

*Common Core issue • Madison Local (Lake) students create cybercafe*

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# JOURNAL

OHIO SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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**Common Core issue:** Ohio districts prepare for the Common Core State Standards, which go into effect in school year 2014-15.

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*OSBA leads the way to educational excellence by serving Ohio's public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.*

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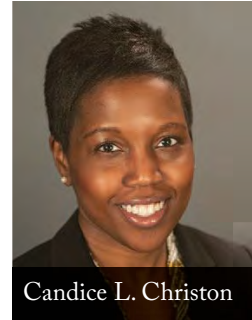
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# Ready to ride

*Richard Lewis, CAE, executive director*



*Lessons from the road*

A very wealthy young man once purchased the fastest motorcycle that money could buy — a Dodge Tomahawk, nearly impossible to match in terms of power. The day he bought his new bike he took it for a spin. He stopped at a red light at the city limits where an elderly gentleman pulled up next to him on a mo-ped.

The mo-ped rider looked over at the silver, sleek, shiny new motorcycle and asked, “What kind of scooter you got there, sonny?”

The wealthy young man boasted, “It’s a Tomahawk with a 500 horsepower V-10 engine taken from a Dodge Viper. It costs \$555,000 out the door. Only nine units were ever built. Theoretically, this bike can go 350 mph!”

The old-timer meekly asked to take a look at it and from his mo-ped, leaned over for a close inspection of the finely crafted machine. Just then the light changed. That’s when the young man decided to show what his new motorcycle could really do.

He gave it full throttle and within seconds the speedometer read 200 mph. The wealthy young man was flying down the road, wind in his face, smiling ear to ear when suddenly he noticed a dot in his rearview mirror.

It seemed to be getting closer! Suddenly, something zoomed past him going much faster. He had no idea what it was, but it was clearly the fastest thing he had ever seen. Then, just ahead of him, he saw the dot coming back at him. It went flying by him again going in the opposite direction! It almost looked

like the man on the mo-ped! “That can’t possibly be!” he thought.

Again, he saw the dot in his rearview mirror rapidly approaching. Without warning, the mo-ped slammed into the rear of the shiny new Tomahawk, demolishing the rear end of the wealthy rider’s pride and joy.

The young man jumped off and saw it was the old-timer. The mo-ped was crushed, the road littered with debris and the old man lying on the ground bruised and battered. The young man ran over to him and asked, “Are you hurt? Is there anything I can do for you?”

The man groaned and replied, “Yes, would you please unhook my suspenders from your rearview mirror?”

There are several lessons board members can take away from this story.

## **Lesson 1 — Curiosity can create a wild ride**

Don’t let that stop you. As board members, continue to ask away. Never stop asking. Never stop learning.

For newly elected members, there is an expected learning curve. You should not be afraid to acknowledge you don’t understand an acronym, budget assumption or any other part of the job.

To advance your never-ending professional development, consider seeking a mentor on your board or a neighboring board. If you can’t find that person on your own, contact OSBA. Many board members across the state have volunteered to step in and pay it forward as mentors.

Through it all, keep asking the great questions. What are we trying to accomplish? Why are we doing this? How much can we allocate? Are we satisfied with the results? But be aware — just as the old-timer discovered — that your question may open the throttle to a wild ride.

## **Lesson 2 — Some of you signed up for a 45-mph ride, but you’re about to top 200**

That’s half the fun! You won’t run full throttle for four straight years, but strap yourselves in and get ready. Like riding a roller coaster, you can scream all you want, just hold on. The ride will eventually end, but you don’t always get to decide when. In the end, it’s not the speed that kills, it’s the stop. Everyone crashes — some get back on, some don’t, some can’t. Just enjoy it and make the most of every moment and never look back with regret.

## **Lesson 3 — The fastest board member sets the pace**

In dog sledding, the lead dogs steer the team and determine the speed. When geese travel, the goose at the apex of the V formation flaps its wings and creates uplift for the bird immediately following.

Taking point is as critical to the success of your board as it is to a dog sled team or flock of geese. But understand that you can’t do it all. You must lead in the opportunities that call for your influence and allow your colleagues to do the same.

Your fellow board members were elected by the community because of their knowledge, skills and abilities, just as you were. On those flights and mushes when your colleagues lead, do whatever you can to keep up the pace of the team.



### Lesson 4 — No matter how fast you are, there is always a faster bike

School districts are like motorcycles. Each is customized differently. There is something that your district does better than anybody else in the state. You should be proud and tell the world about it. Brag about your academic success. Showcase your arts. Provide musicians and athletes opportunities to develop themselves. Thank your communities for the wonderful schools they have helped build.

But know someone else is doing something better. Don't bemoan that fact. If experience truly comes from making mistakes, find the seeds that created those successful programs and steal without guilt.

Then spread those seeds yourself. Participate in the OSBA Capital Conference, Student Achievement Fair, Small School District Advisory Network or Urban School District Advisory Network. Get involved in OSBA's new

Stand Up for Public Schools campaign to highlight public education successes and support locally elected school boards. To learn more, visit [www.standupforOHpublicschools.org](http://www.standupforOHpublicschools.org).

### Lesson 5 — Things are not always what they appear

It's all based on perception. Some may say that motorcycles leak oil. Their owners may disagree, countering that they are simply marking their territories. The wealthy man with the fast bike couldn't believe his eyes. Sometimes you should do a double take as well.

Perhaps it's a vendor with a product too good to be true. Perhaps it's a negotiations proposal that is just too good to ignore. Maybe it's a sudden increase or decrease in student achievement.

Sometimes it's necessary to squint your eyes and look a little closer, because like a 200-mph mo-ped, there are sometimes unexpected explanations.

### Lesson 6 — Objects in the rearview mirror are closer than they appear

Public education is a classic tale of two cities. Some things don't ever seem to move quickly. We've been working on a constitutional school-funding formula in Ohio since 1991. Other things will move at the speed of light. The Ohio teacher and principal evaluation systems, Common Core State Standards and third-grade reading guarantee are all flying toward you. They were once just a dot in the rearview mirror; now they are bearing down at breakneck speed.

Be prepared. Be fluid in your priorities. Expect to have to make decisions quickly at times. The future waits for no one.

I invite you to call upon your association whenever you need help. Whatever your need, OSBA has your answers and is just a phone call away.

In the meantime, enjoy your ride. ■



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*Keys to working as a team*

# What we've got here is ... failure to communicate

*Steve Horton, school board services consultant*

Yes, it's one of the most memorable lines from one of the most revered "guy" flicks of all time. **Strother Martin's** slow southern drawl and **Paul Newman's** impertinent response have helped endear "Cool Hand Luke" to movie enthusiasts for nearly 50 years.

While thinking about my work with boards of education and school administrations, this well-known phrase came to mind. It is especially applicable this year, as with any election-cycle year. Almost all boards are faced with outgoing established members and incoming new members.

There is a dreaded reality with the influx of new board members, and that is *change*. Regardless of your open-mindedness and thirst for the unknown, change is difficult. Our human brains are naturally wired to seek patterns and routine. They bring a sense of calm and normalcy to our lives.

Some need the mundane and the expected more than others, but all of us share a common predisposition. So it is not without reason that when new board members with new ideas, agendas and attitudes invade our sense of calm, there is a certain amount of resistance and turmoil.

Veteran board members — think back to when you were elected. I know some of you have to dig deeper into your memory banks than others, but at that time in your life, how much did you really know or understand about board service?

What are the prerequisites for board

service? Is there required course work on school finance, leadership or current educational programs and practices? Do you have to have a specified number of years of board service with other organizations? Do you have to have a degree or experience in educational theory and administration? The questions could go on, but the answer will still be "no."

So what does it take to be an effective board member? One could argue it doesn't take much, but in reality it requires a great deal. The greatest of skills needed is the ability to communicate. This is not a reference to your ability to speak or write your thoughts and ideas, although that is important. This, more than anything, is referring to your ability to listen.

Veteran board members, consider that the one common need of all those "rogue" board members invading your boardroom space is to be heard. I imagine we can all relate to times in our lives when we had ideas and opinions that mattered, but no one around us would listen. Granted, there are those

who feel the need to shout as loudly as possible when that really isn't necessary. But in time that need may fade, if they know someone is listening.

