

PART FOUR

FUTURE FOCUS

{A GRADE ABOVE}

A COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT OUR
STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL FUTURE

PASS OR
FAIL?

{INTRODUCTION}

WHAT DOES OKLAHOMA DO WELL WHEN IT COMES TO PUBLIC EDUCATION?

The first three reports in this series have focused on identifying and explaining some of the problems with the state's system of public education. In this final report, the purpose of the material presented will be to highlight some of the many positive programs and accomplishments happening within the state.

Oklahoma leads the nation in providing educational programs for four-year-old students, and while the state can celebrate that more students are taking the ACT, citizens can also be pleased at the fact that Oklahoma students continue to perform well on the ACT. More schools are implementing STEM programs to help students focus on careers in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math, and online learning continues to expand for students of all levels. Businesses are becoming involved in students' education by accepting interns and shaping curriculum, and students continue to participate in Oklahoma's nationally recognized Career Tech System.

Schools are also finding ways to meet students' other needs. From combating bullying and hunger to helping first generation college students overcome financial fears and hesitancy with enrollment, educators are partnering with individuals and community organizations to create opportunities for all kids. "Future Focus" takes a look at the many positive things happening in Oklahoma schools. While focusing on Broken Arrow Public Schools, the information in this final report is intended to demonstrate why Oklahomans can be proud of their students and schools.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

For the past decade Oklahoma has been ranked first in the nation for availability of public preschool (Pre-K). About 71% of Oklahoma 4-year-olds attend a Pre-K program, and in Broken Arrow, the district opened three new Pre-K facilities in August of 2013. Called Early Childhood Centers, each of the three facilities was designed specifically for the needs of four-year-old students. Research indicates that early childhood education has a positive impact on student learning, either helping students achieve at higher levels or increasing their likelihood of remaining on grade level, meaning that intensive remediation is not needed.

Broken Arrow's early childhood learning philosophy addresses the needs of the whole child by guiding their cognitive, social, emotional, physical and creative development. This is accomplished through a variety of teaching strategies including purposeful play, differentiated instruction and a stimulating curriculum that actively engages all students in a developmentally appropriate setting. The program is designed to be a collaborative effort involving parents, students and teachers, and by working as a team, all parties are playing a role in creating a foundation for life-long learning in students.

Not only has the district doubled the number of pre-K students it serves, it has also agreed to participate in a long-term study of the pre-K students. Through collaboration with the University of Oklahoma School of Community Medicine, Broken Arrow Public Schools is embarking on a unique study of the pre-K students enrolled in the district's Early Childhood Program. The longitudinal study is optional for parents and students, and the intent of the research is to learn more about "executive functions," – early indicators of student success – and assist educators in identifying students' learning and behavioral skills. This is the first study of its kind that has been done in the nation.



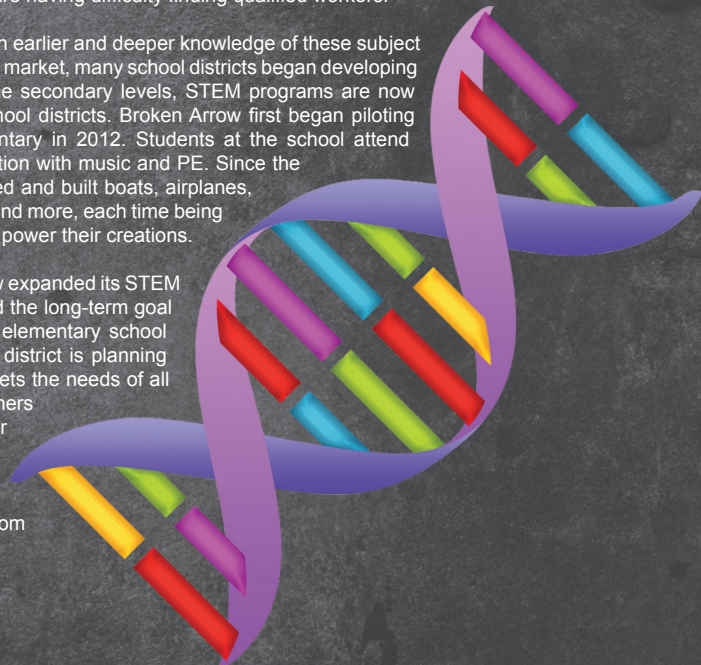
STEM

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING and MATH

The state and national economy continue to evolve and generate more professions in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, during the last decade growth in STEM jobs was three times the growth in non-STEM jobs. The Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce reported that 47% of Bachelor's degrees in STEM occupations earn more than PhDs in non-STEM occupations. While the demand for these jobs is growing, the Council on Foreign Relations reports that as of June 2013, 60% of U.S. employers are having difficulty finding qualified workers.

