



# SCHOOLnews

Winter  
2019-2020



*Auburn-Washburn  
implements Ride 360  
bus tracking app to help  
parents and students.*

*(Details on page 3.)*

**Inside this Issue**

[www.usd437.net](http://www.usd437.net) ★

From the Superintendent & Board of Education.....	2	Washburn Rural Middle School.....	6
Ride 360 .....	3	Washburn Rural High School .....	7
Human Resources Award.....	3	Awards.....	7
Elementary School Highlights....	4-5	Board of Education Transition .....	8
		Key Dates for 2020-2021 .....	8



Dr. Scott McWilliams

# District Strategic Plan Update From

## Dr. Scott McWilliams, Superintendent of Schools and Tom Bruno, Board of Education President



Tom Bruno

In Auburn-Washburn, we have seen great value in seeking feedback from our school community when planning for our future. Based on feedback received, we establish goals and prioritize our work and resources over a five-year period of time. We are currently in Year 4 of our current Five-Year Strategic Plan, which has provided focus and direction to our commitment to inspiring, challenging, and preparing our students during years 2016 – 2021. The benefits of strategic planning include:

- Set and achieve lofty student goals,
- Establish clear direction, laser focus, and district priorities,
- Focus energy, effort, and resources on mutually agreed outcomes,
- Ensure effective communication, collaboration, and targeted support among staff and stakeholders on all aspects of the plan, and
- Annually assess and adjust our direction in response to results and changing conditions.

We are currently seeking feedback from stakeholder groups in our school community on the district’s next Five-Year Strategic Plan that will guide our work from 2021 – 2026. At this stage of the strategic planning process, the most important thing is you. We want to hear your voice!

We have created an 18-slide presentation that provides a brief overview of our current Strategic

Plan as well as an online survey to collect feedback from you. Both the presentation and online survey are located on the Auburn-Washburn School District website and are accessible 24-7 through the end of January 2020. These online documents are located on the District website.

- Visit [usd437.net](http://usd437.net).
- In the Quick Links section, click **Strategic Plan**.
- Click **Presentation** for the 18-slide presentation and click **Provide Feedback** for the online survey.

In Auburn-Washburn, we strive to deliver exemplary, world-class education for all students, instilling in them the academic knowledge, skills for success, and character required to be happy, responsible, and productive citizens. It is an exciting time for our school community. We will remain focused on our current five-year plan through 2021, but envision amazing possibilities for students in our next five-year plan. The fact that you are willing to share your feedback means a great deal to us. Thank you for your partnership and engagement! ★

**Our Next 5 Years**  
2021 - 2026

*Inspiring, Challenging, and Preparing*  
EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY



# Ride 360 Provides Valuable Bus Information to Families

Auburn-Washburn buses now have equipment with GPS geolocation to let students and families know when to expect their bus each day. The Traversa Ride 360 web and mobile app let you see the location of your approaching bus. This portal allows parents and students to access their own secure data for bus stop location, route, and pick up time via the web or app.

Student ID numbers are required when registering, so student information is confidential. Bus information is specific to each student and

## TIPS

- If you are using the Ride 360 App, make sure you always have the most recent version downloaded.
- Have your student(s) ID number handy when you login for the first time. Student ID numbers can be found on Campus Portal next to a student's picture.
- If you have any difficulty using the app or getting it to function correctly, please contact the Auburn-Washburn Transportation Office for assistance. You can email [braswker@usd437.net](mailto:braswker@usd437.net) or call 339-4050 between 9:30 and 2:30.



accessible only to that student and parent (with option to share). Setup and management is simple, and routing information is easily accessible by parents and students.

Complete information on signing up along with the steps on using the Ride 360 mobile app or Ride 360 website are available at [usd437.net](http://usd437.net).

The district is currently using Ride 360 to assist with routing and letting users know the location of their bus. Additional features may become available as the system is fully implemented. Watch parent emails, online posts, and district publications for future information. ★

## District Recognized for Human Resources Efforts

The Auburn-Washburn School District was recognized this fall for several awards related to its efforts to attract and retain outstanding staff.

Auburn-Washburn received the Digital Branding Development Award from the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA). The award recognizes the district for being the leader in leveraging the power of digital venues to tell their district's employment story and provide communication to and gather information from current and prospective employees. This includes websites and social media. Brian White, Executive Director of Human Resources and Operations, along with Jeff Hinshaw, Web Developer, were responsible for the work that earned the award.