This is not a one-way conversation. New board members, you are new to this work. Be willing to listen to the vets. They have been in the trenches and endured the wars. Be willing to learn from those who have been in your shoes.

As I heard one board member say, it took him a year-and-a-half to really figure it out. Don't assume you know anything until you have had time to learn what you *don't* know. If you don't take time to listen to those around you, you are making the learning curve even steeper.

Listening to those around the table and working together for a common understanding is the only way to achieve consensus. Like it or not, that is the only way to truly serve the students in your districts. At the end of the day, that is why we are all here at the table. ■

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# Extracurricular activities law significantly changes

*Candice L. Christon, staff attorney*

There were many changes in Ohio school law during 2013. Several resulted from the passage of the biennial budget bill, House Bill (HB) 59, with many of the provisions becoming effective in September 2013. One area of law that changed significantly deals with participation in extracurricular activities by home-schooled students and students enrolled in nonpublic schools.

The statutory changes outline when home-schooled students and students enrolled in nonpublic schools must or may be afforded the opportunity to participate in your district's extracurricular activities. There also were minor changes to the language affecting science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) school students' participation in extracurricular activities at a traditional public school. School districts were required to implement these changes on Sept. 29, 2013. These changes do not apply to cocurricular activities.

## Defining extracurricular activities

First, let's look at the definition of an "extracurricular activity." Pursuant to Ohio Revised Code (RC) 3313.537, an extracurricular activity is a "pupil activity program that a school or school district operates and is not included in the school district's graded course of study, including an interscholastic extracurricular activity that a school or school district sponsors or participates in and that has participants from more than one school or district." For example, extracurricular activities may include a high school basketball team, track team or cheerleading squad.

## Nonpublic school students

Under the new law, students enrolled in

a nonpublic school have the opportunity to participate in a school district's extracurricular activities if certain criteria are met (RC 3313.5311). First, the student must be entitled to attend the school in the district under RC 3313.64 or RC 3313.65. Second, the nonpublic school that the student is attending may not offer the extracurricular activity.

If these conditions are met, the superintendent must provide the student the opportunity to participate at the school in the district in which the student otherwise would be assigned during the school year. If there is more than one school in the district serving the student's grade level, the student must be afforded the opportunity to participate at the school in which the superintendent would assign the student.

Even if the student is not entitled to attend school in the district, the new law permits, but does not require, a superintendent to allow the student to participate in an extracurricular activity in the district if:

- it is not offered at the nonpublic school that the student attends;
- it is not interscholastic athletics, interscholastic contests or competition in forensics, drama or music.

For a nonpublic school student to participate in the extracurricular activity, the student must be of the appropriate age and grade level for the school that offers the activity. Additionally, the student is required to fulfill the same academic, nonacademic and financial requirements as any other participant in the public school district.

The new law prohibits a school district from imposing additional rules on a nonpublic school student, including additional eligibility requirements, that are not required for other public school students participating in that extracurricular activity. Districts also are prohibited from charging additional participation fees to a student enrolled in a nonpublic school that exceed the fees charged to other students participating in the extracurricular activity.

## Home-schooled students

Similar to nonpublic school students, there is a provision in the law that requires a district superintendent to provide a home-schooled student the opportunity to participate in an extracurricular activity (RC 3313.5312).

A home-schooled student must be afforded the opportunity to participate in an extracurricular activity that is offered by the school where the student would be assigned to attend. However, if there is more than one school in the district serving the student's grade level, the student must be afforded the opportunity to participate at the school in which the superintendent would assign the student. If the student wants to participate in an extracurricular activity offered by the district, the student is prohibited from participating in that extracurricular activity at another school or in another district he or she is not entitled to attend.

Even if the student is not entitled to attend school in the district, the new law permits, but does not require, a superintendent to allow a home-schooled student to participate in an extracurricular activity in the district, but



only if the extracurricular activity is not offered in the district that the student would be entitled to attend.

Certain criteria must be met before a home-schooled student may participate in an extracurricular activity under RC 3313.5312. The district superintendent must determine that the home-schooled student is of the correct age and grade level for the school that offers the extracurricular activity. The student also must meet the same nonacademic and financial requirements that any other participant is required to meet.

In addition, the student must meet one of the following academic conditions if he or she was home-schooled in the previous grading period:

- if the student was home-schooled in the previous grading period, he or she must meet any academic requirements established by the State Board of Education in order to continue being home-schooled;
- if the student was not home-schooled in the previous grading period, his or her academic performance from the previous grading period must have met any academic requirements established by the district in order to participate.

Any student who leaves a district midyear to become home-schooled must have his or her eligibility to participate determined by an interim academic assessment issued by the district in which he or she was enrolled “based on the student’s work while enrolled in that district” (RC 3313.5312).

Additionally, a student that begins home-school instruction after the school year begins and is ineligible at that time to participate in any extracurricular activity because of his or her failure to meet academic standards or any other district requirements may not participate in an extracurricular activity until he or she has met the academic requirements established by the State Board of Education in order to continue home-schooling. A student also may not be

eligible to participate in the same semester that he or she was deemed ineligible.

The new law prohibits school districts from imposing additional rules, including additional eligibility requirements, on a home-schooled student in order to participate in an extracurricular activity that are not applied to other students participating in the same activity. In addition, a district may not impose participation fees on a home-schooled student that exceed the amount charged other students participating in the same extracurricular activity.

### **STEM and community school students**

The new law made a slight amendment to the provision on extracurricular activities for students enrolled in a STEM school. Now, STEM school students may not be prohibited from participating in any extracurricular activity that is offered at the traditional public school that the student is entitled to attend. Previously, the language stated that a STEM school student “should be afforded the opportunity to participate” in any extracurricular activities offered at the traditional public school that the student was entitled to attend. This change can be found in RC 3313.537.

STEM school students still are required to fulfill the same academic, nonacademic and financial requirements that other participants are required to fulfill. This includes any rules and policies that a school district has adopted.

Additionally, a STEM school student still may not be charged participation fees that exceed fees imposed on any other student participating in the same extracurricular activity. STEM school students cannot be required to meet any eligibility requirements that contradict RC 3313.537.

HB 59 did not alter any provisions on community school students participating in extracurricular activities at a traditional public school under RC 3313.537. The same requirements still apply.

Community school students in grades seven to 12 must be afforded the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities offered at the traditional public school they are entitled to attend. In addition, community school students must fulfill the same academic, nonacademic, and financial requirements that other participants are required to fulfill.

The district board of education may require, as a condition of participation, a community school student to enroll and participate in no more than one academic course at the school that is offering the extracurricular activity. If that occurs, the district must admit students “seeking to enroll in an academic course to fulfill the requirement as space allows after first enrolling students assigned to that school.”

A community school student still may not be charged participation fees that exceed fees imposed on any other student participating in the same extracurricular activity. Community school students cannot be required to meet any eligibility requirements that contradict RC 3313.537.

### **Moving forward**

Take a look at your board policy and make sure it has been updated to include these changes. Review your district’s participation fee structure and ensure that other eligibility requirements are still being met.

The Ohio High School Athletic Association has issued a guidance document and FAQ related to the changes in law, which is available at: <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/69642> and <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/29423>. If you have general questions on this topic, contact OSBA’s legal division. ■

*“According to law” is designed to provide authoritative general information, sometimes with commentary. It should not be relied upon as legal advice. If legal advice is required, the services of an attorney should be obtained.*



# A step-by-step look at board policy development

*Megan Greulich, policy consultant*

**L**earning about the policy development process is essential for new board members. Returning and longtime board members also can benefit by refreshing their knowledge of the process and their board policy responsibilities.

Developing board policy is an essential function of a board of education. It's important to understand the process from start to finish to prevent your manual from quickly becoming outdated.

Board policy guides districts toward the mission and vision the board sets, and can provide direction for where the district is now and hopes to be in the future. It also helps address issues in the district. And, most importantly, board policy can help protect the district from litigation by setting a legally compliant standard for administrators to follow.

Policy development is an eight-step process. The process is cyclical and ongoing. Let's take a look at the steps.

The first step is identifying a need. The need to develop policy language can arise from a variety of situations. It can arise from a legal requirement at the state or federal level, or a mandate set by an agency such as the state auditor's office or Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation.