Recognizing that students needed an earlier and deeper knowledge of these subject areas in order to compete in a global job market, many school districts began developing STEM programs. Initially popular at the secondary levels, STEM programs are now commonly seen at all levels within school districts. Broken Arrow first began piloting a STEM Program at Rhoades Elementary in 2012. Students at the school attend the STEM class as an elective on rotation with music and PE. Since the program's start, students have designed and built boats, airplanes, robots, rockets, parachutes, catapults and more, each time being taught to understand the concepts that power their creations.

After a successful pilot, Broken Arrow expanded its STEM program to Arrowhead Elementary, and the long-term goal is to have a STEM program at every elementary school in the district. Building from there, the district is planning to develop a STEM curriculum that meets the needs of all students K-12. From helping young learners explore new subjects and find their skills to allowing the upperclassmen to receive specialized instruction in specific areas, all students need access to the opportunities gained from STEM learning.



VIRTUAL EDUCATION

Online learning is another area in which Oklahoma school districts continue to grow. Seeing the increase of digital courses at the university level, public schools throughout the state are rapidly expanding the online learning opportunities available to students. From one-to-one initiatives where students are given a laptop with digital textbooks preloaded, to district-wide WiFi where students can use their own electronic devices, school districts are creatively meeting the learning needs of the digital natives they serve.

Three years ago, Broken Arrow Public Schools launched its Inspire21 Program. Students enrolled in Inspire21 enjoy a blended schedule – one that combines traditional high school classes with online courses. The program offers a challenging, research-based curriculum for students with certified teachers providing guidance and assistance. Core subjects as well as electives are available, and students can access the curriculum any time, either day or night, providing widespread opportunities and flexibility. While students can work at their own pace, pacing guides are provided for a guideline as to when assignments should be completed.

Students maintain accountability with teachers throughout the week with a combination of face-to-face check-ins, classroom instructional time, phone calls, e-mails, and/or other means of social networking. This system of accountability allows for supplemental instruction and feedback to take place, providing students with real-life skills that will prepare them for the next phase of their life, be it college or career. Nearly 500 Broken Arrow High School students are enrolled in Inspire21, and a similar program is being piloted at the middle school level.

!Inspire21
ONLINE

BUSINESS INTERNSHIPS

The Career Exploration Program (CEP) is in its third year at Broken Arrow High School and the program is designed to give students an authentic learning experience in the business world. Whether a student's plans are to go to college, trade school or straight into the workforce, the Career Exploration Program will help them gain the experience they need to succeed. Through CEP, students are provided with an overview of their chosen career area(s), as well as familiarized with the professional and decision-making processes of that profession.

By partnering with businesses in the surrounding community, the program broadens students' knowledge base about the business world and enables them to hone their talents, goals, abilities and interests as they go beyond high school. Students spend part of their day at a business placement under adult supervision in which they complete real-world projects and tasks associated with that profession. Their classroom work with the teacher is focused on building skills such as professional writing, interviewing, resume building and the other skills needed as they transition from high school to their college or career.

CEP is only available to senior students at this time, and students must apply for acceptance into the program. Once students submit their application, which includes references, each of them must participate in an interview. Students are only chosen if they will



be good representatives of both the district and the community. The students who participate in CEP are able to earn academic credits as they would for any traditional class, while at the same time explore career areas in which they are interested before investing time and money in college courses and trade schools. The business professionals who choose to participate in CEP are able to train and develop qualified workers prior to employment, and they influence curriculum development in schools to better meet business and industry standards. To date more than 75 students and 20 businesses participate in the program.

EXCELeRate



Many districts are also creatively partnering with local universities in order to increase the number of students who choose to attend college. Broken Arrow High School recently announced a new program that allows BAHS students to earn college credit while still in high school. Known as EXCELeRate, this program is made possible through an alliance between Broken Arrow Public Schools, Tulsa Community College (TCC) and Northeastern State University's Broken Arrow Campus (NSU-BA). Through this program, students can attend college courses during the school day through TCC at NSU-BA, receiving both high school credit and college credit at a reduced cost.

