

AN AUBURN-WASHBURN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 437 PUBLICATION

SCHOOL NEWS

Summer 2019-2020



#keeplearning





Dr. Scott McWilliams, *Superintendent of Schools*

What a year; the 2019-20 school year will not be forgotten! The reality is Auburn-Washburn students and staff were experiencing a fantastic school year from day one through Spring Break. WRHS had a record high 19 students named National Merit Commended Scholars, National Hispanic Scholar, National Merit Semifinalists, and Presidential Scholars. Brian White, Executive Director of Human Resources and Operations, was named the National Human Resources Administrator of the Year. The inaugural season of Girls Wrestling in Kansas ended with WRHS female wrestlers and coaches proudly earning the first ever State Championship Trophy. WRMS teacher Lara McDonald was crowned the Region 2 Kansas Secondary Teacher of the Year. We received feedback about our next Five-Year Strategic Plan from nearly 900 students, staff, parents, and engaged members from the Auburn-Washburn school community. We had completed an extremely successful three quarters of the school year.

We do not experience too many things in a lifetime that truly rock the entire world, but that is exactly what occurred after Spring Break. COVID-19 was a game changer that challenged us to create a path that previously did not exist in our schools. When it was announced on March 17 that Kansas schools would be closed to students for the rest of the school year, we rallied to do our absolute best to keep students safe at home yet engaged in learning opportunities from school. It was a completely unexpected approach, but better to chart a new path forward than to not push forward at all.

In Goal 2 of our Strategic Plan, one skill for success we teach and model for students is resiliency. If given only one word to summarize the Auburn-Washburn school community this school year, I would with great pride select the word resilient. When our students, families, and staff were placed in a situation that was far from ideal, we did not give up. Instead, we united, we rallied, we cared for kids as well as each other, and we committed to moving forward in the best possible way. It is with extreme sincerity that I say thank you. Thank you for being understanding, flexible, patient, and above all else, for being resilient! ★



Tom Bruno, *Board of Education President*

The 2019-2020 school year will be one that I will never forget. The end of the school year was a huge challenge for our students, parents, and staff. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped us deal with this challenge. The students had

to learn a new way to learn, our teachers had to learn a new way to inspire and teach, and, for me as a parent, I had to learn to be technical support. It was not easy for anyone.

When our facilities were shutdown in March, the entire staff of Auburn-Washburn took the challenge head on. Their first concern was for our students and their welfare. Our food service staff figured out how to continue to feed hundreds of students every day. Our transportation team members, working with our food service, made sure that those meals got to those distribution points. Our teachers took their own time to do neighborhood parades, to show our students that they miss them, and that they care about their

well-being. I cannot say enough about how lucky we are to have the best staff of any school district in the country.

I also want to take an opportunity to send a message to our graduating class of 2020. I always look forward to our graduation in May, but that did not happen yet this year. We look forward to celebrating graduation on August 2. This spring there was no senior prom, no performances, competitions, or your planned final day of school. For that, I am very sorry. Those traditions and memories can be special but your experience was also valuable in that it both revealed and strengthened your resolve. It also serves as a lesson for the future.

Please stay safe and healthy, and I hope we reach our “new normal” soon. ★

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Washburn Rural High School

What started as conversations at WRHS about school culture and suicide prevention has culminated in a school-wide program. **Sources of Strength** is a diverse group of students and adults who are working to spread hope, help, and strength into every corner of the community.

“Our mission recognizes that our voice has great power and we use it to break the silence when someone is struggling, and to connect them to the help they need and deserve,” said WRHS Social Worker Matthew Swedland. “We spread hope by focusing on stories of strength, rather than on stories of trauma.” He said they want to instill a culture of resilience and hope where students feel confident in leaning on their strengths and to seek help for themselves and their friends when they do start to feel overwhelmed.