A unique situation in your district also can create a need, especially since districts across the state are so different. A need can occur when the district is required to do something, but not required to have a policy on the topic. In

these situations, some districts prefer to adopt language for informational purposes, and others feel confident finding the requirements elsewhere rather than restating them in board policy. There's no right or wrong here, it just depends on your board's philosophy on board policy language.

*Board policy guides districts toward the mission and vision the board sets, and can provide direction for where the district is now and hopes to be in the future.*

After identifying a need, step two requires an analysis of policy strategies. Consider if an existing policy can be revised or a new policy must be developed. If you already have language on the topic elsewhere, it's better to revise existing language to avoid covering the topic in two areas and risk creating contradictions in the policy manual.

You also may consider whether the issue is even appropriate for board policy. The board should ask: Should the language be kept separate for more flexibility? Can it be placed in a district-specific policy, procedure or plan? Once you've analyzed the strategies, it's time for step three: selecting a strategy.

In step four, policy drafting begins. The

initial phase is soliciting stakeholder input. Consider who will implement the language once it's in place and which staff members have expertise on the topic. For instance, a policy on transportation should include input from your transportation supervisor.

Consider appointing a policy committee. This allows a smaller group to focus on the issue and take recommendations back to the full board, which streamlines the process.

It's also important to ask for help. OSBA has a variety of services to help with the process, including the *Policy Development Quarterly (PDQ)* electronic newsletter and a bank of sample policies. OSBA policy consultants are members of the American Association of State Policy Services (AASPS), so they can reach out to other state associations in the event your request is so unique that OSBA doesn't already have a sample or recommendation. If you don't use OSBA policy services, your current provider should be able to provide you resources and recommendations for getting started and addressing any issues you're facing. Don't hesitate to ask for help.

Step five is policy adoption. It is important to consider your time line for adoption. Many districts require two readings at public meetings prior to adoption. This practice is not required by law, but can be wise.

Holding two readings helps inform the community of the proposed changes. It also can be a good way to solicit stakeholder feedback that you

wouldn't have otherwise considered. And, it can give you a leg to stand on when you get complaints after the fact. You can remind community members that you would have welcomed feedback prior to adoption, but now that the language is in place, your district accurately implements board policy as stated.

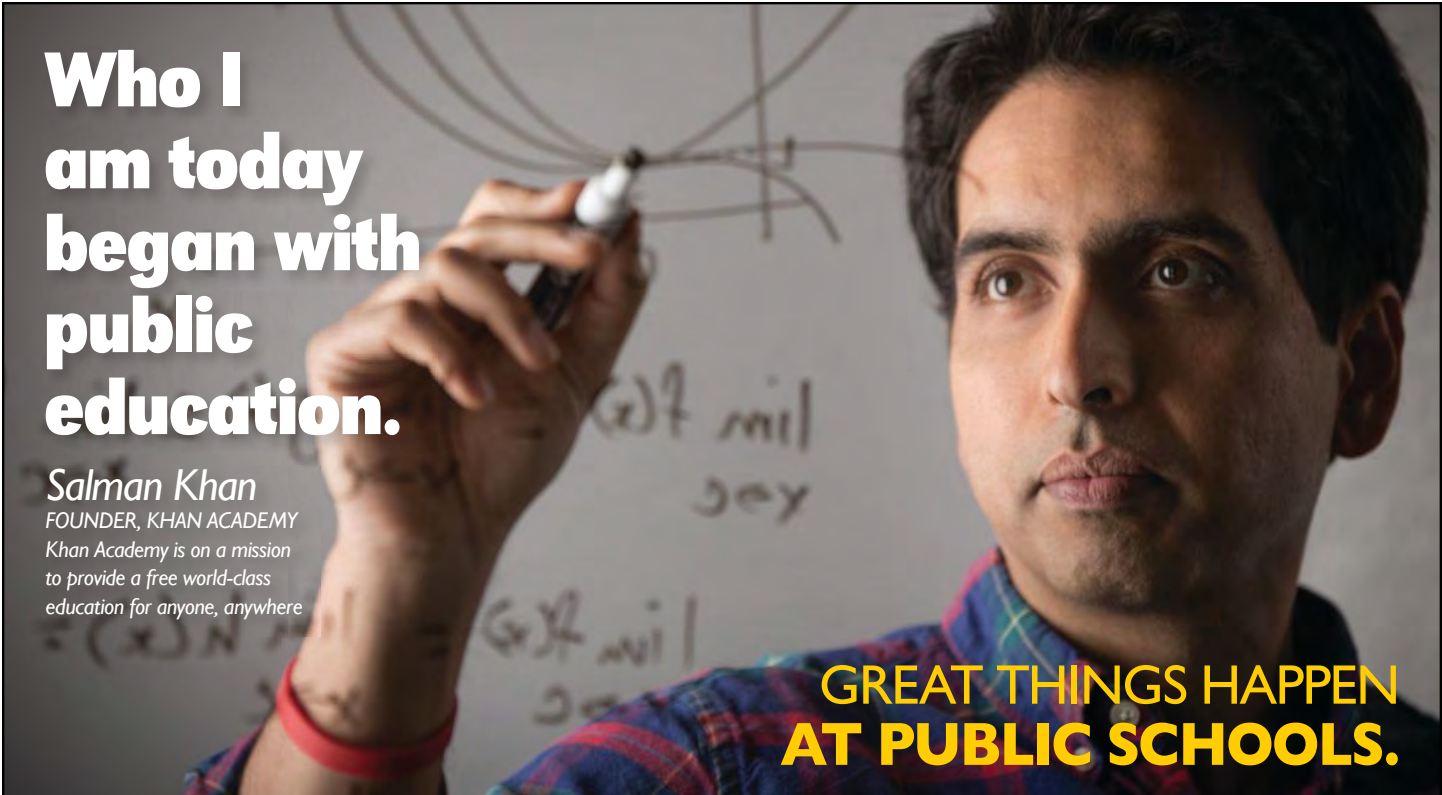
Step six involves policy implementation. This step is important because, in some circumstances, you can get in more trouble not accurately implementing your policies than you would have without a policy at all. In the beginning, you can use the information you solicited from stakeholders during the drafting process to determine the best way to implement the language, and as you move on, experience can dictate continued implementation.

Step seven is policy review and evaluation. Here, consider whether the policy is effective and being implemented correctly. You also should consider any legal, district or educational climate changes. If the policy stems from a law, has the law changed? Is there new legislation you should keep an eye on going forward? If the policy stemmed from a unique need, has the educational climate in your district changed to eliminate the need or has the need evolved so the policy no longer meets it?

The considerations in step seven lead you to step eight, which is policy revision or removal. This is the last step in the process, but, the process is cyclical and ongoing. Step eight leads you back to step one, where you identify the need for revision, removal or new language.

In addition to supporting the district's mission and vision, it's important to remember board policy should not conflict with negotiated agreements, the law or other policies in the board policy manual. Policies should be reviewed regularly, and address the district's current and future needs. And finally, board policy must be effectively communicated to all stakeholders: administrators, staff, students and the community.

Board policy development can be a daunting process. But as long as you stay on top of it and remain aware of the ever-changing legislation, you can be successful. Make sure to take full advantage of your policy services' resources. For information on OSBA's policy services, contact the policy staff at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA. ■



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Unearthing new initiatives

# Legislators digging into midbiennium review

*Damon Asbury, director of legislative services*

The midbiennium budget review (MBR) was recently introduced as Ohio House Bill (HB) 472 by Rep. **Jeff McClain** (R-Upper Sandusky) and the review process is under way. In the past, the second year of the biennial budget often saw a “corrections” bill wherein the General Assembly made any necessary budget appropriation or re-appropriation adjustments, and also took into consideration any language changes needed for clarification and/or to address any oversights in the original budget. Gov. **John Kasich** and his administration have clearly looked at the MBR process in a radically different light.

Instead of a corrections bill with limited appropriation adjustments, the governor has taken advantage of the MBR process as a means of advancing many of his major policy initiatives. His first MBR, which was introduced and completed in 2012, brought several significant changes to public education in the state, including the third-grade reading guarantee and revised teacher and principal evaluation procedures, as well as a new report card

and an A-through-F grading system for schools. The governor, of course, proposed equally ambitious goals and policy proposals in several other areas in addition to those proposed for public education. How have these initiatives fared, and what can we expect in the next MBR?