Courses are held at NSU-BA, and the school district provides transportation to and from the NSU-BA campus during the school day. The cost of enrolling in EXCELeRate is \$73.50 per semester for two classes, and the required books are loaned from BAHS to the student at no extra cost. The EXCELeRate program is available to juniors and seniors, and interested students must first take the ACT. To be eligible to participate in EXCELeRate, seniors need to score 19 or higher or have a 3.0 GPA, and juniors must score a 21 or higher on the ACT or have a 3.5 GPA. Broken Arrow High School students who participate in the EXCELeRate program are actually enrolled at TCC, even though the courses are held at NSU-BA.

The purpose of the EXCELeRate program is to eliminate barriers that might prevent students from obtaining a college degree. Holding classes at a nearby university during the school day enables students to earn high school and college credit, while still enjoying the familiarity of their high school routine. The reduced tuition and free transportation and books make the beginning of a college education affordable for Broken Arrow students. This early college exposure offers students the opportunity to see what college classes are like and get a jump start on their college plans. It will also serve to help first generation college students see they can be successful in the college setting, inspiring them to make the necessary commitments to obtain a college degree. In only the first semester, more than 100 high school students have enrolled in EXCELeRate.

ACT SCORES

The ACT is a national college admissions examination that consists of subject area tests in English, reading, math and science. The three-hour test consists of approximately 200 questions, and the results of the ACT are accepted by all four-year colleges and universities in the U.S.

Based on the 2013 ACT National and State Scores report, 28,988 Oklahoma graduates took the ACT in 2012. This represents an estimated 75% of that year's graduating class. The data shows that while there is still work to be done in writing and math, Broken Arrow students consistently perform higher than both state and national averages on the ACT. More importantly, the number of students taking the ACT continues to grow. From 2009–2013, the number of ACT test taking graduates has increased by 7.1%, and yet students are maintaining a high level of performance. In reviewing ACT data, it is worth noting that of those states that score better than Oklahoma, none have a poverty rate equal to or greater than Oklahoma.

The tables below provide a snapshot of ACT performance, but a greater depth of information can be found by clicking on the reports linked in the "Sources" section on the website.

BROKEN ARROW PUBLIC SCHOOLS												
Historical Profile of Verbal, Math, and Writing Sections of SAT Scores												
Area	2010			2011			2012			2013		
	Verbal	Math	Writing	Verbal	Math	Writing	Verbal	Math	Writing	Verbal	Math	Writing
Nation	501	516	492	497	514	489	496	514	488	496	514	488
State	569	568	547	571	565	547	568	566	546	571	569	549
BA	588	584	559	568	559	537	584	547	547	572	558	544

Historical Profile of ACT Scores				
Area	2010	2011	2012	2013
Nation	21.0	21.1	21.1	20.9
State	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.8
BA	21.9	22.0	21.8	21.6
# Tested	710	679	716	745



PAPERLESS CLASSROOMS

No textbooks required – that’s the case for several classes at Broken Arrow Public Schools. First piloted in a sixth grade science class, the teacher found a number of positive effects as a result of going paperless, including better participation from his students. Since the pilot, a number of other classrooms have gone paperless. Each classroom is the result of a collaborative effort among the teacher, students, parents and technology department.

In order to achieve the paperless setting, each class is outfitted with a wireless infrastructure, a SMARTboard, a classroom audio system and mobile rolling carts that provide access to 32 mini-laptops for the students to utilize. Each student has an Internet account with email access and they are able to utilize Google Docs to document work. All work is saved to the Internet cloud while using Google, and each student has a digital binder of personal websites in which they document daily work in the form of a blog. As long as a student has Internet access, he or she can access documents from any location.

Aside from the spread of paperless classrooms, at least one Broken Arrow School site is the pilot site for a one-to-one laptop initiative. In this concept, students are issued laptops with textbooks already loaded, and each student is responsible for the care of their laptop. In both programs – paperless classrooms and one-on-one initiative – the students have proven to be responsible and respectful of their school-issued equipment. Typically, Bond Funds are what is used to purchase the technology needed for these types of initiatives. Without bond dollars, most district technology initiatives would not be possible.