Sources of Strength is just one of many initiatives started by the school’s Mental Health Club. These include the mental health bulletin board, participation in the Shawnee County youth suicide prevention coalition, and a food/clothing bank. Sources of Strength relies on trained Peer Leaders that represent all corners of the school community. Not long after Peer Leaders were trained, schools were closed due to COVID-19. Swedland said students had great ideas for how to adapt and continue the mission within the context of virtual learning. Video meetings conducted by the group helped maintain a positive attitude and outlook. The goal of the group is to be as inclusive as possible. “Anyone who is passionate or interested in suicide prevention and positive school culture should reach out to me or any of our adult leaders,” Swedland said. “We would love to have you involved.” ★

Auburn Elementary

Auburn Elementary held a summer sendoff as a way to give closure after an unusual last quarter. The school staff’s vehicles were escorted along the route by the Auburn Police Chief and the Auburn Fire Department.

“This gave everyone the opportunity to wave good-bye to their teachers who many had not seen since March and to celebrate the end of a unique school year,” said Second Grade Teacher Alisha Schwinn. All staff including teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, food service, bus drivers, and custodians were invited to participate. ★



Photo courtesy of
Lenses and Lace
Photography

Washburn Rural Middle School

Washburn Rural Middle School just completed a banner year of staff recognitions. Language Arts Teacher Lara McDonald was named the Auburn-Washburn Secondary Teacher of the Year and went on to be named Kansas Region 2 Teacher of the Year.

“It was a well-deserved honor for Mrs. McDonald to be recognized,” WRMS principal Mark Koepsel said. “She builds great relationships with students and advocates for them inside and outside of school.”

In July, Science Teacher Diana Roney was named the monthly winner of the KMAJ Radio Crystal Apple Award. In January, she was surprised with an all school assembly where she was named the program’s Crystal Apple annual grand prize winner. She earned a \$1,000 donation for the school and other prizes.

Gifted Teacher Lindsey Dowell was named as Kansas History Day Teacher of the Year. She is now in the running for the national level award. Dowell was also named as the 2019 Kansas Council for History Education Secondary Teacher of the Year.

This spring, Social Studies Teacher Winston Heilman was named the district Secondary Teacher of the Year. This fall he competes in the statewide program.

“We have a highly effective staff, who work well together to provide both a quality education and a welcoming environment,” Koepsel said. “Whenever we have one of our own recognized for such an honor, it is a reflection on our staff and school as a whole.” ★

Farley Elementary

Each week after schools were closed, Farley Elementary shared a staff message to students that featured a different theme such as a favorite book, favorite song, or a funny childhood memory. It provided a connection and let students learn more about their school staff. Counselor Marie Coats started the project and Librarian Lindsay Kufahl helped streamline the process using the free website Flipgrid. Over the seven weekly messages, 192 videos were recorded and shared with a combined total of 10,483 views. Interactive video classes were another way teachers shared information and stayed connected. Some of these



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Strategic Plan 2021: Year 4 - Inspiring, Challenging, and Preparing Every Child, Every Day

Student Goals

- Goal 1 – To improve the academic performance of each student.
- Goal 2 – To develop skills for success with each student.

