



Dr. Brian Otott
Superintendent

Engage. Inspire. Prepare.

2018-2019 School Year Wrap Up and Celebration!

May 24, 2019

Dear Paulding County School District Community,

This weekend about 2,000 Paulding County seniors will walk across stages at their respective high schools, take their diplomas and then move on to the next stage of their young lives. For many of them, that will mean attending colleges or universities, community or technical colleges, or, perhaps, the military. And for some of our graduates, it may mean going straight into the work force. But regardless of where a particular graduate may spend the next part of his or her life, I am confident the Class of 2019 will be prepared for success wherever they decide to go.

In the Paulding County School District our vision is to **Engage, Inspire** and **Prepare** all students, and we believe that when students are engaged, inspired and prepared, they are more likely to attain success not just today, but for the rest of their lives. We've been fortunate to see students at all grade levels preparing for success throughout this school year.

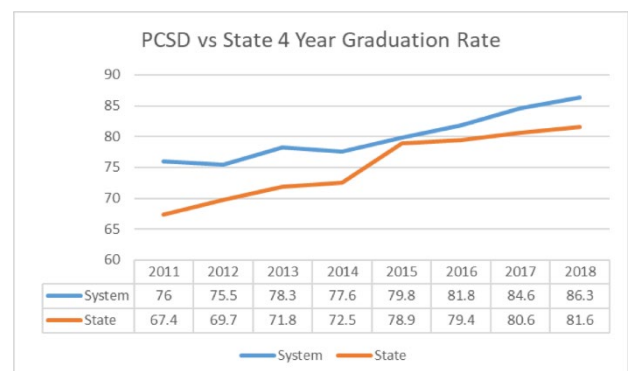


Class of 2019

And what a great school year it has been for PCSD! Our Paulding County teaching staff, administrators, and support staff are second-to-none. The work they do with students on a daily basis is truly phenomenal. Before this year has passed us by and we begin preparing for the Class of 2020, I want to remind you of a few highlights from the 2018-2019 school year – testaments to the outstanding students and staff we have in the Paulding County School District.

GRADUATION RATE:

We began the school year by receiving great news from the Georgia Department of Education that our graduation rate continues to climb. Now at 86.3 percent, the Paulding County graduation rate also continues to exceed the state average, and for the first time all five of our high schools have graduation rates above 80 percent! This is terrific progress and a trend we want to sustain.





STUDENT SAFETY

This year, thanks to the leadership of our Board of Education, we have invested more than \$1 million to enhance and supplement many of the safety aspects of our schools. At the elementary level, parents who visit our schools likely have noticed the new access control camera systems that regulate entrance to the buildings. Additionally, our strong partnership with the Paulding County Sheriff's Office now provides additional school resource officers who staff our high schools and middle schools, and also provide regular monitoring of elementary schools. To oversee our security initiatives, we hired a new district Safety Officer who is helping our schools focus on being safe and secure learning environments for all students and staff members.



PREVENTION/INTERVENTION & MENTAL HEALTH

This school year we created a new district support role specifically aimed at preventing at-risk behaviors among students and intervening to assist students who are struggling with a wide range of social emotional problems. The Prevention/Intervention Office focuses on bullying prevention, suicide prevention, drug & alcohol prevention, and crisis intervention and has been a tremendous resource for students this school year.



Additionally, in February our school district entered into a partnership with Highland Rivers Health to provide additional mental health support for students and staff. We know that social media and other technologies have subjected students to a whole new world of pressures and expectations that are taxing students in ways that we are only beginning to understand. The partnership with Highland Rivers Health will provide an additional resource to help students and staff deal with these challenges in a responsible and healthy way.

LITERACY BY DESIGN

In the Paulding County School District we know that literacy is the single most important academic skill a student can develop. Teaching students to read, comprehend and think for themselves has a profound effect on a student's performance across the curriculum, in every class they take. The data told us that at many Paulding County schools students were struggling to develop this critical skill, particularly in areas suffering from limited resources for early learning support, health care, and other factors that influence a child's overall well-being. That's why we were thrilled in 2018 when the Georgia DOE granted us \$4.5 million, the largest amount awarded to any district in the state, to implement initiatives specifically aimed at improving literacy skills.



