



# SCHOOLnews

Winter  
2016-2017



***Auburn-Washburn makes big strides to conserve resources***

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## David Hines, Auburn-Washburn Board of Education President

With the spring semester well underway I am happy to have this opportunity to share some of the great things going on in the Auburn-Washburn School District. Your Board of Education is focused on two important areas. One, we want our students to achieve at the highest level possible. And two, we want to operate as efficiently as possible. I am happy to report that we are doing very well on both of those fronts. Auburn-Washburn continues to lead the Topeka area in a number of key academic indicators. This includes the Kansas Assessments, the ACT, and the number of students recognized by the National Merit Scholarship program.

Recently it was announced that Auburn-Washburn has earned a top 10 ranking in the prestigious Niche Best Schools in America program. The ranking is based on ACT, SAT, class size, college choice, and parent and student reviews. We are ranked the sixth best school district in Kansas. You can see some of the amazing things our students and staff are doing throughout this issue of School News.



In order to make sure that we maximize our resources for students, we are constantly looking for ways to save money in our operations. Of course utility costs consume a big portion of our operations budget and present opportunities to save. Several years ago, we implemented a focused, strategic effort to cut energy costs. The results have been better than we could have imagined. Under the leadership of our Energy Specialist Chris Crockett and in partnership with Cenergistic, we have avoided over two million dollars of energy expenses. This effort was recognized recently when we learned that all of our schools will receive Energy Star Certification. This has come about because of our commitment to invest in the most efficient systems and the amazing efforts of all our staff to conserve. There have been a number of other adjustments and initiatives that we have undertaken to capitalize on the use of funding. You will find details about those on page 6.

All of our efforts to maximize student achievement and minimize costs could not have been possible without the involvement of our wonderful parents and community and the hard work of our students and staff. Thank you for your continued support of Auburn-Washburn. ★



## Dr. Scott McWilliams, Superintendent of Schools

### *Legislative Session 2017 and School Funding*

On December 14, 2016, the Topeka Capital-Journal quoted Governor Brownback saying, “Everybody is focusing on the budget right now, but the big thing of this legislative session will be the school funding system.” I agree. School funding will receive a great deal of media coverage this session. With that in mind, I wanted to share the following on the recent history of school funding and the school funding court case.

### *Recent History on School Funding*

In 1992, a school funding formula was approved to fund Kansas’ public schools where districts received a dollar amount per pupil (base state aid per pupil) with additional dollars allocated to address specific

needs (i.e. special education, bilingual or ESOL, vocational education, at-risk, free lunch). In 2015, that school funding formula was repealed and replaced with block grant funding. In short, block grant funding froze the amount of money allocated to school districts at the 2014-15 funding level for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. Block grant funding expires in 2017 so a new school funding formula must be approved during legislative session 2017.

At a press conference on August 31, 2016, Governor Brownback stated that he wanted to hear from the people of Kansas on the future of school funding. He went on to say that there would not be town hall meetings or listening sessions, instead, he wanted Kansans to email their thoughts and ideas to an email address. As the Superintendent of Schools for

*continued on page 7 >*



## Auburn Elementary

Recently Auburn Elementary established a Friendship Bench on their playground. It is a way for students to meet people and make new friends. Any student who doesn't have a friend to play with or just wants to meet new people can sit on the bench. When other students see them, they go get them and ask them to join in their game or activity.

The bench was the result of the efforts of the Auburn Elementary Student Council. The students initiated the idea and raised funds to purchase the bench.

"It has gone over well," said Auburn Elementary Principal Melinda Patterson. "I have talked to students who would normally have a hard time making friends, and they really liked having this new opportunity." ★



## Farley Elementary

Farley Elementary is continuing its One School One Story for a second year. This year's book is *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell. All students and families are encouraged to read the original or an adaptation of the story. Teachers can also incorporate the book into their instruction. Farley Elementary Librarian Lindsay Kufahl said the goal is to provide a common focus for the school through literature. "We also want to encourage students to read the classics," she said. As part of the project, horses are being brought in to



give students an up-close experience with the story's subject. One horse is being brought in for each grade level. All classes have had the opportunity except grade six. The school is still looking for a volunteer horse owner to bring in a horse for them before the end of the year. Last year the school started the project with funding for the project initially coming from the Auburn-Washburn Public Schools Foundation. The first book was *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. ★