District Priorities that Support Student Goals

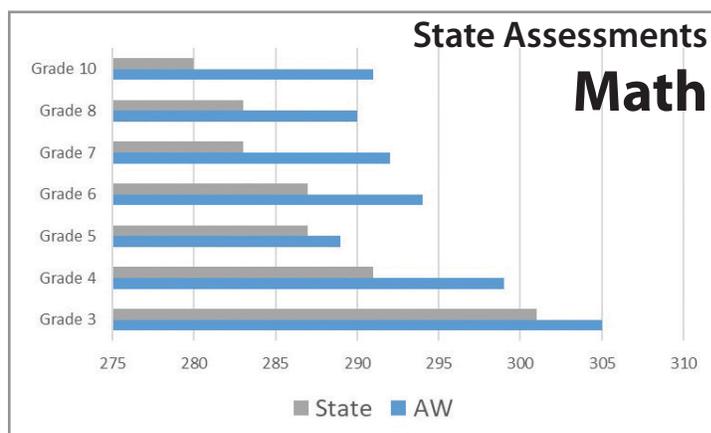
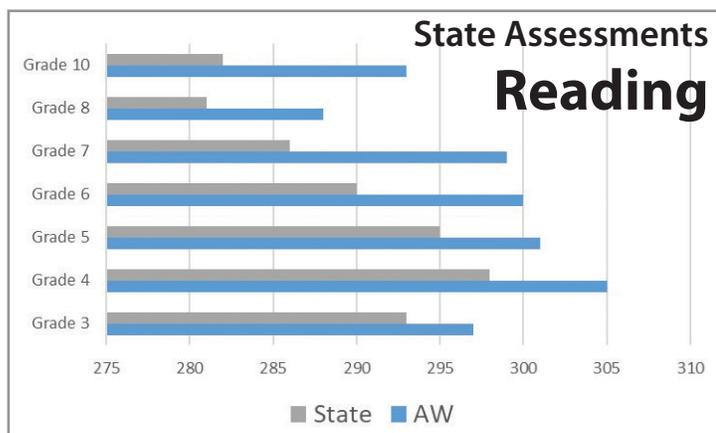
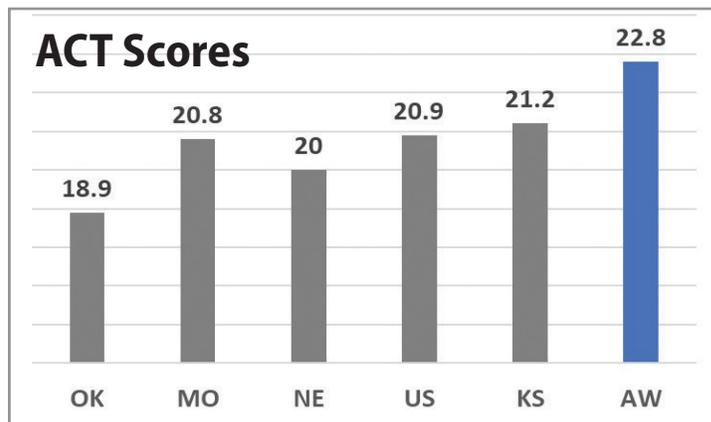
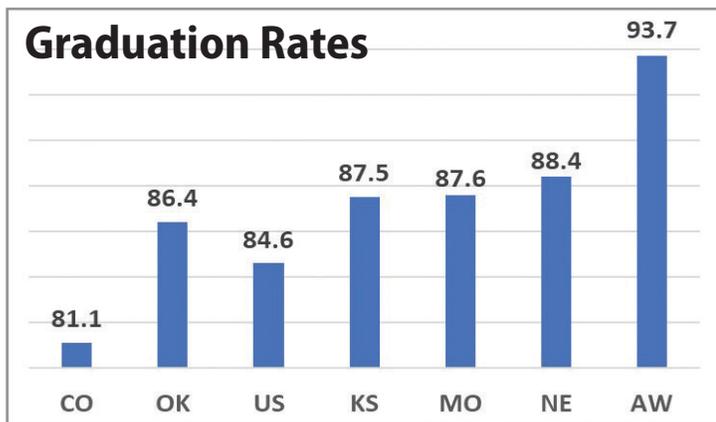
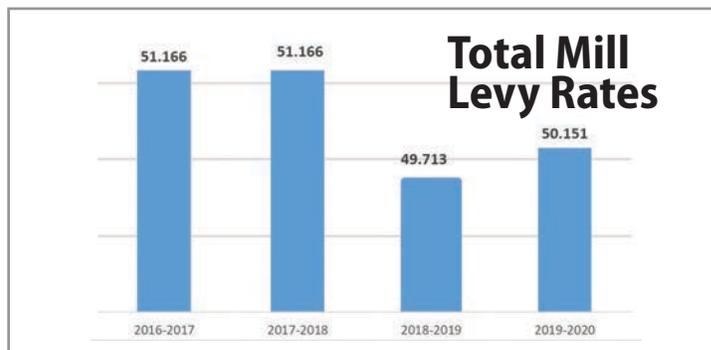
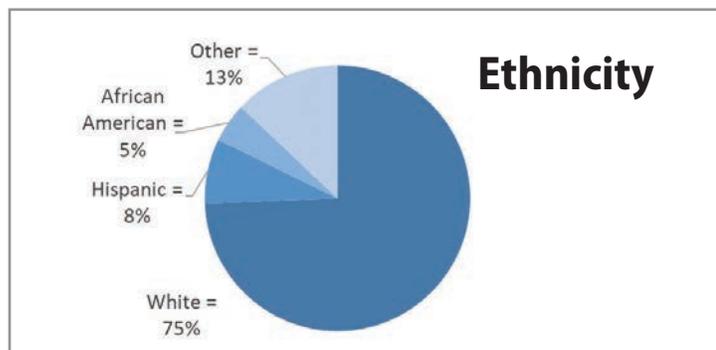
- Outstanding Staff
- Community Engagement
- Effective Resource Management
- Safe, Well-Maintained and Current Facilities