This school year we introduced Literacy by Design, an array of proven literacy programs targeting students in pre-school through 12th grade, at 18 schools in the Hiram High School and South Paulding High School feeder patterns, plus two local preschools. Already we are seeing substantial results. In fact, the early returns show significant academic growth for students participating in Literacy by Design programs, particularly students in subgroups with the greatest needs. We believe that Literacy by Design can be a game-changer for our school district, the kind of program that opens up new worlds for students. So far, it's a great story and one that we hope to continue developing for years to come.



DISTRICT ACCREDITATION

This spring AdvancED, the national organization that accredits school systems, colleges, and universities, renewed the Paulding County School District's accreditation for five years.



A team from AdvancED visited the school district last October and conducted a comprehensive assessment by interviewing school board members, central office staff, parents and stakeholders, and visiting 15 schools for a first-hand look at how students are taught in Paulding County. They also reviewed hundreds of artifacts, documents, self-evaluations, and surveys, and then prepared a detailed Performance Accreditation Report on how the school district measures up to AdvancED's standards.

The school district was very pleased to learn that not only was its accreditation extended another five years, but the evaluation of the district was overwhelmingly positive. On AdvancED's three-level rating system, PCSD had 0 standards on the lowest level, three of 31 scored on the middle level, and *28 out of 31 scored on the highest level*. Out of 400 possible points, the average total score for all institutions evaluated by AdvancED is in the range of 278-283. The Paulding County School District, in comparison, received a score of 353, which ranks it among the highest performing districts.

PAULDING COLLEGE AND CAREER ACADEMY

In October, the school district broke ground on the new Paulding College & Career Academy (PCCA). Located at 4555 Dallas Acworth Highway on the campus of the New Hope Education Center, the renovated facility will serve students from all PCSD high schools and help them develop job skills to meet the future needs of employers in Paulding County. The PCCA will open for the 2019-2020 school year with four career clusters including: Patient Care Tech; Advanced Manufacturing; Energy; and Cybersecurity programs.

Construction on the renovated facility is nearing completion and the new building looks terrific! More than 140 students are registered. We are excited to be able to offer this new opportunity for Paulding County high school students starting this fall.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

In January 2019, the school district conducted a series of Community Conversations, one at each of the district's five high schools, to gather stakeholder input on the challenges and opportunities presented by enrollment growth. The public was encouraged to attend these meetings and review data from a recent enrollment and facility study that shows areas of the county, especially the northeast quadrant, are once again seeing steady growth. As new families move to Paulding County and enrollment begins to reach and exceed capacity at some schools, the district must develop plans to provide sufficient classroom space now and into the future.



I want to once again thank all of you who were able to attend one or more of the Community Conversations. Participants were highly engaged and provided valuable input on preferred approaches to address capacity needs,

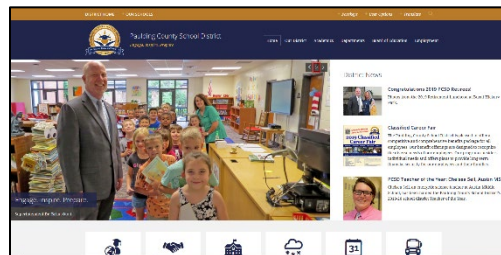


2018-2019 School Year Wrap Up & Celebration Letter

with a consensus favoring new schools and/or adding new classrooms to existing schools. Feedback from the Community Conversations is being used to develop a proposal for the district's next Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax proposal. Details of this five-year facility and technology capital needs plan will be presented in the fall, and a public referendum to renew SPLOST will take place in November.