First, looking back at the 2012 MBR, it is fair to say that the administration-led changes were largely adopted as introduced, with only minor changes offered by the General Assembly. These outcomes were realized, despite calls for a more deliberative process from many educational stakeholder groups, including OSBA.

What could be considered as hurried deliberations led to the need to make revisions in the months that followed to address some important items that were overlooked during the initial process. Among these were issues related to funding for the third-grade reading guarantee as well as the issue of teacher credentials for those assigned to instruct elementary students experiencing difficulty with reading mastery.

The teacher and administrator evaluation process continued to demand tweaks so they were more fair, balanced and capable of being completed on a timely basis. The notion of a relatively straightforward change on the report card from rating categories to a simple A-through-F grading system resulted in a multi-factored “dashboard” approach. The actual consequences and costs of the third-grade reading guarantee and the new grading system will come into play later this year for the first time.

The new MBR was introduced on March 11, and it will be very interesting to review the new initiatives being proposed by the governor. The full details and rationale will be laid out in many legislative hearings in the coming months. Let’s look at a few of the nuggets signaled by Kasich in his State of the State speech delivered in Medina in February, and as contained in HB 472.

First, the governor proposes a new personal income tax cut, with the goal of reducing the income tax rate to below 5% for the highest income categories. The reduction in tax revenues from

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the income tax will be offset by certain proposed increases in tobacco taxes and changes to the severance tax on oil and gas drilling. Other tax reform initiatives include providing tax relief by expanding the earned income tax credit and increasing the personal exemption for low- and middle-income taxpayers.

Second, the MBR proposes to strengthen education and workforce training by:

- developing strategies for dropout prevention and recovery, including earlier identification of at-risk students and developing alternative pathways to earn diplomas;
- offering a pilot program to address the needs of more than 1 million adults who never finished high school by allowing them to work with Ohio's two-year colleges to gain academic credit and work skills;
- encouraging mentoring programs involving parents, community organizations, faith-based groups

and businesses to support schools and students; programs will be able to apply for incentive grants funded by casino-licensing fees;

- expanding vocational education to give students as early as the seventh grade a jump-start on career awareness and education;
- expanding and encouraging access to college credit opportunities for high school students through the College Credit Plus program;
- offering no-cost academic credit to military veterans for their training and experience, as well as assistance to secure federal support to pay for professional license and certificate tests.

Finally, the MBR proposes to address drug abuse by expanding the "Start Talking!" program to encourage parents, other adults and students to engage in conversations about substance abuse.

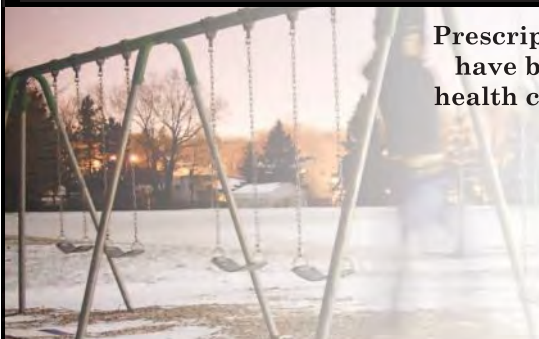
What about these new ideas? The governor is to be commended for the

high priority he is giving to public education and his obvious desire to keep young people in school. The notion of making school relevant to future career paths and through alternative pathways is a worthy idea.

However, the apparent reluctance to engage public educators who have devoted their lives to educating our students is puzzling. How much better the plans could be if the ideas were first vetted with their professional expertise. There should be room at the table for all who wish to better serve our students. The questions of priorities and resources merit further discussion as well.

Your input into the dialogue is encouraged. The programs that ultimately evolve from the MBR will require your insight and suggestions. Contact the OSBA legislative division for guidance on communicating with your legislators and information to help support your discussions. ■

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# Ohio preps for the



*A fifth-grader at Olentangy Local's (Delaware) Heritage Elementary School participates in a spelling activity in teacher Karrie Brun's class. The district implemented the Common Core standards in all of its buildings last year and its teachers designed aligned lesson plans.*

## *School districts plan for the new standards and assessments*

**W**hat you were taught in school growing up was influenced by a number of factors, including *when* you went to school. As research is conducted, technology advances and history unfolds, our understanding of the world grows — and public education adapts to reflect this new information. Just think, for example, how science

instruction was changed forever by the 1953 discovery of the double-helix structure of the DNA molecule, the genetic code that makes up all living things.

Just as what is taught in school evolves with time, so do academic standards — what students are expected to learn and



# Common Core

*Bryan Bullock,  
assistant editor*

demonstrate in each grade level.

The bar for students is expected to rise next school year when new academic standards take effect in Ohio and other states. Ohio is one of 44 states that currently have adopted and are moving forward with the Common Core State Standards. The state-driven initiative is designed to improve educational outcomes for students by developing a set of consistent, rigorous and internationally benchmarked academic standards in math and English/language arts for grades K-12.

Ohio's State Board of Education adopted the standards in June 2010, as well as revisions to academic standards in science and social studies; the standards are collectively referred to as Ohio's New Learning Standards. The standards will officially roll out statewide in school year 2014-15 when newly aligned assessments also are scheduled to be implemented. About 120,000 students in 290 Ohio school districts "field tested" the mostly online assessments earlier this spring. The tests were designed to help schools become familiar with the new exams and assess their readiness for administering them; students won't be graded on the exams.

This issue of the *Journal* takes a look at the Common Core, how it was developed, popular misconceptions about it and what school districts are doing — or still need to do — to prepare as much as possible for the new academic standards and assessments.

To get a snapshot of how Ohio schools are preparing for the Common Core, this article asks curriculum directors at three districts across the state to shed light on efforts to implement the academic standards.

## **'An ongoing process'**

**Olentangy Local (Delaware)** is no stranger to change. The central Ohio district has been the state's fastest-growing district for nearly every one of the past 10 years. Olentangy had 5,700 students in 2003, but has more than 16,700 today.

**Jack Fette**, Olentangy's director of curriculum and instruction, said the district adopted the new academic standards in school year 2011-12, took a comprehensive look at them and moved quickly to scale them up to all grade levels. The standards were implemented in kindergarten and first grade that school year

and expanded to the entire district last school year.

"We were confident in the ability of our teachers to take the new standards, implement them and develop unique lesson plans to support them," Fette said.

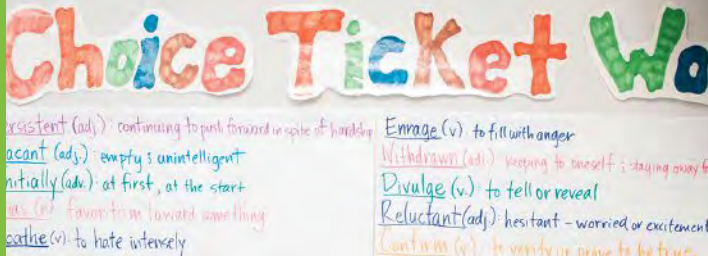
The district, he said, aligned its professional development with the new academic standards to provide teachers the support they need. Last year's professional development focused on instructional shifts in math and English/language arts under the Common Core and this year has focused on college and career readiness outcomes embedded in the new standards.

"Through this professional development process, we have developed more than 1,200 teachers with a strong ability to unpack curriculum into learning targets, use formative assessment to guide instruction and develop quality classroom assessments," Fette said.

In addition to districtwide professional development days and teacher collaborations at the building level, Olentangy offers educators access to the Olentangy Professional Development



*A Heritage Elementary School fifth-grader discusses a book with a classmate. The Common Core standards are designed to greater emphasize discussion, critical thinking and deeper learning.*



*A chart in Heritage Elementary School teacher Karrie Brun's class displays words students are learning. The Common Core standards apply to math and English/language arts.*

Academy, a voluntary program in which they can take courses year-round for college credit through a partnership with Ashland University.

“We have 30 courses on deck this summer, including a number that have ties to the Common Core,” Fette said. “We typically award around 1,000 course credits or contact hour certificates annually for classes taken.”

