

## New category affects DHS state report card

By Colby Gast

The Durant Junior and Senior High took a hit on its annual state report card when it received no points on a new work-based learning category.

Durant, along with every other district in the state of Iowa, is scored on its overall performance through many different categories in the Iowa School Performance Profiles, including proficiency in the academic areas of language arts, science, and math; graduation rates; attendance; and the number of students who received college credits.

However, a new category on work-based learning was instituted by the state Department of Education and implemented in the 2024 report card. Durant failed to score any points in this category from its senior class of 2023.

According to a state education program consultant, Joe Collins, the work-based learning category would include experiences like apprenticeships or internships where work is being completed with outside employers, but it would not include job shadowing or career fairs where students are learn-

ing about careers.

For this report card, schools are required to send in a variety of reports to fulfill these categories, and Mr. Collins believes Durant may have not sent in the correct information to meet this category. He said that it was “likely the applicable courses were not coded correctly in your SIS [Student Information System].”

On the overall report card, Durant scored 500 out of 900, while the average score of all the schools in the state was 549. This brought Durant to a rank of acceptable, the fourth of six rankings given based on a school’s composite score.

The top category is exceptional, followed by high performing, commendable, acceptable, needs improvement, and priority/comprehensive. The lack of any score in the new work-based learning category may have cost Durant the next rank, commendable, if it had achieved a high score in this category. However, Durant superintendent Joe Burnett does not believe the school district was caught off guard by the new category.

“The state’s always changing the

target, and this is just another situation where the state is readjusting what our targets are,” said Mr. Burnett. “We have to adjust some things internally and some of our offerings, but now we’ve got a target that we’re going to shoot for.”

Mr. Burnett takes this score very seriously every year, understanding that it’s important to keep Durant competitive with other school districts, so it can attract new families and students. But in the end, it is just a score for Mr. Burnett.

“At the end of the day, the score might not necessarily be a reflection of what we’re doing,” said Mr. Burnett. “We’re not a district that chases scores. We’re a district that chases good learning and opportunities for kids to be successful.”

In the 2025-2026 school year, Durant will bring in a work-based learning program called iJAG (Iowa Jobs for America’s Graduates), according to Mr. Burnett. The iJAG website says the program “partners with Iowa schools to deliver career development programming, including leadership training, career education, individualized guidance, and employer engagement.”

“iJAG will help us,” said Mr. Burnett. “What we’ve seen in today’s world is there are a lot of opportunities post high school for students in the trades, and we’re trying to give kids more opportunities to explore those trade programs while still in high school.”

Mr. Burnett wanted to clarify that the school was not adding iJAG for the score Durant will receive on the state report card but rather to better the opportunities for students of Durant.

“It’s an opportunity to get students to do more internship-based programs in their junior or senior year to get a taste of some of those career opportunities,” he said. One school program that may count towards the work-based learning category is the journalism class. Students interview community members, sell ads, and release a monthly issue in the *Wilton-Durant Advocate News*.

“It (journalism) might qualify as either a project-based learning, simulated work experience, or student learner program under the new state definition for work-based learning outlined last year in Senate File 2411,” said Mr. Collins.

## Small-school athletes susceptible to overuse injuries

By Allison Toft and Josh Paustian

Junior Colby Gast’s 2024 track season started out with a bang but a pulled hamstring ended any shot at standing on the podium at state.

Gast was a part of the 4x100-meter relay team that was breaking records at the start of the year, and he was also a contender for a state title in the 100-meter dash and was ranked in the top three early in the season.

And then it all came crashing down when Gast injured the hamstring in a meet.

“I tweaked it in a race in the 100-meter dash in an early meet at Tipton, which is what started it,” said Gast. “Then in a baseball game about a week later, I was running out a hit and hurt it even worse.”

Because of his injury, Gast was out for a total of seven weeks.

“I was out about three weeks before I tried to run in a race again, but when I attempted to run in my conference and district races, it gave out mid-race both times,” he said. “These last two tweaks kept me out for three more weeks.”

Colby’s injury is becoming a common story at Durant. In the first four months of the 2024-2025 school year, a *Chronicles* review of injuries showed Durant has had 16 athletes who missed practice or game time due to injury in the sports of volleyball, football, basketball, and wrestling.