### On the Cover

*After hearing a presentation about the district's conservation efforts, these WRMS students got to check out the school's new boiler system. The system reduced consumption by over 75% and will pay for itself in 7 years or less. The new system is expected to last 25 years.*

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## Indian Hills Elementary



In January, Indian Hills took on the Great Kindness Challenge. The goal was for each student to carry out multiple acts of kindness at school during the week-long event. Students were given a

checklist of 50 kind acts. When they performed a certain number, they got to mark their progress on a wall in the school. Third grade teacher Azure Chooncharoen sponsored the event at Indian Hills for students in all grades throughout the school. "We are showing the students that a little act of kindness can make a big difference without even spending any money," she said. Students worked to carry out the kind acts as individuals, in small groups, or as an entire class. The Great Kindness Challenge was a positive bullying prevention initiative. Chooncharoen said the challenge promoted the idea that kindness matters. "Our hope is that this activity will help instill a lifelong habit of kindness." ★

## Jay Shideler Elementary

The Jay Shideler Early Morning Singers has grown to 87 students and is going stronger than ever. “This has just blossomed over the last couple of years,” said Terri Good, music teacher. The group includes students in grades 5 and 6. Each grade level meets each week in the morning before school to prepare. They perform around the holidays for retirement communities and other events. This year that included Presbyterian Manor and the First Christian Apartments. They also performed at West Ridge Mall and at the district Barnes & Noble Book Fair. The students are preparing now for performances in the spring that will include multiple performances with a Disney theme. “We stress the value this has as a community service and the joy that it brings to the people where we perform,”



Good said. “The students really seem to enjoy the chance to come together and do something fun.” ★

## Pauline South Intermediate

Pauline South had a rare opportunity for a school-wide field trip. On January 25 they attended the Jackie Robinson Story at the Topeka Performing Arts Center. Last fall, fifth grade teacher Lisa Doty submitted a request for reduced price tickets for 400 students and staff to attend the show. The request was granted, and they actually received free tickets for the entire school.



The show details how Jackie Robinson was the first African-American to “break the color barrier in the sport known as America’s pastime.” Doty said that the show addressed diversity issues but the overarching message was one of perseverance. “That is a message that all of our kids can take away, regardless of race, gender, background, time or place,” she said. “We truly do encourage our kids to keep going, do their best, and that their efforts are what impact the outcome, not where you come from or what you have.”

Doty said that she is grateful for the TPAC sponsors and donors that made this possible. She looks forward to the day when students will say “Remember when the WHOLE SCHOOL went to that play?” ★

## Pauline Central Primary

Students, staff, and parents at Pauline Central are giving back to the community in a variety of ways. “Over the years we have felt a need to be more involved in the community and have taken advantage of opportunities that have come up to provide support,” said principal Alan Hageman. Many of the projects benefit students in need, but also involve students helping with those efforts.



- Jaguar Den – Collected clothing items for area families
- Harvesters Food Drive – School families donated 1,883 lbs. this fall to provide for nearly 1,600 meals
- Families donated money to pay negative lunch balances
- The school works with an outside group to sponsor a Dental Clinic at PC twice a year providing over 45 students with free annual dental care
- The PC staff adopted a family for the holidays donating over \$600 for a family of six
- PC hosts one of the largest “Jump Rope for Heart” events in the state and raises over \$10,000 for the American Heart Association annually ★

## Wanamaker Elementary

This year Wanamaker Elementary is celebrating 75 years as a school. In December, they held a special spirit week to mark the 75th school day in the 75th year. Each day had a special theme related to the school’s opening year, 1941.



