

Superintendent Adam Cheeseman's State of the Schools address delivered June 7, 2018.

The state of our schools is strong because of the commitment of our students, staff and administration together with the leadership of our Board of Education.

I begin my report with student achievement. Since my last report on the state of our schools we have received recognition both statewide and nationally. Our county placed fourth in the state in the West Virginia statewide educational assessment. Only three other county systems scored higher in academic achievement throughout the state; and the one above us, Ohio, was only one point above us. The districts ahead of us are from large population centers. We can take pride in our students in what they have accomplished. The national press has also taken notice. U.S. News and World Reports in their "Best High Schools" edition has, for the second year in a row, listed Doddridge County High School as a bronze medal school. 20,500 high schools across the nation were examined and fewer than 6,000 across the nation were recognized and nearly 2/3 of them were located in cities. Doddridge County is a very unique and special place to raise and educate children.

2017-18 saw the first year in our new administrative structure. We have two directors and they oversee coordinators in the areas of curriculum, attendance/CTE, child nutrition, transportation, technology and maintenance. As you will see, this new structure has provided great dividends.

Attendance at all three schools has significantly improved. In fact, our assistant prosecuting attorney recently congratulated us for not having to file a single truancy petition. Our attendance, district-wide, stands at 94%. Our graduation rate continues to be impressive as well. Doddridge County High School was acknowledged by State Superintendent Dr. Steven Paine for achieving a 96.25% graduation rate. We have worked very hard throughout the system to prepare our students for success in High School.

Last year saw the roll-out of our new Vision and Mission Statement. In it, we have envisioned the type of student we wish to see graduate Doddridge County High School. Beginning with the first day of preschool we will prepare our students for that day in May when they step out of our school buildings and into life as an adult. We will prepare them for the next step in their journey, whether it be college, trade school or directly into a job. Toward this end we will make sure that their education is grounded in the practical skills that prepare a student for life as an adult.

This last year we began a Project Based Learning (PBL) initiative. This means that classroom teachers will present to their class a project or problem to be solved. Students will then have to solve the problem using the basic skills they have learned. I often hear students say "Why do I have to learn this? I'll never use it after I graduate." Students that complete a PBL see first-hand how valuable that math course or the English course was when they have to solve the PBL by calculating the result and providing a written report. PBL's also help students to think critically and creatively as they work toward the result. PBL's are prepared not with a single result in mind, however each result must be correct and defensible.

We are committing resources to each school to improve our Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math classes. 21st century jobs, whether in the oil field or on Main Street will require employees that know how to handle technology. We have purchased 3-D printers, laser engravers as well as other training tools for the next generation of workers. We will have "maker-spaces" where students will be able to innovate and market ideas. The future will be brightest for those students that not only think outside the box, but are trained on the equipment necessary for employment.

Towards these goals we have created a new course called "Career Exploration." This course is currently an elective but will be a required course beginning with the class of 2022. This course will be an opportunity for students to learn the basics of life as an adult. Students will learn how to open a checking account, how to apply for credit, how to evaluate a loan agreement. It will also provide a chance for students to receive real-life work experiences at local businesses. We have approached over forty businesses ranging from energy companies to hair salons, from banks to restaurants to participate in this course. Students will be given an opportunity to either visit the site or to receive training and information in the classroom regarding requirements in many different jobs. By narrowing down interests, students can be better prepared after graduation to become a leader in their job of choice.

Our vision for the student is not only to succeed academically. We see our mission to educate the "holistic child." This term refers to our approach to help every student become the best version of themselves. Some of our students are raised in homes that cannot fully provide for them. We will continue to reach out to these families through a variety of means including the Backpack Program, clothing programs and counseling outreach. We also provide summer feeding opportunities, afterschool meals and we partner with the Wellness Center on the Middle School/ Elementary School campus. Our plan is to do more. Our Mental Health Specialist meets with children in crises and provides resources for them to cope with sometimes terrifying issues. We will extend these efforts so that our staff is trained to recognize mental health and other traumas with each school becoming a Trauma-Informed School. We will be developing a program to strengthen our families by coming together for a meal and learning how to improve together as a community. We strive to ensure that our students know that they are valued and that we seek for them to be physically, mentally and socially healthy.