Brian White also earned the Herb Salinger Personnel

Administrator of the Year Award. This award is given to a member of AASPA who has achieved the following:

- Distinguished themselves in personnel administration;
- Is involved and a contributing participant in personnel functions and/or programs;
- Made contributions that have had significant impact on public education;
- Is a skilled manager of change and is creative in their approach to personnel administration; and
- Approaches personnel administrative work with a sense of humor and sense of respect for their fellow man.

Auburn-Washburn received two additional recognitions this past fall. The district was one of just 65 organizations in North America to earn Talent Board's CandE award. This is a national award for candidate experience excellence. Auburn-Washburn also was named as a Teddy Award Honorable Mention recipient by Risk & Insurance. This award honors the best public and private sector workers' compensation and disability management programs. ★

## Auburn Elementary

Auburn Elementary has created a STEM room that is set aside for teachers to address 21st century skills with their students. The focus is Science, Technology,



Engineering and Math (STEM). Resources in the room include a 3D printer, SPERO robots, iPads, KEVA blocks, linking cubes, Origami paper, Legos, Hexbugs, and more. Each classroom teacher is scheduled to use the STEM room at least once a week and students are given a challenge or activity to complete. “Students have loved using the room,” said Auburn Elementary Grade 3 Teacher Katie Tenbrink. “Some of the favorites have been creating mazes for Hexbugs, building KEVA block bridges and structures with specific tasks or measurements, and learning how to code and program the SPHERO bolts.” In addition to the STEM skills they use with each activity, the students have to learn to work together, how to problem-solve, how to persevere through challenges, and how to have a growth mindset. “It has been extremely beneficial to have this room and the kids are learning a lot while having fun,” Tenbrink said. ★

## Farley Elementary

Farley Elementary has just wrapped up a Holiday service project. Each grade level collected donations for Toys for Tots, Life House Child Advocacy Center, Helping Hands Humane Society, Rescue Mission, Doorstep, and The Ronald McDonald House. In addition, the school raised \$1097.00 through Penny Wars that the six organizations will split.



How did it come about? The

project began when the student council representatives and sponsors wanted to give back to Topeka. They researched local nonprofit organizations and chose six. They wrote about what each organization did for the community and shared their Wish Lists.

“The students have made huge contributions and the holiday tubs are overflowing,” said Instructional Interventionist Erika Florez. “The students were definitely feeling the holiday spirit.” ★

## Indian Hills Elementary

Each month at Indian Hills, they focus on a specific character trait. Throughout the month, students and staff look for people within the building displaying the trait of the month. Everyone can then nominate someone who they feel has gone above and beyond showcasing good character.



A school assembly is held where they discuss the trait of the month, provide some entertainment centered around the monthly theme, and select 10 people from the nomination pool to present with character awards. Students are involved in the planning and execution of the assemblies. “We are working more and more to find creative leadership opportunities for kids to develop real world skills,” said Counselor Hanna Kemble. She said they get the best response to the assemblies when students help run them. “After the last assembly we had many students asking how they can be a part,” Kemble said. “We have students who want to make the next videos, give out the character awards, and lead the assembly.” ★

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## Jay Shideler Elementary

Jay Shideler third graders had the opportunity to learn about Topeka and take a special tour of downtown. They walked among the new statues and pocket parks and learned about how those relate to Topeka History. At the Capitol, students got to meet Governor Laura Kelly. The trip included lunch at the Pennant and a tour of Ward Meade Park. Before the tour, Topeka history guru Bob Ross came to the school and spoke to the students. During his presentation, he shared the meaning behind each symbol and shape in the Topeka flag, and then students made their own new Topeka flag. “The students had a blast,” said Grade 3 Teacher Heidi Nelson.

“Their learning was hands-on, and they learned so much about the founders of Topeka. She



said it was a trip they will never forget. “Topeka History is so rich and full of amazing people. It was incredible to see our third graders full of spark and light, learning about the place they call home,” said Nelson.★

## Pauline Central Primary



At the urging of Pauline Central parent Ashley Rodgers, the Pauline schools implemented Watch D.O.G.S. programs this fall. “Our PTO provided a

generous donation enabling us to purchase the required start-up kit,” said Pauline Central Principal Debbie Williams. The kick-off event attracted over 300 students and dads with over 50 of the dads signing up to spend at least one day at the school this year. WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads Of Great Students) is a family and community engagement educational initiative. There are two primary goals of the program. The first goal is to provide positive male role models for the students, demonstrating by their presence that education is important. The second goal is to provide extra sets of eyes and ears to enhance school security and support anti-bullying efforts. “Our students and our teachers love having our Watch D.O.G.S. in the building and our Watch D.O.G.S. love being here,” said Williams.★

## Pauline South Intermediate

This fall, Pauline South launched a Veterans Day celebration. “We asked students and staff to provide a picture and name of family members who were veterans,” said Grade 6 Teacher Joe Taylor.



