



C.W. RUCKEL MIDDLE SCHOOL

PAUL WHIDDON

Dear Ruckel Students, Parents, and Community,

I hope this letter finds everyone having an enjoyable summer. I would like to congratulate and thank our students, teachers, staff and parents for another outstanding year! School grades are out and Ruckel just received its 17th consecutive A. This is a tribute to all the hard work that is put forth by all of Ruckel's stakeholders. We had many milestone achievements this year. We were among the highest in the Okaloosa School District and the State of Florida in state testing for Math, Language Arts and Science for both proficiency and learning gains. In fact, Florida has over 500 middle schools and we ranked 9th in the state. If you take out charter and magnet schools, we ranked 3rd in the state. We also scored 100% proficient on the EOC exams for Geometry and Algebra and 94% proficient on the Civics EOC. We also scored our highest ever acceleration score at 72. Acceleration scores are based on the total number of successful students in high school credit courses. Geometry, Algebra, Web Design and Digital Information Technology (DIT) classes all contributed to this score. Our students also passed a record number of certification tests this year in Web Design and DIT and Web Design had a pass rate of 100%. Our school is awarded money from the State for passing State certification tests and because of this we were able to purchase a state of the art Web Design and DIT building. Our STEM program was awarded with a record number of grants this year and that grant money will be used to make our STEM program even stronger. Our area has two Air Force Associations and both recognize teachers that support STEM practices in math and science. This past year, both recipients for Teacher of the Year were Ruckel teachers. Math teacher Penny Parmer was TOY for the Eglin Chapter and science teacher Scarlet Brock was TOY for the Hurlbert Chapter. Our Art and Music programs had a banner year. Art, band and chorus classes all had numerous students receive various awards at the local, district and state level. In the athletic world, Ruckel also achieved at a high level. We were able to win 11 championships and 4 runners-up trophies in sports and our archery club was able to perform well at events. Our academic teams and clubs were also able to win many local and district events.

It saddens me that we will be losing 2 iconic teachers and leaders this year. Coach Noah retired this year and his physical education expertise will be missed. Many of you know that this was going to be Mr. Steadman's last year as our Band Director. He recently received an opportunity to extend his career that he could not pass on so he will be moving to Eglin Elementary. Both of these men will be missed but we extend our gratitude for all that they have meant to Ruckel and wish them well on their new journeys. We also will miss Ms. Kempton, our math aide. Ms. Kempton has been hired as a math teacher at Pryor MS and we wish her a successful first year of teaching.

We will have several new faces and programs at Ruckel this year. In an innovative compact, OCSD will partner with the Italian Government and offer Italian this year. Classes will be offered at Bluewater Elementary, Niceville High School and Ruckel Middle School. Ms. Garufi will be our Italian teacher. We welcome her to our staff. We also have two great additions to our Physical Education Department. Logan Walls will be our weight and physical conditioning coach and also serve as our Head Football Coach. Coach Walls was a 3 year starter and academic All-American at Georgia Tech and comes to us from Ft. Walton Beach HS. He will be replacing Coach Hedges, who will be moving on to NHS. We wish Coach Hedges much success at his new school. Coach Ron Reece will replace Coach Noah in PE and will also serve as our Athletic Director. Coach Reece brings years of knowledge and experience to Ruckel and he will be joining us from FWBHS.

At the present time, we have 1085 students registered for the new school year. Traditionally, we add an additional 50 to 75 students by the time school starts, so there is a good chance that we will add more staff before we start school. I want to welcome all of our students and parents who are new to our school and to let you know how excited I am about what you are going to mean to our school this year. For our new military families, I would like to thank you for what you do for our country and to let you know that we have a Military Family Life Counselor on campus to support your student. We also have a Junior Student to Student program whose mission is to help acclimate students new to our school. We are fortunate to have one of the best Parent-Teacher Organizations in the state. I would like to extend an invitation to all parents to join our PTO! The mission of this organization is to voluntarily support our school and to raise funds that support students and teachers. We have been able to reduce our state testing days from 15 days to 6 days because of the additional electronic devices that our PTO has purchased. Because of reduced funding to our school district this year due to Bill 7069, your involvement in PTO will be much appreciated. Mrs. Donaldson is our PTO President this year and you can visit our website for her contact information or visit the PTO table during orientation.

Upcoming dates for you to be aware of include July 28th, when we will have a Beautification Workday here at Ruckel between 8:00am and 12:00 pm. This will be a joint effort between PTO, teachers, staff and friends of Ruckel, so that our campus will be looking nice for the start of the school year. We will end the day with a cookout. August 3rd- 9th are pre-planning days for teachers and we will have our Readiness Day/Orientation on August 8th. This is an opportunity for all students to get their schedule, locker and agenda book. Orientation for 8th grade will be between 8:00 and 9:30 am, 7th grade between 10:00 and 11:30 am, and 6th grade between 12:30 and 2:00 pm. We will have our Open House on August 22nd at 5:30 and the Book Fair will be open in the Media Center that evening.

I wish everyone a happy and safe rest of the summer and I look forward to an even better year in 2017-18.