In preparation for the new standards, the district has undertaken an audit of the technology available in its 23 schools. Olentangy piloted the new online assessments earlier this spring, which Fette said should help the district better prepare for the tests.

“We do have concerns about how much tech will be available for students who aren’t testing because the testing window is so long,” he said. “It could take a lot of devices offline for as much as a semester.”

Olentangy adopted new math materials for grades kindergarten through eight over the past two years. The district is using a math program teachers selected called Math in Focus, which Fette said is aligned with the Common Core model of instruction.

“We do not buy materials just because standards change,” he said. “We take everything into consideration: the quality of materials, the need, the ability of our teachers to find their own materials based on their unique lesson planning.”

The district has used curriculum night events at the beginning of the school year to keep parents at each building informed

### Common Core resources online

OSBA has gathered a list of resources and information on the Common Core State Standards, academic standards in math and English/language arts for grades kindergarten through 12 that take effect in Ohio next school year. Visit [www.ohioschoolboards.org/common-core](http://www.ohioschoolboards.org/common-core) for comprehensive information on the new standards and aligned assessments.

about the new academic standards. Fette said parent-teacher organizations have helped spread information and Olentangy also has used its existing communication channels with parents to make them aware of changes.

“Adopting new standards is not just flipping a switch, it is an ongoing process and we want to keep parents informed throughout that process,” Fette said.

### ‘Opportunity to succeed’

**Fairfield City** began preparing for the conversion to the new academic standards in 2011 by crafting a three-year plan for implementation. Teachers in the southwest Ohio district of 9,500 students have been closely involved in the process since day one, said **Lani Wildow**, Fairfield’s director of curriculum and instruction.

“Our rollout process is based upon the backward design curriculum development theory and tightly aligned with Ohio’s formative instructional practices,” she said. “We have small groups of representative teachers work with curriculum specialists to deconstruct the standards, determine where we will teach the material, decide how and when we are going to commonly assess our students and make decisions if we need new instructional materials for teaching.”

*About 120,000 students in 290 Ohio school districts “field tested” the mostly online assessments earlier this spring.*

The district is implementing the Common Core in phases. One-third of Fairfield’s teachers rolled out the new standards in the 2011-12 school year, another third did last school year and the remaining teachers are working with the new standards this school year.

“The rollout process that we used relied on the idea that teacher representatives would take the time to share information with their grade level/department after each work session with the curriculum department,” Wildow said.

To ensure all staff members are ready for the new standards, Fairfield implemented checkpoints: common formative and summative assessments in all core grade levels and subject areas. The assessments are discussed at teacher-based team meetings held twice a month, which administrators also typically attend. The district also has provided professional development aligned with the new academic standards for all of its teaching and administrative staff.

Wildow said the district has purchased new materials for many of its content areas and developed an instructional review cycle

to assess any future purchases. In terms of technology, she said the district has been forced to play catch up.

“Fairfield has not always been in a solid financial place, and, unfortunately, technology has suffered,” Wildow said. “At this point, we are working to catch up with where many other districts were years ago, but we have the support of our administrators and board.”

She said the district is on track with an aggressive multiyear technology plan to prepare for the new academic standards.

“We have been very strategic, and the goal is to find ways to use technology not only for testing — we want to find ways to have technology enhance learning for all of our students,” Wildow said.

Fairfield has used school board meetings and parent-teacher conferences as well as the district’s website, newsletters and social media channels to spread the word to parents about the conversion to the new standards.

“I have been to parent-teacher conference meetings at each of our buildings to answer questions that parents may have about the conversion to the new standards,” she said, “and our building principals are consistently on the front line of this communication effort.”

The message the district is sharing is that the standards will

challenge students to think and perform at a higher level.

“All of our students deserve the opportunity to succeed, and no matter what assessments our students take, if they have deeply learned quality information from rigorous standards, they will shine,” Wildow said.

### ‘Preparing for college’

**Boardman Local (Mahoning)** started its transition to the Common Core by focusing on commonalities with the old academic standards.

“I always think it is a good idea to establish a comfort level and focus on what is similar,” said Dr. **Linda Ross**, director of instruction in the northeast Ohio district of 4,600 students. “We focused on what was new in the standards last school year and we are focusing on curriculum mapping this school year.”

Like Fairfield and Olentangy, she said Boardman is leveraging the strength of its teachers in transitioning to the new academic standards.

“I like to give teachers a lot of flexibility and room for growth, so it’s not a top-down process,” Ross said. “Give them information, let them experiment — tell me what’s working, what’s not — and then we get them the professional development they say they need.”

Boardman is using a differentiated professional development



*Heritage Elementary School teacher Karrie Brun leads students in a spelling activity; a student is helping by spelling words on a Smart Board in front of the class.*



plan to help prepare teachers for the Common Core. Ross said the district is administering common assessments quarterly to give district leaders data to evaluate the transition to the new standards. Teachers are encouraged to use differentiated instruction to help advanced students move ahead and struggling students catch up.

“What we’ve found is that teachers who are using differentiated instruction are seeing their value-added scores go up because they are meeting their students at their level and addressing their unique needs,” said Ross, who was part of a group that presented a workshop at the 2012 OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show about Boardman’s transition to the Common Core.

She said the district, in many cases, is holding off to purchase new instructional materials.

“Our math teachers at the middle school level, for example, said rather than buying new books, let them adapt their existing resources and add some supplementary resources until they get a better feel for the new standards,” Ross said.

She offered a word of caution when it comes to selecting instructional materials for the new standards.

“Teachers have to fully understand what is required in the standards so they can make informed decisions regarding instructional resources” Ross said. “You really need to look at the rigor of the content to ensure an alignment is there.”

Boardman upgraded its wireless network in preparation for the new standards and assessments. The district also added laptop carts at the middle school and high school levels this year; Boardman already had iPads available at its elementary schools. The district put its technology to the test when it piloted the new assessments earlier this spring.

Ross said Boardman has worked to communicate with its community about the new standards and what to expect. The district has an active PTA group, which has helped spread the word. She said one parent put together a website for other parents about the new standards, including a FAQ page, which is about to launch.

“Comprehensive change such as this is expected to take some time, but I really do think the Common Core will be good for our students,” Ross said. “The standards are more rigorous, they have good content in them, but the best part is all of our students will be on a common ground as they start preparing for college and their careers.” ■



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# Taking stock for the Common Core

## *How ready is your district for the new standards?*

*Del Stover, editor, Urban Advocate, and senior editor, American School Board Journal*

**D**id anyone expect it to be easy? There were such high hopes for the Common Core State Standards when, just a few years ago, the majority of states and the District of Columbia agreed to a common set of standards — higher standards — for their students. There also was excitement about the promise of new assessments that would provide a better comparison of student academic performance across the nation.

But inevitably there were going to be hiccups. The implementation of new online tests developed with the Common Core in mind hasn't always gone smoothly, with students in several states finding their test-taking interrupted by frozen computer screens and lost Internet connections. The technology infrastructure from schools to national testing companies couldn't handle the demand.

Meanwhile, some educators are complaining that teachers still are not adequately prepared to teach the new standards, and that schools need more time to pull together the instructional materials and lesson plans that will align classroom instruction with new curricula.

All of this has led to worries that implementation of the Common Core is moving too quickly — particularly if state and federal officials plan to tie early test scores to future policy decisions.

“For the standards to succeed, states and school districts must have the financial resources and the infrastructure to manage online assessments, and they must be able to provide school administrators and teachers with the professional development,” said National School Boards Association (NSBA) Executive Director **Thomas J. Gentzel**.

Indeed, NSBA and three school administrator groups aired their concerns in a joint statement last year warning policymakers not to rush implementation.

“Getting this transition right can mean the difference between getting and keeping public and educator support for the Common Core or a loss in confidence in the standards and even the public schools, especially if, as expected, the first-year scores will disappoint,” the statement read.

No one knows more about disappointing test scores than officials in Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools, which saw a drop in students scoring proficient in math and reading after new state tests were introduced. In New York state, where scores also fell, some educators complain that new tests were premature given the state education agency has yet to provide all the instructional guidance it promised.