Over the last year we have increased our food services to our students. Studies show that hunger and malnourishment greatly affect the ability of our students to learn. We have continued our breakfast and lunch programs as well as our breakfast after first block and after school feeding programs. Last summer we participated in a federal summer feeding program called Read and Feed and we will be continuing the program this year. We took the seats out of a school bus and used it as a mobile feeding site throughout the county. Beginning June 19 we will be going to Greenwood, West Union, and Smithburg areas to provide one meal a day to our students in those communities. Our goal is to provide nutritious meals to our students so that when they return in the fall they are ready to learn. At the Middle School we have a new greenhouse where vegetables grown will be used in the "Farm to School" program. We also celebrated the success of our Child Nutrition Coordinator Tiffany Curran, West Virginia's Child Nutrition Director of the Year.

We continue to improve our facilities. We are putting the finishing touches on the new student activity center. It is a beautiful building that will provide indoor practices for student athletics, band and other extra-curricular activities. Science classes as well as other classes will be able to use this space for laboratory experiments and tests. Progress continues on the new football, track and baseball complex.

We now have the ability to live stream events at the high school gymnasium. Next year you will be able to watch volleyball and basketball games live through your computer or other device. To get further details and to sign up for this new technology please visit the "Parent" tab at the county schools website: <http://www.dcschools.us>. We will also be getting this technology set up for track, football, softball and baseball in the future.

We have also sought to extend our ability to communicate necessary information to our students, parents and the community. We have started using our new telephone system that will permit each classroom to have ready communication throughout the school system. Emergency numbers are pre-programmed directly to the prevention resource officer in the building. The new system will also permit parents to call into their children's teachers during the teacher's planning period. My monthly newsletter continues to go out through the newspaper and by social media. It informs the community of our educational efforts. We have grown our already good relationships with television stations and have seen numerous positive television pieces on the facility improvements, our child nutrition program, our Project Based Learning initiative, as well as our new mission statement.

Safety continues to be a very high priority throughout the district. We continue to train and retrain our staff and students. This week we have conducted county wide drills with teachers, law enforcement and county first responders. In the fall we hope to include students in a large-scale drill to make sure everyone is prepared in the event of an emergency. We will continue to improve upon the safety features at the schools to reduce the opportunity for tragedy.

Our Athletics saw a successful year with four teams winning championships. Our Boys Cross Country Team won a state championship last fall. Our Girls Track Team added State Championship number 11. Finally, our Middle School Football team and Middle School Wrestling teams won the LKC Middle School Championship. All of our athletes should be commended for their efforts.

The Doddridge County Band of Pride competed well at their Regional Band Festival competition in April receiving 2's across the board. We again shared our students and the High School Auditorium with the Mountaineer Creative Arts Council's children's theater. Every year they produce an amazing play that brings the community together.

This year we selected our second JASON Learning Argonaut to study science. Courtney Sanford, a Junior at DCHS will be going to the Bahamas to study sea turtles. There, she and Tim Curtis, our Options Pathway teacher, will join students from across the United States and the world to learn from top marine biologists.

Our students have faced adversity and have become closer and more mature because of it. We have had students who have loved ones; one student has been in the hospital for several weeks and we recently had a student injured at the State Track Meet. I am encouraged and humbled by the response of our student body as they rally around their classmates.

I continue to meet with my student advisory council at the high school. They provide useful guidance and suggestions for what is going on not only at the high school but also the community. These kids know what is going on and speak honestly about what it means to be a young adult in Doddridge County.

Doddridge County Elementary School saw an average A honor roll of 142 students with an average of 94 of those students earning a 4.0. That is excellent.

Doddridge County Middle School saw an average of 95 students make the A honor roll. In Benchmark testing at the Middle School 70 percent of students saw increased reading scores and 66 percent increased in math.

Doddridge County High School's "A" honor roll was 109 students four students receiving the Continuous 4.0 award.

The Class of 2018 received a total of 76 scholarships along with 10 Promise Scholarship winners. Scholarships awarded were worth \$641,080 to our students.

In conclusion, the 2017-2018 school year has been successful. But, throughout, the accomplishments of our students, the teachers and the board has been on display.

Our schools' accomplishments this year can be summed up in this year's theme: "Keep Climbing." We have built upon our previous successes and sought out new heights. The staff moves and hires, the facility safety upgrades, the attention to the schools, all of this has been done to unify our school system so that we are all pulling in the same direction in a student-focus team approach. My emphasis has been on loving the students, to encourage them to strive for success and achieve their goals. I think we have made great strides this year in putting a plan in place where students can flourish; and when they look back at their educational experience, be able to say that the adults in their world cared for them and sought to bring out the best in them.

Thank you and have a great evening.