- December 5th was PJ Day in honor of the 1941 invention of the breakfast food Cheerios.
- December 6th was M&M Day to pay tribute to this candy that also debuted in 1941. Students wore plain shirts matching their favorite M&M color.
- On December 7th students wore red, white, and blue to celebrate the 1941 creation of Wonder Woman and Captain America.
- December 8th was Curious George Day. Students wore yellow hats, red shirts, or any Curious George apparel to mark his 75th birthday. Bananas were served at lunch.
- December 9th was Wacky Hair Day in honor of the invention of aerosol spray cans in 1941. Students used hairspray to help make a wacky hairdo. ★

# Washburn Rural High School & Middle School

Scores of students at Washburn Rural High School taking the ACT remain above state and national averages. The WRHS composite score is 23.3. The school saw increases in the composite score and all subject area scores. The ACT consists of tests in English, Math, Reading, and Science that are designed to measure the skills needed for success in college. Nearly 80% of WRHS seniors took the test last year. Nationally, just 64% of seniors participated. For 2016, the Kansas average composite score was 21.9 and the national average was 20.8.

Three Auburn-Washburn students have earned Milken Unsung Hero Discovery Awards. Washburn Rural High School student Avery Munns along with Washburn Rural

Middle School students Molli Christensen and Rachel Osborn were presented with the awards last fall.

Avery won the Outstanding High School Project \$1,000 award for her documentary “Ex Parte Endo: A Journey Toward Justice for Japanese Americans.” It tells the story of Mitsuye Endo, a woman who challenged Japanese-American internment all the way up to the United States Supreme Court and won. The WRHS teacher on the project was Lindsey Dowell. You can see the documentary online at [youtu.be/OQps8gmVh4U](http://youtu.be/OQps8gmVh4U).

Molli and Rachel earned the Outstanding Middle School Project \$1,000 award for their documentary “Heroes Don’t Always Wear Capes.” It tells the story of Frances Kelsey, a Canadian pharmacologist and physician who, as a reviewer for the FDA, refused to authorize thalidomide, a drug later shown to cause serious birth defects. The WRMS teacher on the project was Alice Bertels. You can see the documentary at [youtu.be/GM3nqhpRyEc](http://youtu.be/GM3nqhpRyEc).

The Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes Discovery Award provides students a unique opportunity to do just that: use their creative talents to research primary sources and develop outstanding projects that feature Unsung Heroes who can serve as role models and inspire others to create change. ★



## Students can now Grab ‘N’ Go

A Grab ‘n’ Go breakfast is now available for students at Washburn Rural Middle School. It is served just off the commons, which allows students to remain in the “hang out” area before school, socialize with friends, and still enjoy a nutritious and tasty breakfast. Items being offered are in ready-to-eat packaging and offer a wide variety of products. Many are nonperishable and can be placed in students’ backpacks to eat later. The initial implementation was a great success and doubled the number of students who are participating in the WRMS breakfast program. “A nutritious breakfast is very beneficial to the learning process,” says Auburn-Washburn Food Service Supervisor Stan Vallis, “The Grab ‘N’ Go cart is a great opportunity for students to fuel up before school.” ★



# District Saves Money Through Innovation

Chris Crockett is passionate about conserving resources. As the Auburn-Washburn energy specialist, he never misses an opportunity to share the story of the district's success with energy management. This includes presentations to students at Washburn Rural Middle School as part of their science curriculum. "Once we show the students how little things we do can have a big impact, they're hooked on the idea of conservation," Crockett said.

With rising energy costs and increased usage, the Auburn-Washburn School District was facing the grim reality that funding was being diverted from students to meet these demands. So in 2011, they launched an initiative to address the challenge head-on. In partnership with consulting company Cinergistic, the district implemented a strategic energy management plan under the direction of Crockett, the newly hired energy specialist. Cinergistic had developed a proven method to monitor usage, maximize efficiency, and modify behavior that they guaranteed would result in savings.

