time to answer questions and really get the kids involved. “The students left the presentation excited, with knowledge of what their own local veterinarian does,” Stromgren said. “I hope this presentation encourages students to push themselves in school to reach the job they want to have in the future,” said Stromgren, “Whether that be as a veterinarian or something else.”★



to angle the track correctly to get the marble to complete the loop and make it over the hills, they had to plan how to create a strong structure first and then be able to work together to accomplish the task,” Withey said. “The students loved it; it was so much fun watching them figure everything out.” Withey said this will definitely be an ending project for years to come.★

Indian Hills Elementary

Two Indian Hills teachers combined ideas to create a fun activity while giving back to the community. Third grade teacher Emma Tichenor’s idea was a spirit day on each of the 12 school days in December. Students in Teacher Erinn Bradstreet’s 5th grade class were interested in community service. The ideas were combined as 12 Days of Spirit and Giving. “Each day we had a Spirit Day combined with a Day of Giving,” said Tichenor. One example was Snow Day where everyone wore white and donated hygiene products. On another, students wore flannel and donated blankets and scarves.

“It has been absolutely incredible seeing all the donations brought in,” Tichenor said. “You can tell the



students are seeing the importance of giving this holiday season.” She said that it’s been a heartwarming experience to see everyone come together and give to others. “After seeing how successful it has been so far, we definitely plan to do this each year,” Tichenor said.★

Farley Elementary

Farley Elementary sixth graders recently held their first ever Coaster Fest. Teacher Debra Withey led the project that came at the end of a unit focusing on energy. Students created paper rollercoasters within strict parameters. Marbles were released and rolled down the coasters to an end point.



Coasters were decorated in the students’ chosen themes. Younger students watched the coaster demonstrations and voted on their favorites.

“Not only did the students learn about the energy transformation between Potential and Kinetic energies, but also had to troubleshoot as a group, had to decide how

Jay Shideler Elementary

In an effort to make a difference in the community, Jay



Shideler Elementary carried out their Gift of Giving project recently. They collected donations leading up to winter break. “The students were able to learn about people outside their circle and develop a sense

of social awareness,” said Katie Elwell, one of the parents helping with the project. “Even if they don’t articulate it, they are learning to think bigger than themselves and share the gifts they are given.”

Each grade level focused on one of the following organizations: Kansas Children’s Service League (K), Ronald McDonald House (1), Helping Hands Humane Society (2), Toys for Tots (3), YWCA (4), TFI Family Services – Pathways (5), and Capper Foundation (6). Leading up to the collection of donations, the students heard a presentation about their organization and an age-appropriate book that exemplified kindness and helping others. “The look on their faces, and sometimes tears in their eyes, showed us that the message really hit home,” Elwell said. ★

Pauline Central Primary

In December, Pauline Central and Pauline South families came together for a special event. “The Pauline Express was the perfect holiday opportunity to connect our school and home communities in a morning of fun,” said PC interventionist Carla Spellman.



This was the second year for the event hosted by the PC/PS Parent Teacher Organization. Students, along with their families were invited to gather at Pauline South to make wooden ornaments and drink hot chocolate.

A visit and photo opportunity with Santa Claus was included in the festivities. “The best part of the morning was watching the expression of the students’ faces as they walked in to see Santa,” Spellman said. “I also loved observing the families engaged together.” ★

Pauline South Intermediate

A special Veterans Day program has become an annual event at Pauline South. Sixth grade teacher Joe Taylor heads up the event. “We play the armed forces medley and recognize our veterans in attendance,” Taylor said. “We also talk about the history of Veterans Day and then show a video slideshow of the veterans of students and staff at Pauline South.” The event begins with an inspirational video and flag presentation followed by the National Anthem and pledge of allegiance. “I want our community to realize the sacrifices of the veterans and their families,” Taylor said. “I also hope to instill some patriotism in our students, so they see beyond themselves.” ★



Wanamaker Elementary

Wanamaker Elementary Fourth Grade Teacher Kelly Hoffman recently won the Majic 107.7 Crystal Apple Award. “She goes above and beyond to educate her students” said parent and nominator Katie Ansley.



“I was shocked,” Hoffman said. “My students were very excited for me.” She said she was humbled and honored by the award and the support she receives from the whole Ansley family. Hoffman said, “Receiving this award means that I’ve made a positive impact on my students that has hopefully affected not only their academics but their lives in general.” ★

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On the cover:

There have been a number of therapy dogs in the schools over the past decade with seven currently serving alongside their sponsoring staff member.

Photo credit: Melissa Kasprzyk, Centerpiece Photography



Auburn-Washburn Therapy Dogs

continued from page 4

brightens everyone's day which, in turn brightens mine." Hinck said that Bentley brings comfort and a sense of calmness to Auburn Elementary. "He brings many smiles to staff and students throughout the school day," she said. "Students and staff look forward to seeing him every day."

"Lucian makes staff and students at Farley Elementary happy," Kufahl said. "He spreads joy around the building." Ross says that Harmony meets and greets Pauline South students as they come in to help make their days a little brighter and easier. According to Lang, "Margo's job at Wanamaker Elementary is to make everyone around her happy, and she is exceptional at her job."

"Adaline is only six pounds and very non-threatening," Wheeler said. "She is so friendly and loves kids immensely, when students are having big emotions, she goes to them, and they calm down after visiting with her." Swedlund said that on multiple occasions Sugar has helped calm students who are feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or dysregulated. "It is really neat to see a student's body language, demeanor, and mood change after interacting with Sugar," he said. "Sugar also just makes Washburn Rural High School a happier and brighter place."

Often it was working around other therapy dogs that inspired Auburn-Washburn staff. "I had coworkers in the past who had therapy dogs, and I saw the positive impact they were having." Swedlund said. "I knew pretty quickly it was something I wanted to do." Hinck said that she previously worked

with a psychologist that brought a therapy dog to school on a weekly basis. "I saw the joy that she brought to our kids and staff, and I knew at that point I needed a therapy dog."

When she became a school counselor Kimble knew that she wanted a therapy dog. "I think animals can provide support, a sense of calm, and a friendly face and tail wag to those in need." Wheeler said that the pandemic was hard on everyone. She saw a therapy dog as a way to help Pauline Central.

Therapy dogs need special training, certification, and approval to work in Auburn-Washburn schools. "Our administration and the Board of Education were both very supportive," Swedlund said. "I went through KSDS Assistance Dogs, which provides Assistance Dogs International Certification upon successful completion of the program." Kufahl said that she got Lucian as a puppy. "I took him to training classes and continued through the levels of training until we were certified as a therapy team."

Wheeler said that training with Adaline began when she was just two months old. "I researched, found a small dog breed that is hypoallergenic and got her as a small puppy." Lang said that her family adopted Margo as a puppy from a local shelter eight years ago. "We felt Margo's easy-going personality and love of humans was being wasted at home," she said. "The perfect job for her was to go to work with me each day." Ross said she began the journey in 2006 with her first professional therapy dog through CARES, Inc. "Since then, I have had three professional therapy dogs that have worked such magic with students." "I wouldn't be the counselor I am today without my canine partner." ★