

# FOCUS

ON THE FORT



FORT THOMAS  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS  
H H J M W

November 2021

For so many of us, November signals that the holiday season isn't far away and with it, great anticipation for the meaningful moments that await. It was wonderful to see the Trick-or-Treaters—ghosts and goblins, athletes and princesses, superheroes and Fortnite characters, animals and famous people—come by the Robinson house in their creative costumes for Halloween. It's another evening to celebrate community around a holiday in Fort Thomas.

I personally look forward to Thanksgiving, which is my favorite holiday, when I will be able to spend dedicated time with family and friends. After the traditional "Turkey Bowl" family football game (ages 5-75) our holiday meal will no doubt consist of time-honored favorites: turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie. If past experience is any guide, I'll most likely be lulled into a nap or two while watching football. However, my favorite part of the day consists of taking stock, from the time I wake up until I go to sleep, of the many blessings I have in my life and to express how truly grateful I am for each one.

Gratitude is a very powerful concept, and I aim to make it a part of not only Thanksgiving, but every day before and after. To be truly grateful, every day, can change our perspectives and alter the possibilities for what we can accomplish. This past week, I was privileged to celebrate the vibrant partnership between the Fort Thomas Independent Schools and the City of Fort Thomas while presenting at the Fort Thomas Business Association meeting at Tower Park. As I highlighted the exceptional people and programs that make our district shine, it reaffirmed that I was, in a very real way, celebrating Thanksgiving early by expressing how truly grateful I am for each one of you.

What I see on a daily basis as superintendent in Fort Thomas wows me. Highlands High School art teacher Andy Eckerle hosts his own on-campus radio show, "Eckerle@8", and students willingly assist with a terrific production and an ode to music of the past. (Editorial Note: I love their playlists!). The stage at the Performing Arts Center, not to mention the production booth, will once again brim with the energy of Highlands Theatre students producing their first play of the season, "Radium Girls." Jason Burgess leads an elite operation, both student-run and student-focused, that instills lessons through the performing arts that will last long after the cast and crew graduate. Bill Poff and his students preside over a first-class broadcast operation and work from morning to night to deliver the content our school and community enjoy. Kevin Listerman and Brian Alessandro won state coach of the year awards in Kentucky for boys

basketball and girls cross country, respectively, and Coach Alessandro's teams at the middle school and high school ran brilliantly at state. Moyer Elementary is making final plans for Santa House this month, welcoming our families for yet another wonderful holiday tradition. Inside our elementary schools, our teachers, staff and leadership wore orange on October 21st to take a unified stand against bullying and celebrate kindness and inclusion on Unity Day. The commitment to foster a positive environment that allows all students to grow and achieve their full potential is a message delivered to our students every day in Fort Thomas, from preschool through graduation.

Our pledge is to prepare students to achieve personal success and become the best versions of themselves. Our teachers often function with no official beginning or end to the workday, investing hours of their own time to give our children every chance to blossom. I am grateful for the resources from our community to attract and retain the best in the Commonwealth and I thank each of our educators for making a difference.

I see such promise on the horizon for what we can accomplish as the Fort Thomas Independent Schools and City of Fort Thomas expand our partnership and further strengthen our offerings. We already work together so positively to provide and maintain athletic venues, including beautiful new tennis courts at Tower Park, along with playing surfaces at Winkler Field and Highland Park. We have a shared vision for student safety and work together on construction projects and sidewalk maintenance, especially as walkways to school get slippery in the winter. Where we can truly grow is by partnering with our local businesses to provide experiential learning opportunities and internships for our students, so they can explore areas of interest and apply their many skills in real-world settings. I ask for your ideas and willingness to mentor students to allow this vision to come to fruition.

I spoke at the FTBA meeting about how grateful I am that our District has the resources to offer 1:1 personalized technology for students. However, I believe we have experienced some of our best moments as a community this year when we temporarily turned our computers off, backed away from our keyboards, silenced our phones and have taken part in "Community Conversations" in-person at four of our five schools. I pledge to be an accessible and transparent superintendent with an open-door policy, and I embrace the opportunity to venture into our buildings to listen to anything on your mind and engage in open dialogue.

It has been an overwhelmingly positive experience. Since the start of the pandemic, the road we have traveled together has been filled with successes and setbacks, triumphs and adversity, and the concerns have generated all kinds of opinions and some disagreements, and that's okay with me. Our thorough discussion has been conducted respectfully, which is all I ask. "Community Conversations" have revealed that, by doing this kind of communication face to face, we see that our community consists of well-intentioned adults that have a shared vision of doing what's best for our students. I invite you to our last event at Johnson Elementary School on Tuesday, November 16, at 6:00pm.

At our most recent stop in the “Community Conversations” series at Moyer, our principal, Dr. Dawn Laber, said something very meaningful to all of us. Dr. Laber pointed out that she wishes all of our parents could see the beautiful artwork that our students make that adorns the school walls, emblems of the positivity that radiates through the classrooms and hallways. What I hear in Dr. Laber’s comments is gratitude. During this holiday season, I, too, am grateful. For the artwork at Moyer, for every member of our school community, and for the privilege of serving as superintendent. We are doing great. Let’s keep going, and let’s keep being grateful, during the holiday season and beyond.

Sincerely,

Brian