By the Numbers

2019-2020 enrollment was 6,236 w/ 95.1% attendance rate
Of the 2020 WRHS graduates:

- 129 had a 4.0 GPA or better
- 91.5% of reported pursuing post-secondary education (includes 2 & 4 year, vocational, military, and apprenticeships)
- 22 received a CTE certification
- 197 students had earned 12+ college or equivalent hours

**All information and graphs represent most current data available*



POINTS of Pride

Auburn Washburn Unified School District 437

Art Award

WRHS Senior Coral About won a National Silver Key for her weaving "Thermal Egg."



National History Day

Washburn Rural Middle School students Griffin Reiff, Kaitlin Jackson, Audrey Caleb, and Allison Reed qualified to compete in National History Day.

Niche Award

Auburn-Washburn was named Niche #5 District in Kansas.

The 2020 Best School Districts ranking is based on rigorous analysis of key statistics and millions of reviews from students and parents using data from the U.S. Department of Education. Ranking factors include state test scores, college readiness, graduation rates, SAT/ACT scores, teacher quality, public school district ratings, and more.



National Merit Scholars

Five Washburn Rural High School students were named National Merit Finalists, placing them in the top 1% of students nationwide. This included Shang (Sunny) Chen, Trystan Cheung, Adison Hoppas, Aditi Malay, and Jay Ram.

Joseph Sanderson was named National Merit Hispanic Scholar placing him in the top 2% of all Hispanic students.



Eight WRHS students were named National Merit Commended Scholars placing them in the top 5% of students nationwide. This included Gracelynn Bradbury, Petre Dimitriu, Liam Hall, Raegan Hardesty, Jaden Hamilton Parker, Emma Schroeder, Zoe Spangler, and Samantha Wendt.

Five WRHS seniors were selected as Presidential Scholar Candidates. This included Shang (Sunny) Chen, Trent Dodge, Aditi Malay, Jaden Hamilton Parker, and Jay Ram.

Staff Recognition



WRMS Language Arts Teacher Lara McDonald was named Region 2 Kansas Secondary Teacher of the Year.



WRHS German Teacher Kaylee Barber received the Kansas Horizon Award for new teachers.

Executive Director of Human Resources & Operations Brian White was named National Human Resources Administrator of the Year.

Athletic Accomplishments

Congratulations to our Washburn Rural High School 2019-2020 State Champions!

- State Boys Cross Country Team Championship
- State Girls Wrestling Team Championship
- Dajia Anderson, State Girls Wrestling Individual Championship
- Bishop Murray, State Boys Wrestling Individual Championship
- Jacob Tangpricha, State Boys Wrestling Individual Championship



WRHS Unified Sports Program made ESPN's Top 34 list.

Farley Elementary

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sessions included special guests. Fifth Grade Teacher

Emily Jakle was able to include Slugger, the KC Royals, mascot in an online class with students. “The day Slugger joined us, the students were definitely surprised,” Jakle said. “They loved having Slugger there, asking him lots of questions, as well as answering questions from him. ★

Indian Hills Elementary

Unable to continue in-person group meetings with students, Indian Hills Counselor Hanna Kemble launched a virtual Lunch Bunch. Community members who had something interesting to share were featured.



