

SPOTLIGHT ON

Noble Local School District



In this interview, **Superintendent Dan Leffingwell** describes how the Noble Local School District is investing federal COVID-19 relief funds to prepare its students for a brighter future.

Q: How did the Noble Local School District fare during the COVID-19 pandemic?

We are a mostly rural district whose people pride themselves on being resilient and self-sufficient. **During COVID-19, we adopted the attitude, “More than survive, let’s thrive.”** We weren’t going to just ride out the pandemic. We looked for the silver lining and found outside-the-box ways to create even more opportunities for our students.

Q: How has learning bounced back since the pandemic?

We’ve beefed up summer programming to help students recover academic ground lost during the pandemic. Summer has traditionally been known for “summer slide,” when students lose math and reading skills from the school year prior. We’re turning that concept on its head, using these months to help students catch up and even get ahead.

We’ve also integrated more STEM — science, technology, engineering and math — into school curriculum. This offers our students a leg up, giving them transferable skills that expand their college and career options.

We were able to make these improvements in large part due to federal COVID-19 relief funds from the American Rescue Plan Act.



Q: What's the most exciting project Noble has undertaken with American Rescue Plan funds?

We're developing a 142-acre research farm to offer students hands-on learning about agriculture, economics and technology. We hope ultimately to connect every education pathway at the high school through the farm in some way.

The vision fuses Noble's rural heritage with the economic development opportunities we see all around us. The Farm Bureau estimates the nation's agriculture workforce is short about 90,000 people. The research farm presents a development opportunity for both our students and the larger community.

The district had been exploring the vision of a research farm for some time. Relief funds have allowed us to move forward with it sooner, without having to sacrifice funding for other education needs.

Q: What do these initiatives mean for students?

By using federal COVID-19 relief funds wisely, we can open up opportunities for students after graduation.

One student, Manny, comes to mind. Manny was at risk of not graduating, but then he got involved in the district's high tech and manufacturing programs. It was a natural fit. He thrived and even went on to compete in the world robotics championship. I'm pleased to say he graduated earlier this year.

On top of that, he could go right to work because the education opportunities he'd had here at Noble. Those opportunities exist in large part thanks to our district's 160-plus business partners.

When kids like Manny see that there are pathways, they feel better about their future.

And at Noble, we're committed to keeping that future bright.



Noble Local School District students say **their future looks better than their past.**