“We put those pictures into a slide show to show during the celebration.” Taylor began teaching at Pauline South this year and decided to start the celebration when he learned the school didn’t have a specific annual recognition of Veterans Day. “I chose activities that I thought would be simple but meaningful to those in attendance,” Taylor said. Over 60 photos were submitted for the celebration slide show, which is a lot more than Taylor had expected. “The community was very appreciative of the event, especially the Veterans and families in attendance,” said Taylor. He said he is already working on some ideas to make next year’s event even better.★

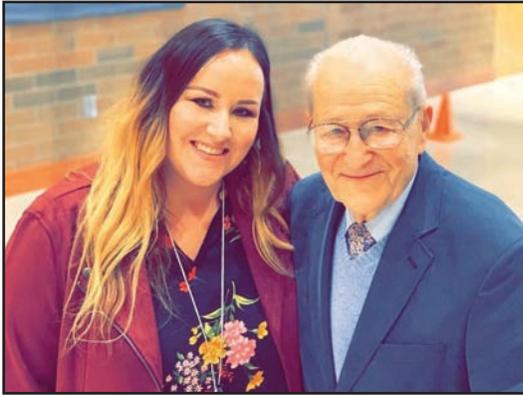
## Wanamaker Elementary

“The Wanamaker Elementary Mustang Choir is a group of grade 4-6 students who love to sing,” said Music Teacher and Choir Director Patricia Ahern. The group meets before school each Wednesday to prepare. They have several performances throughout the year. This includes school assemblies, two evening concerts (December and May), and two tours to retirement homes. “We have also been asked to sing the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ at a Topeka Pilots hockey game in January,” Ahern said. This year, four students in Mustang Choir were selected for the Northeast district Kansas Music Educators Association (KMEA) honor choir. They were Baylee Trachta, Brooklyn Bowling, Shamonique Marsh, and Max McKibben. Also, for the second year in a row, Max McKibben was selected for the KMEA All-State Middle Level Choir, which will perform at the state convention in Wichita in February.★



# Washburn Rural Middle School

Two visitors will share moving stories with students and the community this spring.



## Irving Roth

During the Holocaust, Irving Roth survived a death march as well as internment at Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps. “As we move further away from the Holocaust, there are fewer and fewer first generation survivors living,” said WRMS Language Arts Teacher Megan Fairchild. In March, Mr. Roth will be returning to Auburn-Washburn to share his story once again with students and the community. Fairchild met Roth a couple years ago while completing a Teaching Fellowship with the Olga Lengyel Institute. A grant from the Auburn-Washburn Public Schools Foundation enabled him to visit the district last year and share his story. Another grant from the Foundation is making it possible for him to return.

“Irving’s story is one of sorrow and profound loss, but also of survival, resistance, and love,” said Fairchild. “He shares his testimony with grace, humor, and love, and allows all who hear him to reflect on the importance of tolerance, love, and acceptance, all while warning about the dangers of stereotypes, exclusion, and generalizations.” Roth will share his story with the community on Sunday and then stay to speak with students on Monday, March 30. The community presentation will take place in the Washburn Rural High School Auditorium at 6:00 PM on Sunday, March 29. It is free and open to the public.

## Carl Wilkens

Missionary Carl Wilkens was the only American to stay in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. Last year, two of WRMS teacher Lindsey Dowell’s students created a documentary about Wilkens. “We were lucky enough to be able to correspond with Wilkens by email and phone calls,” Dowell said.

**Irving Roth, Holocaust Survivor Presentation**  
Sunday, March 29, 6 pm, WRHS Auditorium

**Carl Wilkens, Rwanda Genocide Presentation**  
Monday, April 20, 6:30 pm, WRHS Auditorium

*Both are free and open to the public.*

“Through this project, I was invited to travel to Rwanda with Wilkens and other teachers to learn firsthand the history of the genocide and how Rwanda has recovered and flourished in the years after.”

