

"The Cat's Tale"

November 2013

As we near the Thanksgiving break, I want to thank our students and staff for their hard work thus far. We are having a good year. I see students engaged and excited about learning. I see our staff working very hard to help our students succeed. I see a great deal of support from parents and the community. This is extremely encouraging to me. These are the three vital components for student success.

Our architect says that if all goes well we should be ready to start construction in the spring. The construction will include three (safe room) classrooms at the Elementary School. There will be two (safe room) classrooms at the High School. This will allow us to move teachers currently housed in the Middle School Annex to the High School. These teachers teach high school classes and it will be a great benefit to have them in the high school where their students are. One of these rooms will be a computer lab which is much needed both for regular classes and for testing. The third project will be the Agricultural building. This building will have a safe room component in it. A section of the building will be built to withstand tornados. In the event of inclement weather, it is much safer to have students stay in the building where they are than to have them traverse through the elements by moving from building to building.

We should have our much needed buses before the end of the year. We plan to start working on roofs and air conditioning units as soon as we return from Christmas break. At that time we will also begin working on our technology infrastructure. The technology infrastructure is often overlooked. It is not openly visible to the world but when it is lacking it is realized by staff and students when they're working with the devices they need to be successful in today's world. The success of our last bond issue will allow us to begin the process of upgrading and adding to our internal hardware. This attention is much needed and we are very excited to begin this process. We believe it will be of great benefit to our students and their education.

We are fortunate to have received a grant to write a Hazard Mitigation Plan for the school. It has taken two plus years to get this funded. We have received notification of our award and have started the process of writing the plan. It usually takes about one year to complete. If the plan is successful we can then apply for FEMA funds to help with future construction of facilities that would be safe rooms.

I want to congratulate our Cross Country team for a successful year. I want to thank Coach Drinkard and Coach Love for their time and efforts. Three students qualified for the OSSAA State Cross Country meet held in Edmond. They included Jose de la Cruz who finished an outstanding third overall and made All-State with his performance. Miranda Nolen and Juanita Flores also qualified for State and finished 26th and 21st respectfully.

I want to congratulate Coach George and our Lady Wildcat Softball Team. I saw a tremendous amount of improvement this year. If our team puts the same effort into their games next year as they did this year I see them as a force to be reckoned with in the future.

We are nearing the end of the football season. I am proud of Coach Cooper and his staff. I am especially proud of the team. They have shown tenacity and grit in battling through a long season. As I write this "tale" their season record has not yet been determined but I expect them to finish the season with a tremendous amount of Wildcat Pride. Pauls Valley is in for a fight.

We are very proud of both the boys' and girls' teams and of all of our student athletes and their accomplishments.

The A-F Report Card has been released. What was not released is that due to errors, most schools' grades have changed more than five times in the last month alone. Janet Barresi, our state superintendent, blamed school districts for not catching the State Department of Education's mistakes? We are sorry; there were a lot of them.

There is an old saying about statistics: You can prove most anything with statistics if that's what you are trying to do. What the overly simplistic A-F grade does not tell you is that there is nothing in the formula that accounts for demographics, socio-economical issues, and especially language issues. It does not tell you of the massive amount of problems associated with the tests and the testing company. It does not tell you that some of the tests had so many problems that they were thrown out. It does not tell you that objective researchers from the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University have determined that the A-F system is invalid and unreliable. Therefore, a word to the wise would be to look closely at the agenda of those who have initiated this flawed system.

When superintendents from across the state dared complain about the serious flaws in testing and the A-F system, our state superintendent, Janet Barresi, accused them of making excuses and bucking transparency and accountability. This is unfair and simply not true. We expect to be held accountable. We hold ourselves accountable. We simply want the playing field to be fair, and with the current system, it isn't. That's not an excuse. It is the reality.

I question why the governor (through her minion) threatened school officials to be quiet and reminded us that they hold the purse strings. In all my years of education, I can't remember a time when public school morale has been so low. At the same time that an effective leader should set high standards, they should also provide resources, assistance, solutions, guidance, motivation and encouragement. Those important qualities are lacking in our State Superintendent, Janet Barresi. She appears to have a grudge against public school education and is using the powers of her office to demean and ridicule us.

In Madill, we have a unique, diverse demographic that only a couple of other schools in the state share. We open our doors to all children who live in our district and we wouldn't have it any other way. Every child is special to us and it is our mission to see that every child receives the best possible education.

But the simple truth is that our demographics pose challenges for us that cause us to be penalized on the simplistic A-F grading system. It is not fair to expect us to show the same kind of progress as schools with totally different demographics.

Over all, we have an excellent staff of dedicated professionals who work hard for our students. We don't make excuses or shy away from accountability. Instead, we continuously work on school improvement and are dedicated to improving the quality of education we provide our students. I would stack our staff up against any in the state. We are aware of our issues and we work hard every day to address them. We work hard for ALL students.

In a recent survey our staff overwhelmingly stated they felt as if they were under attack by the State Department of Education. I have to agree with them. A lesser staff might be demoralized by these actions. We will NOT! We will always try to improve and do the best we can for our students regardless of scores or others' political agendas.

Thank you for your trust in us and your continued support.

It's a great day to be a WILDCAT!

Yours in Education,

Mr. Tuck