



HEADS UP

Eufaula Public Schools

"Expect the Best"

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Building and Budget Update

Under the watchful eye and constant scrutiny of the Eufaula Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools, Bill Wilson, the high school classroom addition is finally near completion. Throughout the past nine months of construction, there have been both unavoidable and avoidable delays, explained construction superintendent, David Munholland. Frustrating, and pushing the finalization of the construction project far past the expected completion date, the building is finally near completion. The building includes twelve classrooms, an elevator to assist students with special physical needs, and a science lab. With this completion, the construction projects, as outlined in the 2000 Bond Election, have been met. "Our community wanted to make improvements, and now, many of our students are attending classes in new buildings," said Supt. Bill Wilson. "Being a part of this community's commitment to improve our overall school plant has been both challenging and fulfilling. While I am thrilled at the progress we

have made, I know that it does not take long to recognize other areas throughout the district that must be addressed. The needs are great. The voters of this district realize the urgent need for a new middle school, band room, field house, and the complete renovation of the football stadium. I share in this realization, and am encouraged by the community's determination and enthusiasm. The reality, though, is that our state continues to experience a devastating financial crisis.

The state's *Rainy Day Fund* that was made available to public schools helped, but it only reduced the *additional burden* that had been placed on education. With the Rainy Day Fund, the reduction in our state aid was reduced to the same percentage of cuts shared by other state agencies. We are currently operating at an 8.5% reduction in funding, and are braced for additional cuts for the remainder of this school year. Because of a number of retiring teachers, we have avoided the painful personnel cuts that so many other school districts have had to experience, but our district will suffer from the loss of these experienced educators, as they will not be replaced. Our district will suffer, too, from loss of programs that are vital to a healthy educational system. While I appreciate the letters and concern that some of you have sent to me, I encourage you to send those letters of concern to your state officials and let them know how important programs such as transitional first grade and After School Programs are to you and your family. This administration is fully aware of the value these programs bring to our children, but with every budget cut, our district must adjust accordingly. I also encourage you to bring to the legislature's attention that our district loses thousands of dollars each year on tax dollars that do not follow transfer students to our district. We serve a number of students who prefer to attend Eufaula Schools, but because they live outside our school district, we do not receive the benefit of their ad valorem taxes. Because of this law, our district placed a moratorium on new transfer students, but at this time, we are continuing to allow attendance for previously approved transfer students. The state legislature will determine our school's future. I am hopeful that a stronger Oklahoma Public Education will be the result of our state's struggle as it finds ways to fund our government agencies. Until then, I will stand committed to do the best possible with the funding that is available in providing your children a quality educational experience.

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