

## **In Session with the “Oriole” Superintendent**

By, Bill Barnes, CHS/CEMC Principal, Guest Columnist

### CHS Seniors Are Ready for Life After High School

Each year at Charlotte High School, we start the year off by talking with our students about expectations. We talk about professional behavior, trying our best, being positive members of the school community, and taking responsibility for our actions. I always end the conversation by reminding students that they need to plan for the future. After all, there is life after high school and they need to be ready for it.

As we enter the month of May, that last expectation stands out, not only because our seniors are very close to life after high school, but because after four years at CHS, we are confident that they are ready for it. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, we celebrated Decision Day, which is designed to recognize all of our seniors and their post-secondary plans. In this year’s class, we have students who will be attending 28 different colleges, five different trade schools, joining multiple military branches, completing apprenticeships, and seeking full time employment. We spend a great deal of time talking about college and career readiness, and the proof that our students are ready can be found in these results. Our seniors are ready.

It is important to note, however, that these plans for the future are not developed by accident. They are the result of years of hard work, dedication, and support from family, friends, parents, the community, and Charlotte Public Schools. From forming a solid academic foundation in the elementary schools to transitioning through the middle school and into the 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy, the first 10 years of our students’ education provide them with the skills they need to begin choosing a path. Then, in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, students start to make some decisions about what they want to do. Whether it is taking one of our 11 different Advanced Placement courses, enrolling in Eaton RESA’s programs at LCC, joining the Charlotte Early Middle College, enrolling in a Career and Technology Education or engineering course at the high school, or taking advantage of one of our five different college partnerships, students begin building the credentials that they will need after they graduate. In addition, from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade (or year 13 for our EMC students), they build additional skills through our fine arts programs or our athletic teams, and they connect to our community through clubs and activities. Thus, from the moment they walk through our doors, they begin developing the talents that allow them to celebrate their next steps on Decision Day.

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, we will celebrate our seniors and their connection to our school district and community on our annual *Senior Farewell Tour*. The seniors will jump on school buses in their graduation regalia and visit all of the district’s schools. This allows them to say thank you to all of the teachers and staff who helped them along the journey, while inspiring the next generation of Orioles to build their own college and career readiness paths. The tour ends with a cookout on the courthouse lawn. So, if you happen to drive by that day and see the seniors in their regalia, you can be confident that their caps and gowns are not only a symbol of their accomplishments here in Charlotte, but also that they recognize that there is life after high school and they are, indeed, ready for it.