COMMUNICATION

This school year we have made strides toward improving our communication and engagement with parents and stakeholders. Last November we unveiled our new web site design which offers a cleaner, professional and more appealing look. We have tried to be as open and transparent as possible in sharing information directly with parents about the daily events that impact our schools, good or bad, and particularly those that impact student safety. We actively share information using all of our communication tools, including social media and our automated messaging service. We conduct Stakeholder Meetings throughout the school year, both online and in person at the school district offices, to share information about important district initiatives. And recently, our Board of Education adopted changes to our public comment policy to allow the public simpler and easier access to address the school board during meetings.



www.paulding.k12.ga.us

OUR REMARKABLE STAFF

As I mentioned before, our staff is second-to-none! We have exceptional teachers, administrators and support staff in our district who help us attain our vision every day. Recently we celebrated our Teachers and Employees of the Year at the annual Walk of Fame Star Banquet. The luncheon is an extraordinary, first-class event hosted by the Paulding Education Foundation, and this year Chelsea Sell, a dynamic science teacher from Austin Middle School, was named PCSD's Teacher of the Year for 2019-2020. We are looking forward to having her represent our school district over the next year. We also recently celebrated 71 retiring PCSD staff members who, combined, had 1,495 years of service! We wish them the best and thank them for helping to educate the students of Paulding County.



Chelsea Sell

As our district continues to grow, topping 30,000 students for the first time this school year to rank 12th in size among all Georgia K-12 school systems, we are welcoming the demographic and cultural changes that have emerged as our district evolves. Recognizing this trend, the district is proactively providing culturally responsive guidance to our administrators, teachers, and students. We want all members of our PCSD community to experience a positive, equitable and supportive learning environment. We will continue to provide guidance that encourages an inclusive approach to meeting the needs of our diverse population of students and families. To date, our Inclusion and Diversity Training program has reached district administrators, principals, school leaders, teachers, students and stakeholders, with a goal to eventually include our entire school community.



Inclusion & Diversity Training

Each school year our bus drivers cover more than 2.5 million miles transporting students to and from school, our Nutrition staff serve nearly 4 million breakfasts and lunches, and our Maintenance workers close out thousands of



2018-2019 School Year Wrap Up & Celebration Letter

work orders at district facilities. It takes a team effort to engage, inspire and prepare 30,000 students, and this year our team at PCSD did another fantastic job.

OUR REMARKABLE STUDENTS

Of course, the students are the reason we do what we do, and this year PCSD students went out of their way to make us proud. There are simply too many remarkably talented and brilliant students in our district to name here, but some examples include the STAR Students who amazed administrators and the Board of Education during a presentation in February. Then there are the IMPACT students, selected as outstanding representatives by each high school and middle school, who in March heard presentations on district finance and budgeting, and then participated in the district's Inclusion and Diversity Training. Or how about the remarkable students we have highlighted this year, such as Nicole Frey of Paulding County High School, the first PCSD student to be invited to attend the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair? Or Nicholas Revelos, the North Paulding High School student recently named a Georgia Scholar by the Georgia Department of Education for his remarkable balance of academic excellence and extracurricular involvement? Or how about our 2019 REACH Scholars, eighth-graders **Cordeja Stembbridge** of Dobbins Middle School and **Emmanuel Giovinco** of Moses Middle School?

Or I could mention any of the extraordinary artists, performers, JROTC members, STEM students and so many others who dazzled us at school board meetings, recitals, academic fairs, and other venues this school year, as well as the numerous state champions and other outstanding athletes who excelled in athletic competition. Just scroll through our district Facebook page or Twitter feed to get a taste of the extraordinary achievements happening at all of our schools.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

I am extremely pleased with all that we have accomplished this school year, and I hope that you, too, are proud of your school district. We have worked hard to engage, inspire and prepare students, but it is your support that makes our school system great. The involvement of our entire community, from parents to our Partners In Education, helps our schools succeed.

I want to congratulate the Class of 2019 and wish them great success in their future endeavors, and I hope that all of you have a great summer and get to enjoy some well-deserved time off. See you in August!



2019 STAR Students



2019 IMPACT Students



2018-2019 School Year Wrap Up & Celebration Letter

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Otott". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large initial "B" and a distinct "Otott" following.

Brian Otott
Superintendent