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Wright City High School to celebrate 100 years



First Wright City school building for high school classes.

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This school year marks a milestone moment for education in Wright City: the centennial anniversary of the community's first high school class.

One hundred years ago in the fall of 1922, teachers in Wright City opened their first ninth grade class in a spare room at the town hall. Five students attended class there, and more than a dozen others may have received tutoring there, according to historical research provided by the district.

The growth that the school has seen since then has been emblematic of growth in, and support from, the community, said alumnus Jack Dixon, who is researching the school's history for the Wright City Alumni Association. Dixon grew up in Wright City, and is a member of the last high school class to graduate from the first purpose-built high school building which now houses Liberty Christian Academy.

In its early years, Dixon said the Wright City public school was a magnet for students from a much larger area than today.

"Prior to the Missouri reorganization of education, which was post-World War II ... one of the ways that Wright City was able to grow was they got a lot of kids from other areas to come. New Melle, O'Fallon, Wentzville," Dixon said. "The bulk of the growth of the school in the beginning was during the depression. They also built the school, where Liberty Christian is now, right towards the end of the depression. It took a lot to be able to do all that back then."

Since its inception with just a single teacher, Dixon said Wright City's high school program has been steadily expanding, adding more classes, more facilities, and more options for students. Faster community expansion starting in the 1980s caused the school district to change and adapt to keep pace, but looking back on the last 100 years is a reminder of the connections to the past that still remain, Dixon said.

"Some of those (early students') families are still around, and I think it's nice to recognize that, and to recognize the accomplishments of the school," he commented. "I think we always had a pretty good educational system there, and I hope we keep up with that, and get more kids involved in education beyond high school."

Wright City Schools Superintendent Chris Berger said he and other staff members are hoping to plan centennial celebration events later this school year. They hope to commemorate the rich history of the school as part of the community, from championship sports teams to graduate achievements.

Notably, Berger said Wright City's alumni association might be one of the oldest in the state, and Wright City had a 12-year program several years earlier than multiple neighboring schools.

"It's wild to think now, in 2022, that Wentzville students used to come to Wright City High School,"

he commented.

But it's also worth noting, Berger said, a part of Wright City's history that is also part of national history: the desegregation of schools. The district began desegregating students in 1956, and was fully integrated in 1962. There are still people living in the community who were part of the first integrated classes here, and that's worth acknowledging, Berger said.

Overall, the centennial commemoration should recognize Wright City's unique character as a school district and a town where new arrivals and new ideas become part of a close-knit rural community, Berger said. And over the next 100 years, he hopes future educators and community members show the same dedication to the school's success.

"Schools are recognizing that they have to be a little more ready for change. I think public education, even over the next 10 years, is going to be quite a bit different," Berger said. "When we look back after the next 100 years, we're not going to look at public education as something that stays static. It's definitely going to be a little more dynamic moving into the future."