

SURVIVE AND ADVANCE

North Carolina State had to win their conference tournament in 1983 to advance to the "Big Dance". It had been a disappointing season which had begun with high hopes to contend for a National Championship. North Carolina State's coach, Jim Valvano, had the energy and optimism that would make his Italian heritage proud. Their first game in the ACC tournament was against Wake Forest, and they won that game by one point. Their second game was against Michael Jordan's North Carolina Tar Heels, who were the defending National Champions. North Carolina State won that game in overtime. The championship game was against the University of Virginia and 7'4" Ralph Sampson. North Carolina State won the game by one point and advanced to the big dance against all odds. You know the rest of the story: that the North Carolina State Wolfpack won the National Championship in close games and heroic victories. Winning the Championship game with an unbelievable last second shot that was way short but grabbed and dunked by Lorenzo Charles with no time on the clock. They beat the best team in the nation, the University of Houston, otherwise known as "Phi Slamma Jamma".

I was thinking the other night that this championship run is a lot like educating K-12 students. In the ACC tournament after each victory the next challenge was more difficult, more intense and the stakes were higher. The challenges at Wichita County Schools seem to get more difficult and the stakes seem to get higher every year than the year before.

We've had an excellent year at Wichita County Schools. There have been some great accomplishments. We have continued to have test scores that rank very highly against our peers in western Kansas. Our football team had a winning record for the first time in eight years. Our band and vocal programs have won accolades and high ratings for their performances. Our forensics and scholars bowl teams have had very successful years. Several track records have been broken this year, some of which had been held for many years. Those successes are great, but we also have a great administration and staff that is all in for the kids of Wichita County. Our kids start off in a preschool program that is arguably the best program in the state. What an introduction for our kids to life in the Wichita County school system! It's followed up with grade school teachers who exemplify high academic standards and compassion for our students. Then our students continue to our JR/SR high school where they're in an environment that is safe with teachers who expect them to perform and excel academically. I have been in our schools during the day and I can't think of a safer and more energetic atmosphere. The quality of our teachers is exceptional, from preschool to senior high school.

Our school district is in great shape financially, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Higgins, Pat Bishop and Tammy Mason. There certainly is a balance between investing in our teachers, school building infrastructure and the transportation department of our school and saving money for the next financial challenge. We settled the lawsuit on the HVAC system and can move on and spend our time on the challenges of educating our kids.

The school board has identified three goals for our district to meet the challenges of educating our kids in Wichita County.

- Goal #1 Every member of our school community can attain academic success.
- Goal #2 Every member of our school community can develop civic engagement.

Goal #3 We will develop and maintain effective two-way communication within the district and with families/community.

As you can see, these goals focus on developing well rounded students. These goals took a number of hours to formulate and create. If you have input on these goals please contact me to discuss them.

We have survived the 2016-2017 school year and we will advance to next year. I believe next year is going to be another exciting school year for Leoti schools. If you have time, please come out and support our kids at their academic and athletic events. If you see a teacher, administrator or staff member of our school, thank them for all their efforts to make us a great school that cares for our kids. Just as Jimmy Valvano and North Carolina State had victories, their next step was met with a more difficult challenge. Our school district has enjoyed success this year but we will have new challenges next year, and I can tell you that we have the staff and the commitment to meet those challenges head on. Thank you for your support of our school district.

Respectfully,
Jim Myers
President BOE