

Young superintendent makes impact

Gregory Potts
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Shannon Goodsell, 33, is among Oklahoma's youngest superintendents, while his district, Crooked Oak, is one of the state's oldest.

Goodsell said he hasn't heard of a younger superintendent and with a history going back to the 1890s when a school was established to serve oil-field workers' children, few Oklahoma districts are older. Although some of his colleagues have looked at him doubtfully, he thinks his youth may be an asset.

"You have to have a lot of energy and endurance to do this job, he said.

Goodsell got his first superintendent job when he was 30 at Liberty schools, where he served for a year. He worked as a teacher and principal at various schools before that. This is his second year at Crooked Oak. The district consists of a high school, a middle school and two elementary schools. The main campus is at SE 15 and Eastern Avenue. West Oak Elementary School is nearby at 1900 S Everest Ave.

School Board President Angela Bristow is a fan, calling him "positive and motivated.

"He is out in the schools with the students and faculty, she said. "He's always trying to see ways he can better the education for our children. He's very creative.

Goodsell used knowledge gained as a marketing minor at Oklahoma State University to suggest running an advertisement in the newspaper last winter promoting transfers from other school districts.

Goodsell also had majors in business management and social studies, plus another minor in economics. Goodsell also has a master's degree in education administration from Northeastern Oklahoma State University and is working on a Ph.D. in education administration from OSU.

Promoting student transfers seems to have paid off. The inner-city district's enrollment went up from 895 students last year to 992 this year, according to state Education Department records. That growth comes in a nine-square-mile area of south Oklahoma City that isn't growing.

In all, Goodsell said, about one-third of the district's students are transfers from other districts. And of those transfers, he said about 90 percent come from Oklahoma City Public Schools.

Goodsell said many students transfer because their parents want them in smaller schools, which they perceive as safer and more "like a family."

"If you're absent, people actually miss you, he said.

This was not a bad year for an increase in student population since that increase helped offset state budget cuts. In fact, Goodsell guesses his district is among the most financially stable in the state.

Although Crooked Oak has been hit by state budget cuts along with everyone else, he said the district also receives federal aid that many districts do not because of the high number of low-income students.

Bristow said she admires Goodsell for talking regularly to students about college something that many of the students hadn't considered until he encouraged them.

Goodsell instituted a new program this year allowing seniors to attend Rose State College for half a day. Crooked Oak pays for their tuition, fees and books. He said eight students are participating, and are allowed to count the credits for the classes toward high school graduation and college at the same time.

Goodsell gives a lot of credit to district voters for their support. The district passed two bond issues last year. In May, they passed a \$675,000 bond by 89 percent for building new elementary school classrooms. This will allow the district to offer full-day kindergarten.

In December, voters passed a \$900,000 bond issue with 97 percent support for renovating the district's gymnasium, which was suffering structural problems, and for building a new football stadium. |

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