

As the new Superintendent for the Washington CSD, I would like to personally welcome back students, parents, and faculty for the 2015-16 school year. I am excited for the opportunities and things happening in our district as we embark on another school year.

First, I want to thank not only the Washington school family but the entire community for the overwhelming support shown to my family during our transition to Washington. My wife Paula and I have 3 children, our oldest Brady, will be attending Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, IA in the Fall, our daughter Taylor, will be a junior at Washington High School, and our son Mason, will be entering 5th grade at Lincoln Elementary. Both Taylor and Mason were able to join softball and baseball teams respectively this past summer, and really enjoyed meeting new teammates and friends.

Since starting on July 1st, it has been a whirlwind of activity regarding the district. From the passing of the bond issue for the daycare and preschool addition, to the start of the new auditorium. What excitement for the new opportunities both of these projects will provide to our communities. What is so impressive is that each project impacts different stakeholder groups. The daycare/preschool will provide a great introduction for our young families by providing quality solutions for our 0-3 and transitions into 4 year old preschool. The auditorium will provide a venue for performances that will be unmatched for districts our size, and will allow our community access to a first-class facility. Both projects will provide an advantage in recruiting not only new students but also families who are looking for a home.

It is easy to be excited about new buildings, but let us not forget about the already robust opportunities available to our students. The 1:1 initiative is entering it's 3rd year at the high school and the 2nd year at the middle school, and we will be expanding our technology access at Lincoln with the addition of 140 Chromebooks. Chromebooks are a great alternative for

providing web access to our students at a very low cost. This is a large capital commitment for the district, but provides unparalleled access for our students and teachers.

Regional Education Hub

The Washington County Regional Center is also entering its second year of operation. I hope all of our staff, students, and community realize that this Regional Academy, drawing students from surrounding districts, truly sets the Washington district apart from 99% of the districts in Iowa. By my count, there are only 6 such centers like this in the state. Our students will have the opportunity to earn enough college credits to earn an Associate of Arts degree while still in high school. I recently had a question regarding staffing that I want to address. Q - "Because we send so many students to Kirkwood, will we reduce staff at the high school"? A- I don't see that happening, while some classes may be similar, our high school staff will continue to expand our offerings to find the right fit for all students. In my mind, we are better equipped to offer a differentiated learning plan for all students, because the Kirkwood Center is right in our town.

Because we offer the surrounding communities, including Keota, Highland, Waco, Lone Tree, and Mid-Prarie the opportunity to send students to Kirkwood, Washington CSD becomes the Regional Education Hub for post-secondary access. We will continue to work with Kirkwood in an effort to meet the ever-changing demands on our local and regional businesses.

It is with great pride that I am able to say that Washington Community Schools is again listed as

a Top 100 Workplace in the State of Iowa by the Des Moines Register. This is the 3rd consecutive year for this distinction, and as an outsider, provides a great advantage in recruiting new staff to our district.

I will continue to challenge our staff, encourage them to take risks to better their profession, and support them in this journey of public education. I look forward to meeting more and more of our students, faculty and community members as we kick off another year. All of us have a lot to be proud of at Washington Community School, and we encourage you to be an active part in your students education.

We ARE Washington!

We ARE part of something that is unique and special. That is why I accentuate the “ARE” in We ARE Washington. One of the most amazing things I have learned about the Washington school district and the town of Washington, is that most people who are familiar with what we offer, don't see what is available is a big deal. I think it is easy and normal to take for granted the resources that are available to us. From all of the civic groups that are active in town, to Washington Economic Development Group(WEDG), to businesses who utilize technology to provide innovative goods and services to not only local, but national and international partners, to the early childhood through community college education connections that are now established. As I have spent time listening and learning, there are so many people who are part of something really unique and special in Washington. One of my main goals is to let more people know about both the town of Washington and especially Washington Community School and the rich and diverse opportunities that we offer. They need to work in tandem, and I am so appreciative of all of the great things in place. My hope is that we can keep moving them forward together. We ARE Washington!

Mr. Jeff Dicks

Superintendent of Schools