Kemble said it was a great experience for students. “We talked a lot about being kind to our planet, that you learn by making mistakes, that no one is perfect, you have to work hard to accomplish your goals, and that traveling the world to understand other people and cultures is so important,” Kemble said. “And of course we talked about food.”

“Guests would tell me that this was the most fun they had over the entire time we have all been at home,” Kemble said. She said the best thing the schools can do right now is to model flexibility and creativity as well as build relationships in new ways with our students. ★

Jay Shideler Elementary



To wrap the year up, Jay Shideler typically has a massive show to feature the talents of students in grades four through six. The production typically features acts including dance, music, gymnastics, and theater. This

year, because they could not be together, they chose to do something a little bit different. Students who wanted to participate in the talent show submitted a video of themselves to be included in the “virtual talent show.” This opened up the possibilities of what could be done for talent show submis-

sions. “Our first submission was a student doing all sorts of trick shots around his house that may not have been feasible in the gym of Jay Shideler,” said Music Teacher and show organizer Connor Penton. ★

Pauline Central Primary

At the beginning of National Heart Month in February, Pauline Central kicked off their American Heart Association’s Kids Heart Challenge. The challenge is a national initiative to raise funds for heart research and education. The program evolved from Jump Rope and Hoops for Heart.

Physical Education Teacher Shellie Stahly and her students spent the month fundraising and celebrated their efforts with a special party. During the party, students had the opportunity to participate in lots of fun activities and challenges.



“Our students do a wonderful job of raising money and they put their hearts into it with the knowledge that they are helping people whose hearts are not as healthy as their own,” Stahly said. “I am so proud of the effort our students put into this, and they have been one of the highest money raisers in NE Kansas for many years.” ★

Pauline South Intermediate

In February, Pauline South held their STREAM Fair to focus on Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, the Arts, and Math. “It showcases the interests and talents of our students and staff,” said Intervention-

ist Angela Triggs. “It’s a great way of connecting and building relationships.” It also has interactive stations so families can create something together. A Glo-Gallery featured work from Taylor Lynch’s Art classes. “We had the room lit with only black lights and ocean sounds playing. It truly felt like you were going on an underwater adventure,” Librarian Lisa Duncan said.



The fair is supported by teachers, support staff, custodians, food service, and others. “We take turns before and after school before the fair to help students with their projects,” Triggs said. ★

Wanamaker Elementary

A neighborhood parade by staff that came about quickly at Wanamaker Elementary ended up being featured on CBS This Morning. A map of the planned route was shared with the community. Staff gathered at the school to decorate cars and make signs. “We had 52 cars in our teacher caravan,” Decker said. “The streets were lined with Wanamaker students and their sweet families



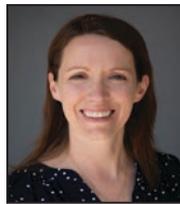
waving flags, holding up posters, and smiling from ear to ear.”

The notoriety of national TV coverage was nice but the staff felt the real benefit was being able to show students how much they cared. Decker said, “It was so exciting to turn a corner and see families smiling and waving frantically at us. It warmed their hearts and did just as much good for our hearts.”★

Distinguished Staff Awards



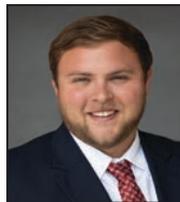
Hanna Kemble
IH Counselor
Distinguished Certified Support Staff



Sarah Wells
Pauline Central Grade 1
Elementary Teacher of the Year



Linessa Frazier
PC Assistive Tech Aide
Distinguished Classified Support Staff



Winston Heilman
WRMS Social Studies
Secondary Teacher of the Year



Ryun Bayless
District Maintenance
Distinguished Operations Support Staff



Nicholas Bowling
WRHS Language Arts
District Master Teacher



Kaylee Barber
WRHS German Teacher
Kansas Horizon Award ★

The Teachers of the Year and the Master Teacher go on to represent the district at the state level.