HUNGER

Poverty is an obstacle that thousands of Oklahoma students face. According to the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma, Oklahoma ranks fourth in the nation in hunger. The Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma reports that 675,000 people in the state – nearly 18% of the population – struggle to find their next meal. One in four Oklahoma children is at risk of going to bed hungry, and educators in all Oklahoma school districts recognize the negative affect hunger can have on student learning and development. For many students, school attendance is not just a matter of having access to an education, it is a matter of having access to their next meal. Understanding this correlation is one of the reasons many districts participate in programs that help ensure students have meals on days when school is not in session.

The Broken Arrow Food for Kids Backpack Program provides students with food over weekends and long breaks during the school year. Every Friday, a bag of food is given to students who have been identified by the school as lacking sufficient food for the weekend. The program is made possible through a partnership among the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma, Broken Arrow Neighbors, St. Stephens United Methodist Church, and the Broken Arrow Parent Teachers Association. The program is funded through individual donations, fundraisers and sponsorships of children, and nearly 600 Broken Arrow students are served through the Food for Kids Program.

In 2013, the district also partnered with Move For Hunger and Accent Moving and Storage to host an enormous food drive that included all 25 of its schools. Students and staff from across the Broken Arrow district were encouraged to bring non-perishable food items to each school site, and all donations from the drive benefited Broken Arrow Neighbors, a non-profit that provides basic needs and emergency assistance to Broken Arrow families. Although falling a bit short of their 17,000 pound goal, students collected nearly 13,000 pounds of food to stock the shelves at BA Neighbors. The district plans to conduct another food drive this spring.

RACHEL'S CHALLENGE

Bullying is a very real issue for students throughout the state. Whether online or in person, bullying can have negative effects on a student's academic performance, and in some instances, the effects of bullying can be deadly. A number of programs exist to support school districts in their fight to end bullying, but most of these programs come at a financial cost to districts. However, because educators recognize that the best learning environment is one where students feel safe and valued, bullying prevention programs and curriculum are quickly becoming the norm in schools of all sizes.

In Broken Arrow Public Schools, educators have chosen to invest time and funding into a program called Rachel's Challenge. Rachel Scott was the first person killed at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Her acts of kindness and compassion have become the foundation for one of the most life-changing school programs in America called "Rachel's Challenge." The mission of Rachel's Challenge is "to inspire, equip and empower every person to create a permanent, positive culture change in their school, business and community by starting a chain reaction of kindness and compassion." Rachel's Challenge seeks to change the culture of a school and community by teaching and promoting kindness at all levels.

Character education begins early in Broken Arrow, where Pre-K students learn to be kind thanks to the efforts of an owner-dog duo named Travis and Presley. In third grade, students attend an assembly hosted by Broken Arrow High School students, and through skits, songs, videos and other tools, these upperclassmen share the importance of being kind to everyone. At middle school the students hear the story of Rachel Scott in its entirety, helping them better understand the life and death impact of words and actions. Freshmen students attend the highly emotional Chain Reaction Day – a program that involves members of the community who volunteer to serve as mentors for this powerful program. The district continues to seek sponsors and funding to further expand this program, because the response from students, teachers, parents and community members has been incredibly positive.



ACCOUNTABILITY, REFO

Public schools are often mischaracterized by their critics as avoiding accountability, reform and transparency, but reality paints quite a different picture. The next few pages contain a snapshot of some of the reforms that have taken place in Broken Arrow Public Schools in just the last three years.

Construction – Since 2010, the district has built or renovated 26 buildings across the district, nearly eliminating all 208 portable classrooms and replacing them with state-of-the-art, permanent facilities. By the year 2015 the district will have completed more than \$240 Million of construction, completely changing the look of Broken Arrow Public Schools.

Technology – Ahead of most school districts, Broken Arrow Public Schools has implemented a wireless network that covers all 27 school sites in addition to all district departments. The network features three types of secure log in options, making Broken Arrow the first district in the nation to have a keyless Wi-Fi system based on network credentials only at logon. Research is currently being conducted on the feasibility of spanning the entire 115 sq. mile district with the wireless network in order to serve students at their homes.