After spending two weeks in Rwanda with Wilkens, Dowell realized there would be great value for students and the community to hear Wilkens speak in person. This fall, Dowell received a grant from the Auburn-Washburn Public Schools Foundation that will enable Wilkens to visit the district in April. “Mr. Wilkens’ message is about the power and importance of building relationships by learning about each other,” Dowell said. “He often says that everyone has a story and when we learn each other’s stories we start to create respect for each other. From respect comes empathy and from empathy comes inclusion. In a world that is becoming more and more divided, I think it is incredibly important for students and adults to be engaged in this type of thinking.” Wilkens will speak with students during the day and then share his story with the community in the evening. The community presentation will take place in the Washburn Rural High School Auditorium at 6:30 PM on Monday, April 20. It is free and open to the public. ★



# Washburn Rural High School

This fall, Washburn Rural High School hosted a career fair that enabled students to interact with professionals in their area of interest. The fair involved students and staff in courses that focus on Career and Technical Education (CTE) areas. “Within a span of just three hours more than 1,100 students heard from 35 speakers,” said WRHS Counselor Keith Wetzel. Wetzel worked with Business Department Chair and CTE Facilitator Teresa Golden to organize the event. Wetzel explained that in designing this new event, they wanted students and professionals to have the opportunity to interact. “That is why we chose the classroom setting where students could choose to whom they wanted to listen,” said Wetzel. Going forward, the school hopes that every Washburn Rural student will have an opportunity similar to this event, once or twice during their time in high school. Speakers at the



event represented a wide range of professions including: Physician’s Assistant, Admissions Counselor, Manufacturing Recruiter, Restaurant Franchise Owner, Manufacturing Engineer, Architect, Developer, General Contractor, Physical Therapist, Videographer/Photographer, Accountant, Human Resource Director, Clinical Diagnostics Radiology, Information Technology/Cyber Security, Family Medicine/Sports Medicine, and Medical Lab Testing. ★

## Kansas Teacher of the Year Finalist



In September, Washburn Rural Middle School Language Arts Teacher Lara McDonald was named the Region 2 Secondary Kansas Teacher of the Year.

Just two teachers, one elementary and one secondary, are named finalists from each of the State’s four regions.

Lara was honored along with the other finalists during the Kansas Teacher of the Year banquet in November in Wichita. ★

## Kansas Outstanding Elementary Art Educator of the Year

Auburn Elementary and Jay Shideler Elementary Art Teacher Charleen Stessman was named Kansas Outstanding Elementary Art Educator of the Year in October. ★



## PAT Blue Ribbon Award

In 2019, Auburn-Washburn Parents as Teachers completed the Parents as Teachers Quality Endorsement and Improvement Process and earned the highest designation: Blue Ribbon Affiliate status. Being named a Blue Ribbon Affiliate affirms that Auburn-Washburn Parents as Teachers is among the highest quality programs in the field.

The program includes home visits, group connections, child screening, and connections to community resources. It equips parents with knowledge and resources to prepare their children for a stronger start in life and greater success in school. The program serves parents of students from prenatal to three years of age. If you would like more information about the services offered by Parents as Teachers, please call 339-4762 or email [mcginjul@usd437.net](mailto:mcginjul@usd437.net). ★



## Board of Education Transition in January 2020



Darren Haddock

In January 2020, the Auburn-Washburn Board of Education will see a change. Member Darren Haddock will be leaving the Board after serving for nearly 20 years.

Darren began serving on the Board in 2002 and is the longest standing Board member. Darren chose not to run for re-election in November. Darren has been instrumental in the areas of budgeting, negotiations, auditing, providing teacher and staff support, and remaining focused on what is in the best interest of students. Thank you to

Darren Haddock for representing the Auburn-Washburn community in a first-class way for many years.

To take Darren's place is incoming Board of Education Member Tara Dimick. Tara and her husband have proudly called Topeka home for many years. As the proud parent of three Auburn-Washburn students, she is excited to join the Board of Education to support our work with students.

Please welcome Tara as she begins a four-year term in January 2020. ★



Tara Dimick

### Key Dates for School Year 2020-2021

- August 13 – First Day of School
  - September 7 & 28 – No School
  - October 9, 15-16 – No School
  - November 25-27 – No School
  - December 21-January 4 – Winter Break
  - January 18 – No School
  - February 11-12 – No School
  - February 15 – No School
  - March 5 – No School
  - March 8-12 – Spring Break
  - April 2 – No School
  - April 5 – No School Unless Snow Makeup
  - May 7 – No School
  - May 26 – Last Day of School
- See a complete calendar at [usd437.net](http://usd437.net). ★