

As part of our wellness initiative at BPS, I became a sponsor for the Run the Streets Woolaroc 8K on October 13 which allowed any district school employee to participate at a reduced cost. Woodrow Wilson Elementary school had the most participation with 29 registrants. I am very pleased to say 141 BPS employees registered for the race!

I am happy to recognize Aarya Ghonasgi and Liza Williams for being named National Merit Semifinalists, reflecting their hard work and discipline.

The third annual Hands-On, Minds-On Bartlesville Math & Science Night event for middle school students will be held on Monday, November 5 from 6-8:30 p.m. at Madison Middle School. That event is open to all middle school-age students in the Bartlesville area. Last year over 700 middle school students attended the first annual event helping them learn more about STEM education and careers in the oil and gas industry.

We celebrated our seniors during the last home football game on October 26 and our cross-country teams competed at the 6A State Championships this weekend, with the boys team as the defending state champions. Bartlesville High School is tied for the most 6A State Championships in Oklahoma over the last two years.

The success of our students, both academically and in their activities, depends not only on our talented teachers and coaches but also on our classified "support" employees. They occupy essential roles, including administrative assistants, teaching assistants, bus drivers, and maintenance staff. We celebrated them during Education Support Personnel Week in October, along with the employees of Sodexo, Source One, the YMCA, and Cole's Lawn Service who also work in and around the schools.

Our graduating Class of 2018 earned an average score of 21.1 on the ACT, compared to 19.3 for the state. In addition, 12% to 16% more of our students were rated as ready for college than students statewide. There are 20 states like Oklahoma where almost all students take the ACT, and our students outperformed the national average of 20.8 as well as the state averages of every state except top-ranked Minnesota. It is worth noting that when the Class of 2018 students were freshmen, Oklahoma was only spending two-thirds as much per pupil as Minnesota.

A lack of operational funding helps explain why the teacher shortage in Oklahoma continues to worsen even with long-overdue pay raises this fall. We now have a record 2,565 teachers statewide who lack regular certification, including almost two dozen in Bartlesville. Despite increased funding, our state remains last in the region in per-pupil spending. Our state must invest more in school operations to lower class sizes, restore lost electives, and attract and retain qualified teachers.

That is one reason it is so important that everyone vote on Tuesday, November 6. You also have the option of voting early at the courthouse on Thursday, Friday, or Saturday before election day. Every candidate will claim to support public schools, so look for realistic plans to benefit students. Among the state questions will be SQ 801 to allow local building fund revenues to be used for school operations. However, that would not provide one more penny in school funding, and our analysis is that it would provide no real benefit to our district.

Go vote, and go Bruins!

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This column is online at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KKUcam6I5kj7VK5sX7L0sZbVO4IB1htxTNcm7jwBT0g/view>

