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THE WIDEFIELD WAY

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Photo by Carolyn Stephen

Aniyah Reff, fourth grade student at King Elementary, wears a mask in the classroom; a new norm for students doing in-person learning.

BY SCOTT CAMPBELL
SUPERINTENDENT

History has shown us that the greatest achievements and innovations arise from the most difficult times. I understand the struggles our community continues to experience and I want to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who is doing their part to help keep our schools open and to help keep our students learning. I am confident that the Widefield community and the schools that serve the students will emerge stronger than ever.

While we believe that our schools are some of the safest places to be, the spread of COVID-19 continues in our community creating challenges of keeping staff and students in the classrooms. When positive cases lead to students and staff needing to quarantine for 10-14 days, those absences greatly impact the in-person learning environment. Ultimately, we decided to keep preschool and K-2 students at school for in-person learning and to transition students in grades 3-12 to distance learning at home through January 15, 2021. We are still accommodating all students with special services with in-person assistance.

This decision was not made lightly. It is always our desire and intention to provide in-person learning for all students, and we believe that in-person learning is still the best option for primary students (PK-2). We will continue to consult with local health officials, monitoring county health data, and conferring with staff on when will be the safest time to return students to full in-person learning. In this unstable time we feel like remote learning will provide consistent instruction for the majority of our students through the holidays.

On top of the global pandemic and new models of education, our nation continues to battle social injustice and political strife. We have been reflecting in real-time on how we adapt and make fundamental changes not only in this current climate but for the future. We are taking action to transform the district in an intentional, meaningful, and research-based way. We began cultural competence training in the fall for all staff in the district and training will continue second semester. We are also in the process of developing an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) strategic plan to better serve our community. Your

voice is important and will play a vital role as we move forward in this journey. We will be sending monthly updates to our families on where we are in the process as well as post updates on our website, wsd3.org.

As we've mentioned to our community, I will be retiring, along with Assistant Superintendent Joe Garrett, at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Mr. Garrett and I have been educators for 30 years and it has been an absolute honor to serve Widefield School District 3. We have a lot of work to do before we leave, and we are committed to serving our students, staff, and community.

The Board of Education approved the appointment of Mr. Kevin Duren on November 19, 2020. I truly believe Widefield School District 3 became stronger

upon the appointment of Mr. Duren to the position of Superintendent beginning June 1, 2021. Mr. Duren has a history of leadership in the school district and will assemble a strong leadership team to lead the district into the future. Please join me in welcoming Mr. Duren to his new position. I sincerely thank you for believing in Widefield, and from all of us in D3, happy holidays.

**We are taking
action to
transform the
district in an
intentional,
meaningful,
and research-
based way.**



Photo by Carolyn Stephen

Pallets of Chromebooks stack high in at S.A. Wilson gym as staff prepare devices for deployment.

BY CARLOS LOPEZ
DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY

While most of us were preparing to hunker down for Halloween in a somewhat subdued version of the holiday we know and love, a fleet of 27 pallets of 150 devices per pallet were delivered to SA Wilson gym just prior to the weekend. While this was a special and long-awaited delivery for the Department of Technology Services (DTS), the mission couldn't be pulled off without support from DTS's good friends at the District Warehouse. Aside from their many duties of delivering much needed supplies and organizing pickups for neighborhood schools, the Warehouse plays a critical role for DTS often receiving and storing massive orders of technology destined for student hands. This was no exception.

The pallets were arranged in the middle of the gym floor, cellophane wrapped, and featuring stacked boxes sometimes six feet tall. As one holiday passes and gives way to the next, the mountains of boxes now look less like the candy they symbolized the week before and more like a Thanksgiving bounty. At any moment, a minimum of five team members are busily working in an assembly-line fashion to unbox, unroll, update, and sanitize

devices as well as velcro cables and fill carts. While most of the team is made up of members from DTS, the operation owes a great deal of thanks to helping hands from other departments including Transportation, Student Achievement, and Business Services. He won't accept credit for it, but if you come at the right time the casual observer might even spy Widefield's very own Chief Financial Officer Mr. Terry Kimber breaking down boxes - he's been responsible for quite a few.

As Widefield prepared for an unprecedented start of the school year featuring distance learning for some, hybrid learning for many, and cohorts for all, DTS was charged with providing the technology infrastructure to support the event. While elementary schools prepared to meet in person, the demands of secondary school schedules made it clear that students in grades 6-12 would have to prepare for distance learning and working from home. Approximately 1,200 Samsung Chromebooks were purchased to support specialty courses in the high schools and the district's fleet of HP Chromebooks were collected and repurposed to meet the needs of the middle schools.

To be clear, the provision of devices to support the secondary initiative wouldn't have been possible without the compas-

sion of our elementary schools, who with little to no warning were needed to share their school's technology in order to support an organized and appropriate district response. DTS repurposed many of their devices with little more than a promise that, in return, the department would assume responsibility for not only replacing their devices in the weeks to come but also finish the work that many schools had long planned - that is, achieving a device ratio of one-to-one across their buildings, and finally providing equitable access to technology to students whether they were in kindergarten or fifth grade.