School boards will only hear more of this. Both national teachers unions have called for a moratorium on the use of new test results in teacher evaluation systems, school sanctions or student promotions — to provide time for schools to make the shift. New political pressure from tea party groups and other conservatives, who have their own fears about the Common Core, have prompted lawmakers in some states to put implementation on hold or at least take a second look at the impact of these standards.

None of this should be all that surprising, **Patte Barth**, director of NSBA's Center for Public Education, suggested in the April issue of the *American School Board Journal*.

“It was probably inevitable that closer examination would reveal some previously unnoticed imperfections,” Barth





*Some educators are concerned that schools need more time to pull together the instructional materials and lesson plans that will align classroom instruction with new standards.*

wrote. “But for school boards and their communities, it’s hard to know whether the good in (the) Common Core standards is greater than its perceived flaws — or if it’s time for morning-after regret.”

Still, despite the debate surrounding the Common Core, school boards cannot pause in their preparations to implement these standards. Some school districts nationwide may gain more time to prepare, but most still have only months until the 2014-15 school year — the deadline for many states to put standards in place. Most districts are entering the home stretch of the implementation process.

Let’s take a look at some of the key issues that school boards should examine in preparation for the Common Core. What follows are four questions that you should be asking your administration.

These are not the only questions your school board can ask. But these should be high on your list. There is still time to monitor your school system’s implementation process and make midcourse corrections if you find shortcomings in your preparation. Now is a good time to take stock of where your school system stands.

**Question 1: Are your teachers adequately trained to teach the new standards?**

Ask school administrators whether teachers are ready for

the Common Core, and many will say their professional development efforts are getting the school system prepared. But is that really accurate?

“When you break down what many (districts) are doing, they’re often not ready,” said **Maria Voles Ferguson**, executive director of the Center on Education Policy at George Washington University.

Certainly some school systems have made the right decisions in preparing teachers for the Common Core, but some observers say a major problem is that too many school districts — where school officials should know better — still rely on one-time workshops and weekend conferences for training.

Such a training model can convey basic information, but research shows that it does little to influence teaching practices in the classroom. And that’s the danger: The Common Core requires teachers to explore academic topics in more depth and foster more critical thinking, and without training designed to change how teachers teach, many will be at a loss as to exactly how they are to translate the standards into everyday lessons.

“I don’t think it’s going to be impossible to bring teachers up to speed,” Ferguson said. “But I haven’t spoken to anyone who doesn’t agree that (the) Common Core



represents a pretty big jump for teachers.”

One school district that’s working to address these issues is Kentucky’s Jefferson County Public Schools. Officials are looking to reinforce their professional development efforts with teacher-led professional learning communities. The district will be setting aside time in the school week for teachers to discuss the challenges they face in the classroom and share successful instructional practices.

“This will enable our teachers to sit around the table talking and growing and doing research about what’s needed,” said **Dewey Hensley**, the district’s chief academic officer. “Our goal is to help our teachers grapple and struggle with (the) Common Core and, as they understand it more, they can help us recognize what training they need.”

The district also has moved many resource teachers — teacher coaches, if you will — out of the central office and into individual schools, he said. This will allow these veteran educators to work one-on-one with teachers in their classrooms, a training strategy that should prove more successful in changing classroom practices.

Given today’s budget constraints, some school boards may be challenged in providing the level of training required, said **Patrick Murphy**, a professor at the University of San Francisco and senior research affiliate at the Center on Reinventing Public Education. Some have found a solution by investing in training a cadre of top teachers, who then are expected to return to their schools and train their colleagues.

Any number of strategies will work, Murphy said, but it’s up to the school board to press the administration about the logic behind any training program — as well as the results that have been reported.

“Ask what (the training) looks like,” he said, “and if it’s everyone going down to the ballroom and talking for an hour, that model isn’t really the one you want.”

### **Question 2: Do your schools have the necessary instructional materials and lesson plans to align classroom instruction with the standards?**

It’s easy for a publisher to slap a label on a textbook or other instructional material that states it’s aligned with the Common Core. It should come as no surprise, however, that some of this material won’t be helpful.

“I wouldn’t make big purchases right now,” Murphy said. “Where we are right now, we’re finding the first wave of (instructional) materials are tweaked and adapted and torqued a bit to cover a broad swath of (the) Common Core. But this work is an incremental change.”

Others see far worse out in the education market.

“There are a lot of charlatans out there; a lot of people who want to make money off the Common Core and they want to take advantage of administrators who are struggling (with implementation),” Ferguson said.

The challenge for your central office is there is no easy way to identify which instructional material is truly aligned with the Common Core, she said. So school boards should be asking about the district’s selection process. Are educators turning to state education agencies, universities, publishers or officials within the Common Core initiative for guidance? How involved are teachers and curriculum experts in researching what materials — such as state-created learning modules or internally developed lesson plans — should be put to use?

*Any time a new assessment system is put in place, test scores are likely to drop. It’s an inevitable consequence of changes to standards, curricula, classroom teaching and a new assessment format.*

Some state education agencies are developing their own material — a service that’s helping New York’s Rochester City Schools save money and defer any major financial commitment to new instructional materials, said Superintendent **Bolgen Vargas**. That also is allowing the district to put more money into training to allow teachers to rethink how they can use existing resources.

Meanwhile, Kentucky’s Jefferson County Public Schools is going slow on new purchases and hoping that it can adapt existing material, as well as free-source and online material, to serve during the initial implementation of the Common Core.

“We don’t want to jump out and buy materials simply because they say they’re aligned with (the) Common Core,” Hensley said. “We want to wait and have a process, as things sort out, so we can make good decisions.”

That process will include turning to professional learning communities in the schools, where teachers on the front line of implementation can judge what support they really need, he said. Also, it’s likely that teachers, properly supported, could develop some of their own material to fill

the gaps in existing materials.

In the meantime, Hensley said, the district is working to provide some framework to help teachers, such as creating “curriculum maps” that provide guidance on what to teach and what materials can help — “So we’re not just leaving them hanging there.”

### **Question 3: Is your technology infrastructure ready to handle the demands of online testing?**

When Kentucky students took the first online assessments tied to the Common Core, they found their test experience interrupted by frozen screens and lost Internet connections. Thousands of tests were invalidated, and the state has decided to rely on written tests for the moment.

Similar problems arose in Oklahoma, where more than 9,000 students were forced to retake tests after their initial round of online testing failed. In a statement, the testing company acknowledged that its computer services simply couldn’t handle the demand of thousands of students simultaneously online.

Early practice simulations “did not fully anticipate the patterns of live student testing,” the testing service acknowledged. But with large-scale online testing advancing side-by-side with the Common Core initiative, these early problems raise a question for school boards. If national testing services have stumbled over large-scale online testing, how robust is your in-district technology infrastructure — and can it handle the testing load on its end?

Only a handful of schools in Kentucky’s Jefferson County Public Schools ran into problems with the latest round of testing, Hensley said. As a larger district in a metropolitan area, the district’s infrastructure and Internet network had more capacity than was found in small and rural districts that reported far more problems.

School leaders who review their technology now may still have time to get ready, Ferguson said. And it doesn’t necessarily follow that the costs must be painful. For example, no one expects a school to have a computer for every student. “You may only need a single computer lab of 30 computers” — but they need a good network system to back them up.

Meanwhile, some school officials are noting that some low-tech infrastructure work may be needed. In Rochester, N.Y., school officials saw in the Common Core a need to upgrade their high school science labs and eliminate less academically rigorous science courses that weren’t going to align with the new standards.

“We had a significant number of students who took a

chemistry class but never had a chance to participate in a chemistry lab,” Vargas said. The district now has put money into its high school labs so that all students will have access to hands-on learning.

“That’s a shift in culture,” she said.

### **Question 4: Have you prepared your public for the almost-inevitable drop in test scores?**

Any time a new assessment system is put in place, test scores are likely to drop. It’s an inevitable consequence of changes to standards, curricula, classroom teaching and a new assessment format.

So it was no real surprise that some school districts in Kentucky and New York, two states that moved quickly to implement testing alongside the Common Core, saw significant drops in reading and math achievement levels. Some worry that the decline in scores won’t be clearly understood, rattling parents and offering fodder for critics of public education who may point to the lower test scores as further evidence for expanding charter schools and voucher programs. That’s why some educators are urging school boards to educate and prepare their public for these test scores long before the first results are released.