Class Size – By monitoring classroom counts the first few weeks of school, district leadership has developed a strategy for quickly adjusting staff to better meet the needs of students. Broken Arrow's class sizes are the lowest in Tulsa County : K-2=22 students, 3-5=23

students, and 6-12=27 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

Higher Education Reimbursement Program – In 2012, for the first time in district history, Broken Arrow Public Schools began offering a Higher Education Reimbursement Program to all full-time, certified employees. The program provides reimbursement to certified personnel enrolled in an accredited institution taking courses in his or her area of work, and district leaders are planning a survey to gauge support employee interest in a similar program.

Kristin Chenoweth Theater – Last year the Broken Arrow Performing Arts Center Theater was named for the famous Broadway actress and movie star, Kristin Chenoweth, who is also a 1986 Broken Arrow High School graduate. She was in Broken Arrow in July, 2012 to accept this award and distinction after performing in the theater that has been named in her honor.

Subway Franchise – In August of 2012, the Broken Arrow High School Cafeteria was the first school

DRM & TRANSPARENCY

in Oklahoma to open its own Subway Franchise. The modified sandwiches meet with the nutritional guidelines required in schools, and all students are eligible to select Subway as a meal option. Since the implementation of Subway at the High School, the program has expanded to North and South Intermediates.

Literacy First – In 2011, the district implemented Literacy First – a research based literacy process that has proven most effective in increasing literacy rates among all students. The program encompasses pre-K through 8th grade as a comprehensive, cumulative method for bringing all students to a high level of reading and writing achievement.

Reading Recovery Program – This is an intense literacy intervention program that targets first grade students reading at two years or more below their peers. It is based on more than a decade of international research that has shown it to be the only universally effective way to intervene in early literacy. Made possible through a partnership with Texas Women's University, the Reading Recovery Program utilizes a reading lab both to host one-on-one instructional sessions with students and train teachers in the expansion of the program throughout the district.

Social Media – Like many other organizations, the school district utilizes social media to communicate with its audiences. These mediums allow the district to communicate quickly and simply with a large number of stakeholders. The district has more than 6,000 likes on Facebook, and more than 1,000 followers on Twitter.

Secured Front Entries at School Facilities – Thanks to the 2009 bond issue, the district has successfully remodeled the front entry of nearly all school sites making each more secure. In addition to the new design, a LobbyGuard visitor check-in system has been added to each site, allowing district staff members to run background checks on every visitor who enters the building.

High School Addition – One of the district's largest construction projects undertaken in the past several years, the 93,000 sq. foot addition to the High School is currently under construction. Classrooms, science labs, a TV studio, black box theatre and more are included in this addition which is scheduled to be complete in early 2014.

Mini-Hub Fiber Node – The BAPS Technology Department in collaboration with Cox Business has created the first mini-hub fiber node for a public school

ACCOUNTABILITY, REFO

system in Oklahoma. The technology is utilized at the Multipurpose Athletic Facility, and will facilitate future demands for data, video and production from the athletics facility, high school and stadium.

Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) – In 2012, the district took steps to change its financial reporting processes to generally accepted accounting principles recognized in all industries. This system allows the district to be eligible for recognition for its sound financial reporting. Last year, the district successfully completed its first CAFR, a significant accomplishment in the financial world.

High School Transformation Committee – In an effort to research innovative high school education, a committee of approximately 40 district stakeholders was created and tasked with this responsibility. In their review of nearly 50 of the nation's best high schools, the committee has identified potential programs and initiatives for implementation at BAHS. From academics to activities to the structure of the school day, all aspects of Broken Arrow High School are being evaluated and transformed to better meet student needs.

Versatrans – Broken Arrow public schools encompasses 115 square miles, and three years ago, the district implemented an electronic routing program.

Known as Versatrans, the program enables district transportation staff to quickly and effectively create bus routes with acceptable ride times, and it also features a web service whereby parents can type their address to learn their child's bus route, bus stop and the times the bus will run.

Budget Committee - Each year a group of employees from throughout the district meets to learn about the budgeting process. These employees represent numerous sites and departments, and each plays an active role in determining the budget priorities for the next fiscal year.

Demographic Study - An ever-growing district, BAPS school leaders commissioned a demographic study to predict district growth over a ten year period. The demographic information has been used to drive various decisions such as land purchases and school construction.

Long Range Planning Committee - Consisting of approximately 50 parents and patrons from throughout the district, this committee is charged with assisting district officials in long-range planning. From redrawing district attendance boundaries to researching land purchases and determining bond issue priorities, this group of stakeholders plays an active role in shaping the district's future.