Months after the school year began, the irony is uncanny that as we prepared for Thanksgiving, we paid back a significant debt of gratitude to the elementary schools that have made secondary distance learning possible. The 4,000 devices were largely destined for each of the district's nine elementary schools and North Preschool where they replaced their fleets, bringing each to an instructional ratio of one device per student. Carts were strategically distributed covering all homerooms at each of the sites further supporting cohorts to maximize availability during instruction and minimize the need to share devices across classroom or grade level lines. And while the specifications of the devices are

appropriate to meet the needs of all grade levels, the form factor and design was selected first and foremost to be of benefit to elementary students where the 11" display, rubber perimeter, and more ruggedized design would serve students well and minimize damage to the machines.

The proliferation of these 11" Chromebooks across the elementary grades will allow the strategic repurposing and deployment of the preexisting 14" Chromebooks to the secondary schools where, like the elementary schools, they will establish a device ratio of one-to-one in grades 6-12, not only supporting technology rich instruction for all but ensuring the ability of schools to successfully provide in-person, distance, or hybrid learning regardless of what COVID-19 or second semester brings.

Last but not least, Teaching and Learning Resource Services (TLRS), a division of DTS is working collaboratively with the rest of the department and schools to onboard all devices for grades K-12 into the Destiny asset management system. While this system is more commonly used by librarians to issue students books from the school library, this integration will increase the flexibility of each site to assign devices to students locally and maintain records for accountability and tracking.

Since March 2020, Team DTS has taken pride in supporting the needs of the district through the ever-changing landscape created by COVID-19. A team of 19 staff members have worked tirelessly to support almost 11,000 students and staff, onboard and deploy over 5,000 new devices, maintain a fleet of almost 15,000 devices, cable and wire over 300 carts, deploy 450 hot spots to families in need, service and resolve over 2,000 tickets, onboard and deploy devices and accounts to over 100 first year teachers, train hundreds of staff members both directly and indirectly in the use of Schoology and Google Classroom, and record and broadcast dozens of livestreamed district activities both during and after school hours. While this is just a snapshot of their accomplishments, I am incredibly proud of the team's contributions and I know I speak for all of them when I say we're honored to support the continued efforts of our amazing students and staff.



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D3 Grown: Encouraging Students to become Educators

BY CAROLYN STEPHEN
COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST

A community that grows together, stays together. Despite the challenges this year has brought, our staff remains resilient to support our students. Colorado continues to struggle with a teacher shortage, worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to Widefield School District 3 (WSD3) Human Resources having to get creative for hiring staff. Where else to find inspiration for recruiting than to look at our own dedicated staff?

Many of our teachers, staff, and administrators have been part of the district since their days as students themselves. They grew up in Widefield and came back to work in the district to give back to the community. D3 will continue to support our students as they may one day become educators and leaders right here in Widefield. Human Resources (HR) and the Communication Department have teamed up to inspire our students to be a part of the D3 family in the future through our “D3 Grown” campaign.

The internal campaign focuses on getting students interested in education early. We are using stickers and business cards for elementary students with the message, “When I grow up I can be a teacher, a principal, or anything I want to be.” As a way to reach junior high students, we are highlighting staff members that attended junior high in the district and where they are working now. A fun graphic showing ‘then’ and ‘now’ photos with a quote is shared on the district’s social media channels and the district website. The quotes detail the staff’s favorite part of their junior high experience and the most rewarding part of being a part of the district. The goal of the campaign is to bring awareness about working in education and why it is a viable career choice.

“We want to ensure our students know that a professional career in education, as a teacher and a leader, can be a reality for anyone who seeks it, particularly in Widefield,” Kirk Vsetecka, Executive Director of Human Resources.

Next steps for the campaign is to promote the high schools’ Teacher Cadet Program, a honors level class

that prepares students with skills to be a teacher. HR has partnered with local organizations and colleges across the country to recruit new staff. It takes part in virtual job fairs to draw attention to D3 and utilizes digital advertising to reach an even wider audience.

D3 wants all our students and staff to know they have an entire community encouraging and supporting them personally and professionally. If you are interested in being part of the D3 family, visit our website www.wsd3.org/departments/human-resources or call 719-391-3015.

“ The teachers had a huge impact on my life. They challenged me to become stronger and always provided support. ”

- Ursula Reese, Grand Mountain School Assistant Principal

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Happy Holidays from the WSD3 Board of Education



“We want to thank our community for their continued support during these very difficult times. We are amazed by the resiliency, creativity, and compassion of our staff, students, and families. You all are truly heroes. We wish you all a safe and healthy holiday.”

Photo by: Samantha Briggs

Back row: Susan Graham, vice president; Carlos Gonzalez, member; Neil Nelson, member
Front row: Charron Schoenberger, president; Theresa Watson, treasurer



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