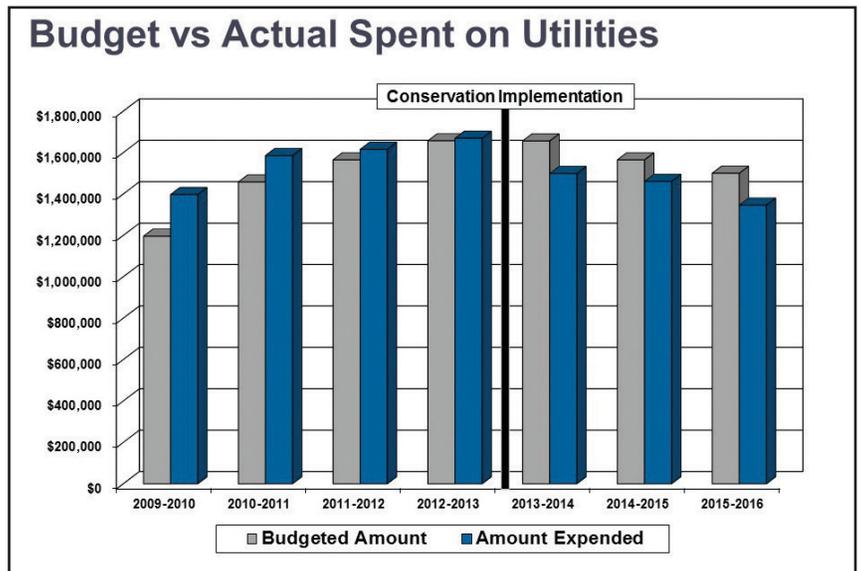
Due to a growing student population, Auburn-Washburn has added an additional 205,837 square feet of space since 2007. That was added to an existing 917,332 SF of space that all needs lighting, heating, and cooling. With the energy budget for the district steadily increasing, the energy management program set out to change that. It started with comprehensive data analysis to pinpoint what we were using and where. Monitoring and control of systems was computerized and automated. Equipment was tightly controlled to be used as little as necessary. Problem areas were investigated and addressed.

The success of the program relies on changes in behavior by staff to do things like turn off the lights and equipment when not needed. Staff also have to plan and communicate the use of common areas. The staff response has been better than expected. They know the importance of saving money. "In the times we are living in, anything that reduces our collective carbon footprint is a benefit for future generations," said Washburn Rural High School Social Studies teacher Kevin Hedberg. "It is also amazing how much money we are saving." "I can't thank the staff enough for their efforts to reduce consumption," Crockett said. "They have really stepped up to make this work."

Student and staff comfort was a big focus of the program. While it is almost impossible to get 7,000 students and staff to agree on the perfect temperature, close monitoring and man-

agement of every space has greatly reduced the number of comfort complaints Crockett said. Wanamaker Elementary 5th grade teacher Cathy Decker has noticed a difference. "Since the program has started, the temperature in my classroom has been consistent and comfortable," she said. "This has also made me more conscious of energy saving at home."

The amount of energy the district has avoided purchasing has been dramatic. While electricity rates have gone up 30% since 2011 and the district has more square footage, the budget for energy in Auburn-Washburn has actually been steadily decreasing (see chart).



The district has a replacement cycle plan to maintain facilities and the energy management program was folded into that process. When systems or equipment are set for replacement, long-range energy costs are factored in. With the comprehensive inventory of equipment and usage, the district can be very strategic. They have made adjustments to the replacement cycle with a focus toward return-on-investment. They have put a priority on upgrading equipment that offers the fastest payback. "Our Board of Education has embraced this program and much of its success is due to their support," Crockett said.

This winter the district found out that all of our schools have earned Energy Star Certification. This is the result of meeting rigorous standards for energy conservation. This is a great affirmation of all the great work that the school community has done to make our schools and the world a better place," Crockett said. ★



# From the Superintendent

► continued from page 2

Auburn-Washburn, I took the opportunity to submit the following message:

*Thank you for seeking input from the people of Kansas on the future of school funding. As the Superintendent of Schools for Auburn-Washburn School District USD #437, I believe strongly that students are our top priority, there are significant societal benefits gained by supporting and funding exemplary public education, and all Kansas students deserve an adequate and equitable public education. I advocate including the following in the new school finance formula:*

1. Base state aid per pupil
  - a. Prior year enrollment (average of 9/20 and 2/20 count dates) for predictability
2. Adjustments to base state aid per pupil to address individual student needs
  1. Poverty
  2. English Language Learners
3. Fully fund full-day kindergarten
4. Early childhood and preschool programs
5. Special Education to cover 92% of excess costs
6. Transportation with additional aid for hazardous routes
7. Career and technical education
8. New facility aid
9. Capital outlay
10. Bond and interest
11. Consumer price index linked to base state aid per pupil
12. Local control of cash balances

*The items listed above would provide support for the Kansas State Board of Education's new vision. They also would provide flexibility and local control so school districts could go beyond state requirements, exceed local expectations, foster innovation, and promote continuous improvement for all students.*

## **A Brief Review of the School Funding Court Case**

- The Kansas Constitution provides that, "The legislature shall make suitable provision for finance of the educational interests of the state." That contains two primary components: equity and adequacy.
- In 2013, the district court panel held that the State failed to meet both the equity and adequacy components of school funding. The State appealed.
- On February 11, 2016, the Kansas Supreme Court affirmed the panel's decision that the equity component of school funding was unconstitutional.

