

## Pawnee Superintendent Up-date:

### Exciting Growth and Opportunity at Pawnee: A Bright Future for Rural Education

Pawnee, our small but vibrant rural school, is shining bright in Texas with innovative programs, new facilities, and a commitment to hands-on learning that's setting students up for success.

**The Equine Grant-** This grant has been very impactful. The use of horses to help students develop confidence, social skills, and emotional resilience is truly transformative for students who need a different approach to personal growth and mental health support. The equine therapy program is the first program offered in K-12 school districts, no other school in the state has this type of program. Pawnee ISD is the first school district to embark on an equine therapy program and the program Pawnee develops will serve as a model program for other schools across the state.

**The greenhouse program,** where our students get hands-on experience with plant science, learning everything from seed propagation to sustainable agriculture practices. This green learning hub is more than just a structure—it's a place for students to nurture both plants and curiosity, connecting classroom lessons with real-world applications. One unique feature to this program is the fact students are planting crops in the field; they are researching different methods used in growing crops. In the fall students planted crops like squash, okra, peppers, and more. The method of planting and fertilizing the crops was a huge learning curve. Okra produced but other items planted did not do so well. Recently students tested the soil and found out that the ground lacked certain minerals and learned how to prepare the soil for maximum output. The students recently planted over 1500 strawberry stems and there is excitement in the school because they are already seeing growth. According to the students, if they tend to the strawberries, the 1500 stems have a chance to turn out over 25,000 to 35,000 strawberries. They are also growing other crops in the field and hope to have a farmers' market for the parents and the community. Hopefully the harvest is good and we can have our first Pawnee ISD farmer's market.

**The Industrial Mechanics Program,** once again Pawnee, is the one of the only school districts in the state to have such a program. recently bolstered by a Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) grant of \$220,000. Pawnee is one of only seven schools across Texas to receive this grant, allowing our students to receive the necessary equipment needed to gain industry-relevant skills in welding and metal work, electrical wiring and relay systems, and alternative energy learning systems. This program is a gateway to high-paying, in-demand careers, bridging the gap between high school and workforce readiness for our local youth. The students that embark on this pathway will receive dual credit and micro-credentials, not to mention vital skills in a high demand work force field. The Governor of Texas recently put out an article announcing the awardees of this grant.

**New Classrooms-** making sure every student has room to grow the board approved adding six classrooms and approved adding new girls and boy's locker rooms. These classrooms not only look fantastic but are already alive with active learning, supporting students across various subjects with ample, flexible space. Alongside these improvements, the updated science lab in the secondary wing has become a hub of discovery for older students. Equipped with modern tools and resources, the new lab allows students to dive into hands-on experiments and explore scientific methods up close. Now the science lab has been updated, it was inspected by Coastal Bend College and now meets the standards to offer dual credit chemistry. With both the portable classrooms and the science lab upgrade, Pawnee ensures our students have the ideal environment for active, engaged, and impactful learning across the curriculum.

**The Future Farmers of America (FFA) Program** has been a welcome addition, quickly establishing a dynamic student officer team and sparking high interest. With an agricultural barn set to be completed in the coming weeks, our students will soon have a dedicated space for raising and showing animals, giving them hands-on experience with livestock. The excitement amongst the students is very noticeable.

**New Bus Barn**, located beside the Ag barn, will also be nearing completion, ensuring that transportation is smooth and efficient for students and staff alike. With Pawnee ISD taking over its own bus transportation department it has been a cost savings for the district. We are already seeing savings compared to last year's cost using a third party to manage transportation for Pawnee. Pawnee has hired a transportation director which also serves as Pawnee's mechanic, in addition, Pawnee now has its own certified bus drivers and continues to have employees work on their driver's certification to ensure Pawnee has enough drivers to cover all of its extracurricular events along with its regular bus routes.

**Exciting Milestone for Pawnee ISD**, we have joined the University Interscholastic League (UIL) high school competitions for the first time in forty years. The school's sports teams have jumped into action, completing their first season in both volleyball and football. Students and coaches alike are eager to continue competing as basketball season begins. Participation in UIL not only brings pride to our school but also builds essential skills like teamwork, dedication, and resilience, setting students up for success both on and off the court. As we continue this journey, we're thrilled to see our students thrive in their first year of UIL competition.

**Dual Credit Welding Program-** Pawnee ISD has renovated the old maintenance building into a well-equipped weight room, added a nice classroom, but more importantly the newly renovated building now hosts a welding shop that most 5A schools would envy. With the help of grants and hard work, Pawnee ISD now has new Miller welding machines, a 4x 8 plasma table, and new Lincoln downdraft tables. In addition, the shop has a lift, and an Iron worker machine for manufacturing metal projects. This shop has every imaginable piece of equipment to offer students the

opportunity to leave with not just a welding certificate but dual credit course work in welding.

**Pawnee Early College High School-** In every way, Pawnee ISD is fostering a community of learning, growth, and possibility. From equine therapy to greenhouse operations, to industrial mechanics, to updated and new facilities, Pawnee ISD is building an inspiring future—one student at a time. This year Pawnee hired a number of teachers that have qualified to teach face to face dual credit. To date Pawnee is the only area school that can advertise having a designation by the Texas Education Agency as an Early College High School. This is truly a designation to be proud of, it is extremely rare for a school the size of Pawnee to have the number of teachers available to teach face to face dual credit and it is also something to be proud of for a school the size of Pawnee to have a designation as an Early College High School.

Pawnee teachers and staff have implemented a mindset based around offering a well-rounded education in academics, along with instilling a no quit attitude to giving every student an opportunity to achieve a better future. As stated in the beginning there is Exciting Growth and Opportunity at Pawnee: A Bright Future for Rural Education

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