

Recently I received a phone call asking me to appear on the radio program “Inside Shale” with Hoppy Kercheval. The radio program explores how the energy industry affects West Virginia. The energy industry is proud of how additional tax revenue helps out the communities in which they are located. I would like to share with you what I shared on the radio program and how the additional funds received over the last few years have been spent to increase academic achievement, provide for student safety and to build facilities for the future.

For the 2008-2009 school year Doddridge County students in 3-8th grade ranked 53rd out of 55 counties in the statewide assessment. In 2017, we were fourth overall and our 3-8th graders were fifth overall. The school system that was second-most improved was Pendleton County which improved 27 slots. The 48 spots improved is historic and unrivaled. Not all of this improvement is attributable to our increased revenue; our success is due to the hard work of our students, our teachers and our parents. However, the additional revenue has helped us to feed our children through breakfast, lunch and after school meals. Many studies show that students that are not hungry concentrate better and do better in school. We have also been able to hire more teachers and aides to help out with our students with exceptionalities. Our goal is that every student be equipped to find a job after graduation. The revenue has allowed us to purchase equipment and technology that will provide our students with training they will be using in their jobs after graduation. We are able to provide all of this because of the additional revenue.

We have also used the additional revenue to build new buildings. When we built the new High School we issued a bond for the payment. This bond will be paid off this May and will not appear on the tax records for next year. We have also built an auxiliary gym, weight room and classrooms at the high school as well as a student activity center on the high school campus. This allows all students to ride the activity busses home since all sports can practice right after school. This will get our students home earlier so that they will be better rested for school the next day. It also means that our students that drive will be home before dark, except in the dead of winter. We will soon be changing over our lighting in the auditorium from large old-type theater lamps to more efficient LED stage lighting. The new lights will be easier to maintain and operate and will last much longer than the old bulbs.

We have made a strong push to reduce our campuses to two locations; the Elementary/Middle School and the High School. Our current football and track facility has flooded every few years. We then have to pay to have the facility repaired. Most every home football and track event have cars parked along Route 18. It is not uncommon to see families with young children and infants walking on the road as traffic passes by. Moreover, our students drive to the football, track and baseball fields for practice along busy US Route 50. As truck traffic increases on Route 50 we believe that moving the athletic complex to the high school increases safety not only for our students, but for our families as well.

We built a new multi-purpose building at the Elementary School. This provides for physical education classes and recess time to continue while the lunchroom is being prepared and used.

We have made many safety improvements throughout the schools. Every school across the nation is concerned about student safety to protect our children from those who would wish harm. We are in a financial position to make those safety improvements. We made a safe

schools entrance at the Elementary School, we provided for a safety lane at the middle school and have provided safety advances at the High School. We have three Prevention Resource Officers at the schools to help protect our students and to act as a mentors to our vulnerable students.

We have spent approximately 7.5 million dollars on the improvements made and received funding from the School Building Authority for 1.18 million, excluding the new Athletic Complex. I believe our students are safer because of our efforts. I believe that the increase in our state-wide ranking is a direct result of how we have spent the additional revenue that the oil and gas boom has generated. These buildings will be here for many future generations of students. It will be a testament to the Doddridge County Citizens of our time, right now, caring about those future students.

But revenue is not our greatest asset. Our greatest asset is our community and the support our community has shown toward our students and toward education. We are proud of our rich history in support of education. I am proud to be the Superintendent during this crucial time in Doddridge County's history. We have made many great strides to provide a first-class education for our students and I look forward toward advancing even further.