- On June 24, 2016, the legislature approved a school finance equity plan that Governor Brownback signed and that met the review of the Kansas Supreme Court. That brought closure to the equity component of the school funding court case.
- With the equity piece of the school funding court case being resolved in June 2016, attention turned to the adequacy piece.
- On September 21, 2016, the Kansas Supreme Court heard oral arguments on adequacy.
- Many believe that the Kansas Supreme Court will rule on the adequacy piece in early 2017.

We will follow the Kansas Supreme Court ruling, legislative session 2017, and work on a new school funding formula extremely closely and will provide updates to our parent community as they become available. ★



## **2017-18 Calendar Approved**

- August 15 – First Day of School
- September 4 – No School (Labor Day)
- October 13 – No School (Staff Day)
- October 19 – No School K-8 (P/T Conference)
- October 20 – No School (P/T Conference)
- November 22-24 – No School (Thanksgiving)
- December 21-Jan. 2 – No School (Winter Break)
- January 15 – No School (MLK Day)
- February 8 – No School K-8 (P/T Conference)
- February 9 – No School (P/T Conference)
- February 12 – No School (Staff Day)
- March 9 – No School (Staff Day)
- March 19-23 – No School (Spring Break)
- March 30 – No School (Unless needed for snow make-up day)
- April 1 – No School (Staff Day)
- May 4 – No School (Staff Day)
- May 24 – Last Day of School ★



## Auburn-Washburn Teachers Earn Statewide Awards

Auburn Elementary fourth grade teacher Kristi Bruce was selected as one of eight 2017 Kansas Teacher of the Year Finalists this fall. As part of her nomination, a fellow teacher had this to say about Kristi, “Each of her lessons are carefully planned and taught. She strives to make her lessons challenging and fun as well as effective. She has many of the positive attributes that make an excellent teacher, but I think what I most admire about Kristi is her attitude. She cultivates an atmosphere of respect between her students and herself.”



Bruce was selected from a pool of more than 100 nominations from across the state. Throughout the coming year, all eight finalists will work as a team to advocate for education and teaching.

Each of the eight members of the 2017 Kansas Teacher of the Year team also receive a \$2,000 cash award from Security Benefit and a red marble apple from the Master Teacher in Manhattan. In addition, each will receive Capturing Kids’ Hearts training from The Flippen Group of College Station, Texas, and a one-year membership in the Kansas State Teachers of the Year organization.

The Teacher of the Year program has state and national competitions. The national program, presented by Voya Financial, is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers. The Kansas program is sponsored by the Kansas State Department of Education.

Washburn Rural Middle School Social Studies teacher Tyler Riedel was named a 2017 Kansas Horizon Award winner early this year. The award is given to just 32 teachers from across Kansas after their first year of teaching.



Principal Mark Koepsel had this to say about Tyler, “Mr. Riedel exhibited outstanding qualities as a first year teacher.

He displayed strong knowledge of the Social Studies curriculum and Kansas history and even more so, Tyler had a knack for building student relationships, which enhanced his ability to reach students. They wanted to learn because he made it interesting and fun, but they also did not want to disappoint Mr. Riedel. These are exceptional attributes for any teacher, but even more so for one in his first year. He also possesses a quiet confidence and dry sense of humor that work well with middle school students. We’re fortunate to have him at WRMS!”

The first-year educators will be honored at a special ceremony during the Kansas Exemplary Educators Network (KEEN) State Education Conference in February. The Kansas Horizon Award program, which is sponsored by the Kansas State Department of Education, allows all school districts in the state an opportunity to nominate one elementary and one secondary teacher for the award. To be eligible for the award, teachers must have successfully completed their first year of teaching and have performed in such a way as to distinguish themselves as outstanding. ★