CRM & TRANSPARENCY

Strategic Plan - More than 150 employees, parents, students and patrons were part of the year-long process that was undertaken to create a multi-year strategic plan for the district. Now in its first year of implementation, committee members will meet annually to review progress and offer input.

PAC and Arts in Education - The Broken Arrow district is home to a state of the art Performing Arts Center that operates as a school facility. Arts students have unique experiences with nationally-known artists from Wynton Marsalis, the cast of "Shrek" to the Karkowska Sisters. The relationship results in unique opportunities like a student performance at Carnegie Hall, and classroom presentations such as the Spencers Theatre of Illusion performer who showed special education students how to use magic as a rehabilitation tool.

Radios - Through a partnership with the City of Broken Arrow, the district has implemented a sophisticated radio system for all school sites and buses. The system is compatible to that used by local emergency responders, providing for seamless communication between school officials and law enforcement.

EBackpack - Specifically designed for online document sharing between teachers and students, EBackpack takes classrooms into the paperless realm. The program, accessible from any location

with an Internet connection, allows teachers to share assignments with specific classes and students can turn in their work online.

Response to Intervention (RTI) - A high-quality, researched-based technique, RTI is a tiered instructional approach whereby struggling learners are identified and provided with increasing levels of intervention. Decisions about the intensity and duration of the interventions are based on the child's response to instruction and the ongoing assessments given by the classroom teacher.

Website - From salary schedules and conflict resolution steps to the superintendent's contract and board agendas, the district website contains a vast amount of information that is available to the public. Patrons are able to send feedback emails on any topic, and those emails are directed to the appropriate employee for a prompt response.

Bond Issue Realignment - In 2011 the district voted to realign \$73 million of a bond issue that was passed in 2009. Believing district needs had changed since the passage of the original bond issue, district leaders worked with the Long Range Planning Committee to create a new list of bond projects that better met district needs. The public approved the realignment by nearly 70%.



FROM WHERE

Read on to find out Dr. Jarod Mendenhall's opinions on these

On early childhood education... **PASS**

To the critics of early childhood education, I would ask why isn't it important? Why wouldn't we want to better prepare our four-year-olds for kindergarten? Why wouldn't we want highly-qualified teachers in those classrooms laying the foundation for learning? Why wouldn't we want to provide safe, structured learning environments for those students who do not enjoy that at home? Why wouldn't we want to educate parents on how to be an active part of their child's education. I worry that our state will eliminate the funding schools receive for early childhood programs, because some critics claim it does nothing to improve student performance on tests. I disagree, because I believe early childhood education is the foundation on which all other learning is built. Research shows us that those students who have a high-quality early education are much more likely to be successful, either by remaining on grade level or by performing at higher levels.

On non-traditional learning options... **PASS**

High school is not what it was when I was there almost 30 years ago. The students learn differently – they are digital natives that crave hands-on, interactive learning experiences and fast-paced schedules. To meet student needs, schools have to evolve to include online learning, technology-infused instruction and other innovative programs like career exploration. Most of the time, the adults involved in these new programs are more uncomfortable with the change than the students are, but as educators, we have to push beyond that comfort zone to do what's best for kids. While our main objective is to provide them with a solid education, we do them a disservice if we do not also prepare them for the real-world college and career opportunities that await.

HERE I STAND

the topics and how they will impact Broken Arrow Public Schools.

On community partnerships... **PASS**

Partnerships with the community are a main ingredient in this recipe of success. From the Tulsa Manufacturing Alliance and the Broken Arrow Chamber of Commerce to Tulsa Community College and NSU-BA, we could not provide programs and opportunities were it not for partnerships. As discussed in previous reports, districts are frequently short on funding, and so creative problem-solving is a necessity in providing students with opportunities like CEP and EXCELeRATE. Educators and business professionals desire the same outcome: educated citizens prepared to enter the workforce. That common goal unites us, and the results of working together can be quite exciting both for the students and the community.

