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**April 2019
Message
from David W. James**

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APS: Making Another Connection

Dear APS Friends:

At Akron Public Schools (APS), when we say we are Connecting Community to the Classroom, it is more than a tag line (or an empty slogan). Akron Public Schools has now formed partnerships with several hundred local companies, foundations and organizations who have each committed to making a difference in the lives and futures of our students. They're each using a combination of time, talent and resources to enrich public education in Akron. To say we are grateful for their contributions would be a significant understatement.



From our College & Career Academies of Akron transforming high school education to our earliest learners in kindergarten and pre-kindergarten, soon, all students will know the benefits of having the resources in our community, outside of our schools' walls, available to them for learning and enrichment.

On April 2, many of us at APS enjoyed one of the most creative and fun programs we have ever seen here. The Cleveland Cavaliers, in partnership with Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, arranged and organized it at Buchtel CLC in the middle school. The Cavaliers in-arena host, Ahmaad Crump, was our emcee in an afternoon that included hands-on STEM activities.

Principal Nicole Hughes and her team -- along with Tamiko Hatcher, our director of specialty programs, and Megan Mannion, who is in charge of all of our librarians and multimedia resources -- did a marvelous job.

Under balloon arches spelling out "science," "technology," "engineering" and "math," we listened as our partners and others addressed the audience. After we cut the ribbon, Buchtel's middle school students started working in their newly renovated STEM lab provided by the two prominent NEO forces. Our students at Buchtel will now be able to study and integrate science, technology, engineering and math into their education.

What made this happen is a byproduct of the partnership that put the iconic Goodyear Wingfoot on the front of Cavalier players' uniforms the past few seasons. APS benefits by way of the two businesses gifting \$1 million in support for STEM programs in Akron Public Schools and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, with each district receiving \$100,000 a year for five years.

I was thrilled to hear Cavaliers CEO Len Komoroski tell students in attendance, "We've worked with Goodyear and your school district to make this middle school STEM lab a great place to learn, create and innovate for the students here today and for all the students who will walk through the halls of Buchtel CLC in the future."

We have more work on this project planned for the Griffs in this the partnership's first STEM project in Akron.

To give you an idea of what a wonderful resource this will be, one room now includes robotics, a Lego wall, virtual reality, and augmented reality and eSports. And that is through another exciting partnership ... with our friends at The University of Akron.

Another room at Buchtel used to be used to store things. Now it's a workroom/studio with wooden basketball court-style floors and a green screen, 3D printers, a T-shirt press, and booths with whiteboard tables students can write on for small-group work.

This lab is going to help middle school students prepare to attend one of our high schools, now complete with our 59 career pathways through the College & Career Academies of Akron.

I can't put the benefits of this more eloquently than Principal Nicole Hughes did that day when she said to her students, "Who am I talking about? I'm talking about each and every one of you who have the capacity, the very seeds of brilliance."

This new learning environment and these formidable partnerships will open so many new doors for our kids. Doors that were much more difficult to find before the community connections began taking shape.

By Connecting Community to the Classroom, we are reaching out to the valuable resources available in Akron to teach and offer memorable, perhaps life-changing, experiences to all of our students. We have stepped a bit outside of the normal comfort zone of a public school system, and we love what we have discovered.

Akron Public Schools has always known about Akron's generosity and talent. Now, our students know, too.

Best Wishes,



David W. James
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