It’s a strategy that can work, Hensley said. “The state did a pretty good job of putting together information packets, and we had a plan to disperse this information that the state expected a 30-point drop in proficiency levels.”

The message that school boards must deliver is that standards are rising, Murphy said. “We’re raising the bar.”

School boards have plenty of opportunities to get that message out: Newsletters, presentations at community meetings and briefings for reporters are just a few of the strategies educators are using. In Kentucky, state education officials reached out to the state chamber of commerce and PTA to help distribute information.

“I strongly recommend that this should be an agenda item at regular board meetings to make them a teaching moment for the media and public,” said **David Baird**, interim executive director of the Kentucky School Boards Association. “I think school boards can get the message out. Board members must be prepared to have a message for their public about why our test scores are going down — and give them a heads-up that we are changing what we’re doing and we want children to be better prepared by raising the standards and the expectations.” ■

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# New standards focus on college, career readiness

*Lisa A. Gray, project director, The Ohio Standard*

Over the years, we have made great strides to improve student achievement in Ohio. But unfortunately, student performance has not risen at the pace or level to prepare all children for success in life, whatever they choose to do.

Although Ohio fares reasonably well relative to the rest of the country, 41% of the state's public high school graduates who attend public colleges require remediation their freshman year and 31% who take the ACT meet none of its college-ready benchmarks. A minority of Ohio fourth-graders pass the National Assessment of Educational

Progress math and reading exams. And nationwide, nearly one in five high school graduates do not meet the minimum academic standard required for Army enlistment, as measured by the Armed Forces Qualification Test.

## **Developing new standards**

The Common Core State Standards initiative was launched in 2009 as a response to this persistent and nationwide crisis. Forty-eight states, two U.S. territories and the District of Columbia signed a memorandum of agreement with the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers committing to a state-led



*Nearly one-quarter of Ohio school district leaders reported in spring 2013 that their curricula were fully aligned to Ohio's New Learning Standards, with the remainder indicating that work was well under way in aligning materials and preparing teachers.*

process to develop a set of new standards that reflect the knowledge and skills needed to prepare students for success in college and careers. Forty-five states, the District of Columbia and four territories went on to voluntarily adopt the standards; however, Indiana recently dropped out of that group.

After a four-year comprehensive development and review process that included input from thousands of educators nationwide, including many Ohio teachers, these English/language arts and math standards were finalized and adopted by Ohio's State Board of Education in June 2010. The state concurrently developed and adopted its own new standards for science and social studies. Those new standards and the Common Core State Standards were combined to create Ohio's New Learning Standards.

School districts across Ohio have been working hard since summer 2010 to implement these higher expectations. Many superintendents have placed these standards at the forefront of plans to transform their districts to improve student achievement.

Statewide, nearly one-quarter of Ohio school district leaders reported in spring 2013 that their curricula were fully aligned to Ohio's New Learning Standards, with the remainder indicating that work was well under way in aligning materials and preparing teachers to teach to these new standards. Millions of dollars and tens of thousands of teacher hours have been spent to prepare Ohio's children for greater academic success.

And educators and school districts are not alone. Ohio's New Learning Standards enjoy support from Ohioans across the state. The Ohio Standard, a statewide coalition created to ensure that Ohio remains a Common Core state, includes more than 40 organizations, including the Ohio School Boards Association, Ohio Federation of Teachers, Ohio PTA, Ohio Business Roundtable, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, local urban leagues and Philanthropy Ohio, to name a few. Indeed, supporters represent an intersection of educational, business and philanthropic communities across Ohio.

### **The opposition and the facts**

Despite this widespread support, the standards have come under attack in the last year.

While most educators agree that Ohio's New Learning Standards, including the Common Core, are a significant improvement over previous standards, there are those who seek to repeal the Common Core standards. Legislation has been introduced in the Ohio General Assembly (House Bill (HB) 237 and Senate Bill 237) that would prohibit Ohio's implementation of the Common Core State Standards. In addition, there are pieces of legislation that would delay or

prohibit the new aligned assessment system (HB 193 and HB 413). Although these bills are unlikely to pass through both the House and Senate, they continue to cause derision and confusion, leading opponents to continue their demand for the repeal of the standards.

To some of these opposition voices, these new standards represent another in a long line of Washington power grabs — an attempt by the federal government to wrest control of schools from local school boards, superintendents, teachers and parents. To others, these standards allegedly “dumb down” our previous standards. And to a number, the reporting of student results on the assessments constitutes an invasion of children's and families' privacy.

Of course, none of these claims is true.

The Common Core standards are not dumbed-down expectations; in fact, they are far superior to the ones they've replaced. In 2010, a Thomas B. Fordham Institute study determined that the Common Core was more rigorous than the English/language arts standards in 37 states and the math standards in 39. The same study found the Common Core to be “significantly superior” to Ohio's current academic standards.

While our past standards often were characterized as a mile wide and an inch deep, the Common Core focuses on far fewer standards. This ensures that teachers can treat each and every standard comprehensively and students can more deeply understand the material. The Common Core emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, deductive and inductive reasoning, and the importance of showing your work. And while the past set of standards were disparate and disconnected, the Common Core connects learning across grade levels, thereby equipping students with the building blocks to learn more complex subjects.

The Common Core is not curricula. Nor is it a prescribed lesson plan. And implementing the Common Core will not prevent teachers from formulating their own lesson plans and tailoring instruction to the individual needs of their students. In fact, it encourages that.

Ohio's local school boards will continue to select and determine curriculum and adopt textbooks and other instructional materials. The Common Core is simply a set of standards for math and English/language arts that challenges and prepares students to read and critically consider text and creatively solve real-world math problems.

For example, in math, kindergarteners learn how to count to 100 by ones and tens, and fourth-graders learn to translate word problems into mathematical equations. In English/language arts, fourth-graders draw conclusions from a text and support them with evidence from the text itself, while

eighth-graders use context to figure out the literal and figurative meanings of words they do not understand. There is nothing controversial about these standards. They are simply common sense.

The Common Core is not a federal initiative. It is a state-led, nonpartisan effort organized by governors and state superintendents. Ohio's State Board of Education voluntarily adopted the standards and the state can withdraw at any time. The only federal funds Ohio has received to assist with implementation came through the state's successful bid for Race to the Top funding, which, among other things, specified the state's plan for implementing "college- and career-ready standards," enhancing and supporting teacher and leader effectiveness and ensuring all students are prepared for success beyond high school.

Finally, implementing these new standards does not invade children's and families' privacy. The Common Core does not include new data collection requirements. School districts and the state already collect data on students. But, that data is aggregated for the federal government only after stripping out students' personal information even prior to sending it to the state, and this data collection does not change if states adopt the Common Core. Furthermore, Ohio has some of the nation's most stringent guidelines on collecting student data, and expressly forbids sharing student-specific data with the federal government.

### The path forward

The fact remains that — despite what the opposition says — these standards reflect the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in college, careers and life, and schools across Ohio should continue implementing them. This does not mean, however, that there are not legitimate concerns over implementing the standards and their aligned assessments.

Students and teachers need to be supported as the new

standards are implemented. Additional professional development will be necessary to ensure teachers are solidly prepared to help students achieve at these more challenging levels.

There is no doubt that the assessments, in particular, present very real challenges and difficulties. They will require significant teacher training and development, an increase in building Internet bandwidth and improvements in technological infrastructure that many schools and school districts will struggle to afford. But, we must work together to overcome these challenges.

As project director of The Ohio Standard, I ask that you help us help you effectively implement Ohio's New Learning Standards. We are working to better communicate with parents about these standards, but we need your help to distribute the parent guides that we're developing. We are working to disabuse Ohioans of the persistent myths put forth by opponents, but we need your help to disseminate our extensive FAQs and identify key speaking opportunities.

We are working to address implementation challenges, but we need your help to identify exactly what those concerns are and what you might need to overcome them. I am confident that if we all work together, we will succeed in improving the academic preparedness of our students and, most importantly, improving our children's futures.

Visit The Ohio Standard website at [www.TheOHstandard.org](http://www.TheOHstandard.org), review the materials and resources, and share this information with your superintendent, principals, teachers, parents and community members. ■

*Editor's note:* In addition to serving as project director of The Ohio Standard, Lisa A. Gray has her own consulting practice specializing in public policy development, government relations, advocacy, strategic planning and project management, with an emphasis on public education.