The Durant school uses Rock Valley Physical Therapy as its athletic trainer. Mrs. Kelly Waack is a physical therapist at Rock Valley, which has offices in Wilton and Walcott, and more than 60 clinics altogether in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska.

“I think some of the injuries that

Durant has had over the last few years have just been isolated incidents or bad luck, but I think some of the junior high and high school injuries have been from overuse,” said Mrs. Waack.

“In a small school, most athletes are in multiple sports and are typically doing offseason work for some sports while they are in season for another sport. This seems to lead to too much activity with too little rest.”

With all of the injuries, Rock Valley saw a “high percentage of the injured Durant athletes at our clinic,” Mrs. Waack said.

“This has been a busy year for us overall. At any given time, we seem to at least have a few high school students on our schedule, along with some junior high athletes or younger at times.”

The football team had the most number of players injured this fall with 12,

according to the *Chronicles* injury review. Three of those injuries were concussion-related.

“I helped cover Wilton and Durant football games last year and this year, as we **See INJURY, page 3**



Junior Christian Frantz gets helped up by coaches during the Cascade football game.

## TikTok ban causes rollercoaster of emotions for Durant students

By Royce Richman

Durant students’ worst nightmare became a reality earlier this month when their favorite social media app, TikTok, went dark on the night of January 18. However, within a day, the app was up and running again for all American users.

“It was strange seeing it get banned because it was an app we all used so much,” said junior Charlie Anderson. Anderson and other users saw a message from TikTok pop up on the app when they tried to access it on January 18.

“Sorry, TikTok isn’t available right now,” the message said. “A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the U.S. Unfortunately, that means you can’t use TikTok for now.” The app returned after President Donald Trump promised an executive order that would prevent the law from taking effect. President Trump did sign the executive order on inauguration day to essentially pause the ban for 75 days and give his administration “an opportunity to determine the appropriate course forward,” according to an article by *The New York Times*.

This rollercoaster ride began in April when Congress passed a bill that

banned TikTok in the U.S. if it wasn’t sold to an American company by January 19.

The U.S. government claimed that the app’s Chinese parent company, ByteDance Ltd., would allow the Chinese government to collect personal data about American users through the platform. On January 10, the U.S. Supreme Court listened to arguments from TikTok representatives about why the law was a violation of the First Amendment.

Only a week later, the Supreme Court upheld the ban, which three local students, Anderson, senior Carter Furne, and junior Baie Hart, disagreed with. Interviewed right after the decision, Furne and Hart said that they were never worried about TikTok stealing their information but were already looking for similar replacements for the app.

“If you have any sort of social media or just a phone in general, you’ve already given up all your personal data to them,” Hart said.

The most popular TikTok replacement so far seems to be another app based out of China called REDnote. After the Supreme Court decision, REDnote was the top app in the App Store and Google Play,

despite much of the user interface being in Mandarin.

Hart explained that she has already downloaded the app and is getting a feel for it.

“I’ve started talking to people from China a lot, and I’m learning a little bit of Chinese,” she said. “I’m gonna make a post there later today about my day in the life at school as an American because a lot of people on there are curious about American culture.”

Furne, who called the TikTok ban a “terrible bill,” said that the government’s concerns about national security in the case are invalid. “Nothing on TikTok has ever messed with my head or changed any major world thoughts I have, and I have never had information stolen,” he said. “If the American government is just out to ban everything that Americans do not make, we are in for a rough time in a country that’s supposed to be labeled as land of the free.”

Before TikTok went dark for a day, Hart started downloading old videos before they became inaccessible in the U.S.

“I didn’t get TikTok until this summer, so I haven’t been using it that much or

as long as other people have, but I have a lot of saved videos and audios and stuff,” she said. “And then having to download those videos and then put them somewhere else, that’s going to be a lot of work.”

According to Dr. Brett Johnson, an associate professor at the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication, the ultimate fate of TikTok lies in the hands of President Donald Trump.

“Trump gave an interview where he said he would save TikTok, and he mentioned how TikTok was very influential in his campaign, and so he kind of feels like he owes them for that,” said Dr. Johnson.

Although the law attempts to protect Americans from their personal information being used by the Chinese government, Dr. Johnson said that this issue extends beyond the TikTok app.

“If China really wants to get information on American citizens, one person said they could go to any one of dozens of data brokers that exist in the United States and all the parts of the world and get the information there,” he said. “This ban probably won’t solve the issue. The issue is not going to go away.”