2020 Retirees

- Coni Fenton** - PS Secretary - 22 Years of Svc
- Kent Bryan** - SEC Preventative Maintenance - 13 Years of Svc
- Karolyn Fulmer** - WRHS Paraeducator - 11 Years of Svc
- Linda Thompson** - PC Paraeducator - 13 Years of Svc
- Don Davis** - SEC Groundskeeper - 28 Years of Svc
- Kent Griffin** - IH Grade 6 Teacher - 5 Years of Svc
- Kathryn Eli-Schneider** - WRHS Special Education Teacher - 25 Years of Svc
- Amy Kester-Niehaus** - WRHS Special Education Teacher - 14 Years of Svc
- Susan Ottman** - PC Early Childhood Teacher - 12 Years of Svc
- Ann Metzger** - PC Special Education Teacher - 7 Years of Svc
- Alcinda Daniels** - WRHS Art Teacher - 14 Years of Svc
- Jacqueline Gilbert** - WE Grade 5 Teacher - 32 Years of Svc
- Diane Ballou** - WRHS Secretary - 22 Years of Svc
- John Webb** - WRHS Custodian - 17 Years of Svc
- Donald Scholl** - PLC Paraeducator - 5 Years of Svc
- David McGeeny** - Bus Driver - 5 Years of Svc
- Denise Taylor** - Board Clerk - 25 Years of Svc ★

Years of Service Recognition

35 Years of Service

- Rita Manker** – AE Grade 1 Teacher
- Doug Stanley** – WRMS Science Teacher

Kathy Schnacker – AE Food Service

Gerald Vandervort – WRHS Agricultural Ed Teacher

25 Years of Service

- Deanna Brant** – PC Paraprofessional
- Kak Eli-Schneider** – WRHS Special Education Teacher
- Christi Evans** – WRMS SFA Teacher
- Pam Grieves** – SEC Secretary
- Kristine Wanamaker** – PS Special Education Teacher ★

30 Years of Service

- Sandy Hardesty** – WRHS Social Studies Teacher
- Kerry Johnson** – WRMS Social Studies Teacher
- Penny Lane** – WRHS Activities & Athletic Director
- Marc Pyko** – WRHS Science Teacher



We Will #keeplearning Together

By Dr. Jeff DeSota, USD 437 Curriculum Coordinator

We would like to begin by expressing our appreciation to you--the students, parents, and employees of our community--for your patience, flexibility, grace, and partnership. This situation has been challenging to everyone involved in your students' learning, and because of the support of our collective Auburn-Washburn family, we have kept moving learning forward.

Throughout this process, Teaching and Learning has operated under the following principles when facilitating support efforts:

- To practice grace and patience as students, families, and teachers learn in new and potentially unfamiliar ways;
- To remain mindful of pressures placed on our families and community—health, economic, childcare, and physical distancing, among others—and balance education with these increased pressures; and
- That all students and families deserve a seat at the family table, and we must ensure that all students can learn regardless of ability, access to technology, or access to resources.

As the situation quickly evolved in mid-March, teachers representing diverse grade levels, buildings, and disciplines rapidly gathered to develop #keeplearning Choice Boards to support interim learning as the district developed and submitted the KSDE Continuous Learning Plan. Meanwhile, a team of district and building stakeholders developed and published community and staff #keeplearning resources

to visibly engage our community in the Continuous Learning Plan. Building and district stakeholders crafted plans to carry learning forward for the remainder of the year. Our teachers thoughtfully put these plans into motion, engaging with your students through digital platforms and offline opportunities. We are proud of the hard work, time, and heart our teachers have devoted to make this sudden transition as smooth as possible.

The complexity of the situation has showcased our district's spirit of teamwork, and we are thankful for the efforts of Operations to keep everyone safe and healthy, Technology for facilitating device management and distribution, and Transportation for ensuring devices and resources were distributed and accessible to all district learners. Moving forward, our teams will continue to partner, being mindful of our principles, to ensure that all students will be inspired, challenged, and prepared regardless of what our community faces. We are currently developing plans, aligned with KSDE and health guidance, to “#keeplearning” long into the future. Until then, we wish you a healthy and happy summer! ★

2020-2021 Online Registration is Now Open

Register now to help us make sure materials and online resources are ready for your child when school resumes in August. Go to www.usd437.net and look for the Registration link. ★