

It's A Great Day To Be A TIGER!

Last week we hosted a reception for Sharon Whelpley who has served on our Board of Education for 20 years. I have known her since 2003, and I am so grateful for the wisdom and encouragement she has shared with me during my tenure as the superintendent. This week marks her last week as a member of the Board of Education, and I thought it only fitting to share with you a letter she recently sent to me.

"I have had the privilege, pleasure and honor of serving on the Broken Arrow Board of Education for the past 20 years. A very long association, but sometimes it seems that I started yesterday. Time flies so quickly!

During my tenure, I enjoyed the support of so many wonderful teachers, administrators, support staff and citizens. Support was the very foundation of my service, for no elected official can be effective without encouragement. I feel it is the true meaning of teamwork.

I am very proud of accomplishments we have attained as a team. Together we have passed bond elections and built new schools, modern athletics facilities and a PAC. We remodeled an historic landmark - Central on Main – and are using it now as our Enrollment Center.

Together we have seen Broken Arrow grow and prosper. We worked together... citizens, the City, Chamber of Commerce, and the school district. Our visions and goals are set firmly for our children and Broken Arrow. Our support from our business partners is always there and always outstanding.

I'd like to say a special thank you to our Broken Arrow School employees. Remember, you make a difference each day in our students and our district. Take pride in doing your best, because you have the most important jobs. Your hard work pays off in students' knowledge, character, and success."

Although sent to me, I think these are fitting final comments from someone who has invested 20 years in education. I hope her words will encourage you, as they have me, to continue to improve upon the tradition of excellence that is Broken Arrow Public Schools.



Jarod Mendenhall, Ed.D.
Superintendent



FEATURE

Much yet to be determined with NCLB exemption waiver

Within the past two weeks, the State Department of Education announced that Oklahoma was one of 10 states to submit and have approved a waiver that exempts the state from the regulations of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

"I am in favor of local control, and while I think the waiver does give the State more flexibility, it does nothing to give schools more flexibility," said Dr. Jarod Mendenhall, Superintendent of Broken Arrow Public Schools. "The same processes are still in place, but the terminology has changed."

The waiver replaces the federal regulations of NCLB with regulations created and monitored by the State Department of Education. The new system still has a ranking system for schools, and those schools deemed to be in need of improvement are still subject to sanctions up to and including take over by an outside entity.

"Under this waiver, the State has the ability to take over control of any school classified as a 'Priority School' by these new standards," Mendenhall said. "According to page 53 of the waiver, the principal and staff members of a Priority School will be replaced if they have been determined to be ineffective. The thing that concerns me in that scenario is who is determining the effectiveness of these educators, and by what methods? That is not clearly defined."

Another area yet to be defined is the grading scale upon which the new system is based. Passed into law last year, the A-F School Grading System has not yet been defined or piloted and yet will be fully implemented next year. Aside from the lack of information on this particular element, there are several other areas that have Mendenhall and other local superintendents concerned.

"In calculating graduation rates, schools are not given full credit for those students who take more than four years to graduate from high school, which seems counterproductive," Mendenhall said. "I also have concerns about the movement of federal funds, Title 1 for example, from one school to another under this new system."

Although the waiver leaves much yet to be defined, Broken Arrow Public Schools has already begun to make district-wide improvements and engage in new education initiatives.

"In Broken Arrow Public Schools, our job is to make sure students are college and career ready citizens when they graduate, because that's not only our job, it's our passion," Mendenhall said. "We assemble the greatest team of educators possible to serve the 17,000 students in our district because we want only the best for Broken Arrow students, and waiver or no waiver, that's exactly what we will continue to pursue."

Mendenhall is encouraging all staff members to visit the State Department of Education website at <http://sde.state.ok.us/Programs/ESEA/Default.html> to become educated on the waiver and all its elements.



Professional Development Corner

Applications for the COX CONNECTS Innovation in Education Grants are now available. Teachers can apply for individual classroom grants ranging from \$1000-\$5000. There is also an opportunity to apply for collaborative teaching grants between \$5000- \$10,000. Applications can be downloaded at www.coxconnectsok.com or you can visit our district website and after logging in under the Staff Tab you will find information in the "only for staff" section. Grant applications are due March 1, 2012.