



Remarks by Tamara Cotman  
Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education  
Unified School District 259  
Americans All® Press Conference, November 6, 2003  
Wichita, Kansas

Good morning,

I am Tamara Cotman, the assistant superintendent of elementary schools, and it is my honor and privilege to welcome you on behalf of Superintendent Winston Brooks, who was very disappointed that he couldn't be here today. He had this event scheduled on his calendar, but at the last minute had an opportunity to go to a meeting in Washington, D.C., with some of our staff to learn more about what we can do to continue our endeavors to raise student achievement. So he asked me to represent him this morning.

First, I'd like to recognize one of our board of education members who is present here today, Reverend Kevass Hardy. And sitting here before Montara began her introduction, former Mayor Bob Knight remarked to me that we could not have chosen a more fitting backdrop than to have these students here as we make this announcement this morning. And I couldn't agree more. As I look around the room, I see groups of people who are committed to the very cause that Americans All® stands for. I see members of the city, members of the county, members of the school district, members of the community at large and, most importantly, students who believe that everyone has an equal place in this country.

I want to thank Mr. Ken Thiessen, the principal here at East High, and the school librarian, Mrs. Jane Rand, for opening up their home to host this grand event today.

I don't know of a better location we could have used to serve as a springboard for today's event. As you look at this group of students who stand before you, you see the range of diversity that we serve every day. Although you cannot identify them individually, you see students who come from our most well-to-do families and students who come from our most impoverished neighborhoods. You see children whose parents were born here in the United States and children whose parents were not born in the United States. And you perhaps even see students who were not born in the United States.

All of these folks have come together today to support what we believe in this district is one of the most important reasons that we exist. And that is to celebrate diversity by working collaboratively as a community to ensure that we provide an appropriate education that includes everyone.

The greatest value of the Americans All® program is that it promotes the value of all people and all cultures. And it supports our fundamental mission of educating every student every day, regardless of their background, their poverty level, their economic status or their family circumstances. We hold high expectations for every child in this district, for every teacher and for every student. And we are very pleased to partner with and support Americans All®, because we believe that their mission is compatible with the mission that we're assigned to carry out every day.

On behalf of the Wichita Public Schools, we thank you for your presence today. We look forward to hearing more about this massive unveiling. And we encourage each of you to support what these students stand for and to support our mission and what the public schools stand for.

Thank you very much.



## Wichita Public Schools

Within a district of more than 49,000 students and 7,000 teachers and staff members, the Wichita Public Schools give parents, students and community members a customized approach to meeting their education needs through 108 unique learning centers. In addition to traditional neighborhood schools, this includes the district's 26 magnet schools that provide specific educational focus in such subjects as international studies, environmental studies, science and technology, and foreign language and communications.

Learning centers at every high school, as well as at several alternative locations, provide resources for students who left school prior to graduation and who now choose to return to school and receive a diploma. The district's Wichita High School East also hosts the acclaimed International Baccalaureate advanced academic learning program. The Wichita e-School, an initiative of the Wichita Public Schools, provides online curriculum to the district's home-schooled students. This innovative effort, now in its third year, is being offered to neighboring school districts as a way to broaden curriculum offerings while dealing with limited financial resources. With growing special education and bilingual student needs, the Wichita district is also well prepared as a regional leader in providing special and unique services.

In addition to academically challenging opportunities, students in Wichita Public Schools can participate in numerous extracurricular activities. These include speech, sports, debate, drama, forensics, fine arts, community service clubs and JROTC leadership programs.

Wichita's business community has supported the development of the district's rigorous testing program in the core academic areas of math, reading and writing. All students in the second, fifth, eighth and tenth grades are tested to assess progress, provide benchmarks for achievement and, most importantly, determine those areas in which individual students need support to be successful in their academic pursuits.

The business community aims to make education a top priority. It not only commits financial resources, but also participates in student tutoring programs, supplies state-of-the-art equipment, welcomes students and teachers into the business environment for career exploration activities, and brings business leaders into the classroom for collaborative learning opportunities.

Strong, meaningful parent involvement in the schools is encouraged. Parents work with staff to shape the direction of each school through engagement, partnerships and site-based management. Parents and staff also work together to create a learning environment that is safe and disciplined as well as academically challenging.

The Wichita Public Schools affords families the benefit of a large, diverse district with the student-centered approach of the individual communities it serves. For more information, visit the district's Web site at [www.usd259.com](http://www.usd259.com).