

October 2022

To Our Fort Thomas Families,

I hope you are doing well in these final school days before Fall Break. We have enjoyed a string of beautiful weather days as summer has given way to autumn in Fort Thomas. Our trees are showing signs of the seasonal shift and pumpkins are gradually lining up on porches and in front yards. We likely need a jacket to cheer on our Bluebirds as they play and perform outdoors. It is a wonderful time to be part of our school community and the rest of Kentucky is noticing the excellence that we have achieved in our schools for generations.

Recently, I enjoyed the loveliness of fall on a drive to Frankfort to gather in the Rotunda of our state capitol with the finalists for the Kentucky Teacher of the Year. I was there because Robin Kemp, a science teacher at Highlands High School, represented our school community as one of four semifinalists for high school teacher of the year. To put this honor in perspective, some 40,000 teachers from across Kentucky are eligible for the awards (there is an elementary, middle school, and high school teacher of the year award, and an overall teacher of the year recipient), and approximately 2,000 nominations poured in this year for the committee to consider. I congratulate all of the winners, finalists and nominees for serving as examples of the difference that public education makes for our students. We see this kind of impact all the time in Fort Thomas.

This fall has also brought news that our own Woodfill Elementary was named a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence for a second time, with the first such honor coming in 2011. In 2022, Woodfill represents one of only five public schools in the state of Kentucky and 420 nationwide to earn this distinction. Schools that are named a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence are recognized for either being exemplary in student academic achievement or for closing achievement gaps among their students. I cannot wait to join the Woodfill team that will be presented the recognition in Washington, D.C. this November. Woodfill, like our teachers recognized for state honors, represents what makes our district so special, a fully engaged learning community connecting prepared students, supportive families, and top-notch educators.

We have the best faculty and staff in the state. Our teachers throughout the District are empowering our students to travel beyond their comfort zones and take on leadership roles, which provide the most ideal environment for our children to learn and grow. Examples abound throughout the district on display every day. A third-grade student at Woodfill felt nervous about speaking in front of large groups. However, through hard work and practice (that included writing out scripts at home), this student is now delivering the news on-camera in the

library as part of Mrs. Chajkowski's school-wide broadcast. At Moyer, a group of students (decked out in boots, bandanas and cowboy hats) emcee a school-wide assembly in the gym every month to celebrate Mustang successes, impart lessons for classmates to ponder and produce learning videos as part of their Mustang Round-Up. In these settings, teachers and administrators are on hand to guide and assist, but the students take on the responsibility for their own learning. It's an energizing experience to watch children in our schools blossom into leaders. I was inspired by a video sent to the middle school principal Erika Volpenhein showing our students engaging in introductory programming to invent and design new products and efficiencies. At our September Board of Education meeting, a group of Johnson students presented how they have partnered with their teacher, PTO and our Fort Thomas Education Foundation to design and build an outdoor classroom. I want to personally thank all of our students and teachers for embracing these kinds of opportunities with a determined enthusiasm.

It is a great time to be in the Fort. I hope each of our families, faculty, and staff enjoy a restful Fall Break and our entire community embraces the beauty of the season.

Sincerely,

Brian