On efforts to end bullying and hunger... **PASS**

I wish that neither of these issues were realities faced by our students, but sadly that is not the case. With nearly 18,000 students in our district, it saddens me to know that both bullying and hunger exist within Broken Arrow, but knowing that fact also motivates me to change it. As families struggle, character education is one of the duties that has fallen to educators to perform, as has finding ways to make sure students have their basic needs met on a regular basis. It would be easy to ignore these issues or use them as excuses for poor performance, but neither would be in the best interests of kids. I am proud of the efforts our district makes in combating both of these issues, because I believe that if we can reach a child's heart, their hands will be used to help others, and their head will be prepared to learn.

CONCLUSION

This report is the final report of the, "Pass or Fail?" series, and so it concludes with some suggestions of what the reader can do to assist in making sure that students are the "Future Focus" of Oklahoma.

1. Citizens must play an active role in educating students.

Parents play a critical role in their child's education. From taking time to read and assist with homework to participating in parent teacher conferences and school events, the role of a parent cannot be overlooked. Aside from parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors and other members of the community can also step in to support those students who do not have parents that are active in their education. Schools are in need of volunteers, and students are in need of mentors. The more resources a community invests in its future citizens, the better for everyone in that community.

2. Citizens must play an active role in educating legislators.

Legislators must hear from citizens in order to understand what issues are of importance in a community. Knowing facts and figures will assist citizens in making their case when speaking with a legislator, and in turn, these conversations can assist legislators in educating their peers as they write and approve bills. Citizens should know who their representatives are as well as the best method for contacting their elected official. Legislators have many interests to consider when crafting legislation and calculating budgets, and citizen input can assist in establishing priorities. If the laws are to reflect the wants of the citizenry, rural, suburban and urban voices must be heard at the state Capitol.

3. Citizens must remain educated on the issues affecting their public schools.

Citizens have an important role to play in shaping their community schools. From the panhandle to the mountains of southeast Oklahoma, school districts need the ideas and support of their patrons. Each individual brings new ideas, expertise and experiences that can enhance the school environment and improve students' quality of education. By communicating with educators, citizens can play an active role in identifying and solving issues as they arise, and together both groups can also plan for the future of their district.

A FINAL NOTE FROM DR. MENDENHALL ABOUT FUTURE FOCUS

As you can see, we have a lot to be proud of in our state, and I am specifically proud of all that has been accomplished by the students and staff of the Broken Arrow Public School District. There are hundreds of other districts in our state, and each has accomplishments, programs and people of which a community can be proud. Do we have work to do as a state? Most definitely. The process of continually improving will never cease. We have much to do if our state's system of public education is to be the envy of the nation, and even when we get to that point, we will still have work to do to stay the best.

Despite the obstacles discussed in this series, I am encouraged by the positive progress of public schools. Our students have more opportunities than ever before, and as schools continue to improve, I expect those opportunities to expand beyond what we can even imagine today. Students are the future of our state, and the adults owe it to them to create the best possible path for success. That can only happen when the adults are willing to collaborate, compromise and do what's best for kids. I often remind Broken Arrow students and staff to dream big and then dream bigger, and I want the citizens of Oklahoma to do the same thing.

I hope readers have found this series to be informative, and I thank everyone who took the time to read the information that was presented. Broken Arrow is but one of many successful public school districts in this state, and regardless of the challenges that lie ahead of us, every day is a great day to be a Tiger.

Jared Mendenhall





Broken Arrow Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, genetic information, veteran status, marital status or age in its employment, programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Broken Arrow Public Schools will take all necessary steps to ensure that each school and work place in the District is free from unlawful discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, marital status or age. The following people within the District have been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination issues and concerns:

- The Chief Human Resources Officer, Ed Fager, should be contacted for all non-student and/or employment related issues at 918-259-5700 or at 701 South Main Street, Broken Arrow, OK 74012;
- The Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services, Amy Fichtner, should be contacted for all student issues related to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, at 918-259-5700 or at 701 South Main Street, Broken Arrow, OK 74012;
- The Director of Special Education, Carol Gruben, should be contacted for all student issues related to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA), at 918-259-5700 or at 701 South Main Street, Broken Arrow, OK 74012;
- The Assistant Athletic Director, Melenda Knight, should be contacted for all student issues related to Title IX, of the Education Amendments of 1972, at 918-259-4310 or at 1901 E. Albany, Broken Arrow, OK 74012.

Inquiries concerning non-discrimination can also be made to the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

Broken Arrow Public Schools Education Service Center
701 South Main Street
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
(918) 259-5700 | F: (918) 259-4334
www.baschools.org