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# Communicating about the Common Core

*Karen Derby-Lovell, APR, director of communications, Bay Village City School District*

**T**he Common Core standards offer a smart strategy to improve education for our nation's children. That strategy is to set common, robust learning standards for students in every state, and then accurately measure whether students are mastering those standards.

Such a straightforward, common sense goal should be easy to communicate to the public. But while the goal is simple, reaching it successfully will require complex and often difficult changes in how most of our schools and classrooms plan curriculum and teach students.

School districts, principals and teachers face another challenge in explaining these changes to parents and residents. Fortunately, we now have more communication tools and methods at our disposal than ever before to help us do that.

## **Tell your district's unique story about implementing the Common Core**

Effective communication tells a story, and every good story presents a goal and the obstacles to that goal. When we hear that districts need to tell their communities their stories, that means they should describe their struggles and setbacks, as well as their progress and successes. This type of candid transparency builds credibility with community members.

"Success in meeting the new standards will require a lot of professional effort, a lot of work," said **Clinton Keener, Bay Village City** superintendent. "Our community members should know that.

"They should also understand that our test scores on the Ohio report card may be lower than what they've been used to seeing, at least in the beginning. But it all means we're holding teachers and students to a higher level of rigor, and we're moving toward better preparing our youngsters for college and careers."

The Bay Village district tells its stories through a variety of communication channels that include digital newsletters, video and website features. But while digital methods reach people who seek out information on the schools, the district relies on printed, mailed newsletters to reach the majority of residents who do not have children in school.

## **Present Common Core as a system for teaching and learning**

One appealing feature of the Common Core standards from a communication standpoint is its systemic aspect. The goal is simple, yet the path to reaching it is a complex labyrinth of curriculum changes, collaborative teaching, infusion of technology and applied learning. Districts can share that complexity in a format that pulls together all the elements of the new program in a coherent, big-picture way. Our minds like to see complex information presented in an organized fashion, and well-designed lists, outlines, charts, graphs and infographics can tell a complicated story visually.

*School districts, principals and teachers face another challenge in explaining these changes to parents and residents.*

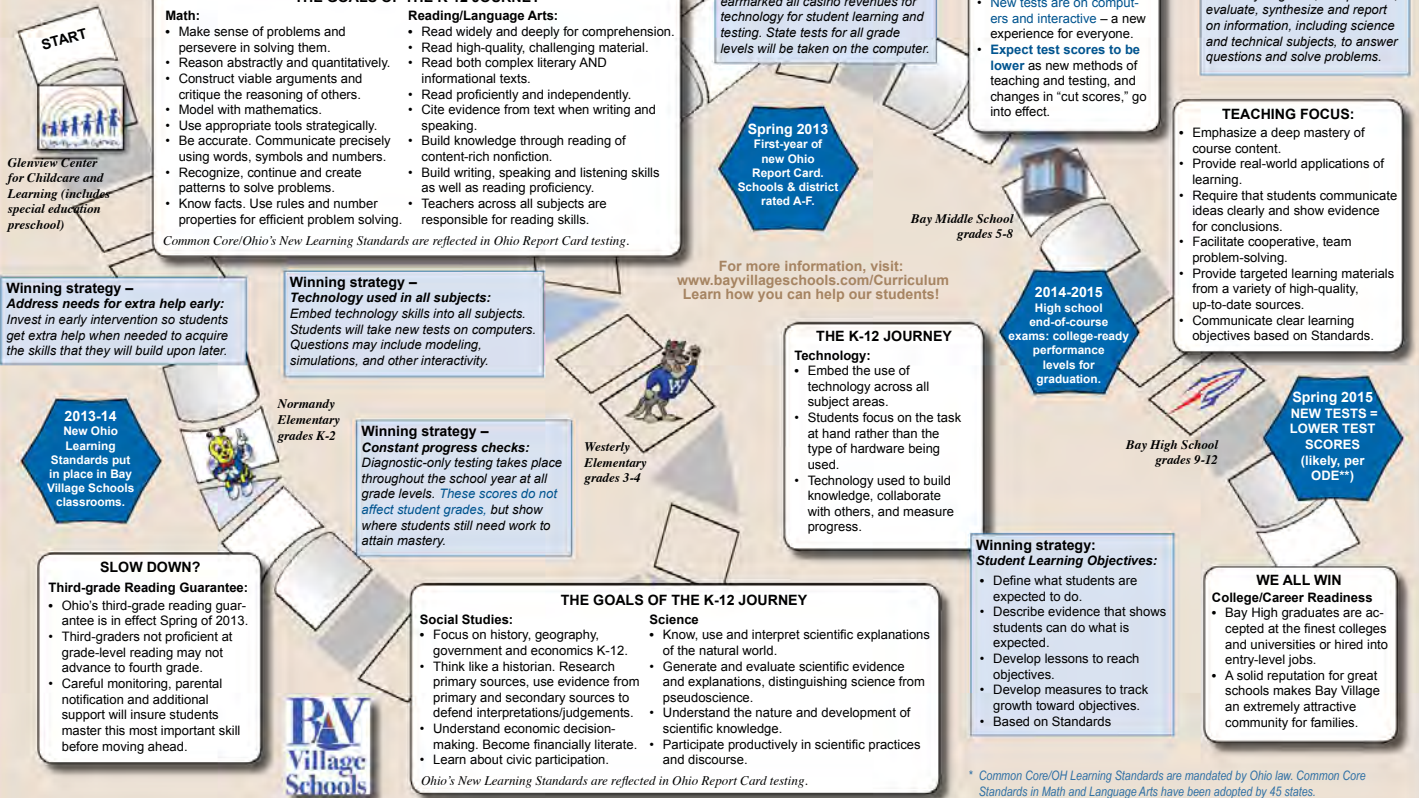
"The new standards are about having students truly master a set of skills before they move on," said **Char Shryock, Bay Village City's** director of curriculum. "Instead of having students learn a little about a lot of topics, we will focus on having students go deeper into a smaller number of key topics. Students will master skills through real-world applications, and then they will build upon those skills they have thoroughly mastered."

Shryock stresses that reading, writing and math skills must be integrated through all subjects, including science, social studies, art and physical education. Teachers will use more technology, more cooperative learning and more evidenced-based instruction, where the evidence of learning is made clear to students at the start of each lesson so that they know what success will look like.

To convey these many integrated strategies, the Bay Village district mailed residents a print newsletter whose centerfold was its Common Core "journey" in the form of a game board, explaining key concepts in the standards, the district's strategies for success and deadlines along the way. The "Common Core at a Glance" infographic (*see page 26*), based on Shryock's

# Common Core/OH Learning Standards\*

Keeping students on a winning track for college/career readiness . . .



Bay Village City’s “Common Core at a Glance” infographic explains the key concepts of the standards (view and download a full-size PDF of this graphic at [www.bayvillageschools.com/CommonCore](http://www.bayvillageschools.com/CommonCore)).

knowledge of the standards and the work ahead, was promoted through digital media, social media and local news media. Many residents gave positive feedback and expressed appreciation for the help in understanding the Common Core initiative.

The district also has leveraged public presentations made by Shryock and other administrators by videotaping them and presenting them as Web videos, including links to supplemental information that add an interactive aspect for those who want more details. Hundreds have viewed the videos, many more than could have attended the live presentations.

## Stress that technology is both a hurdle and a key to implementing the Common Core

Technology offers unprecedented and exciting interactive opportunities for learning and assessment. It also can present one of the most formidable barriers to implementing the new standards as districts are required to spend money to upgrade hardware and Internet connectivity so that students can have the skills and access to take the new online tests.

Bay Village City Board of Education member Dr. Gayatry Jacob-Mosier believes that sharing the variety of strategic

investments to improve student access to technology also is an opportunity to demonstrate good fiscal management.

“Our board has earmarked all the new casino dollars for technology,” she said. “It makes sense, because the amount of money varies and is not so predictable, and those are dollars that had not been included in our financial forecast over the past several years.

“We also asked our Citizens Advisory Committee to study the bring-your-own-device programs that other districts had already put in place. Students are carrying their own devices anyway, and it is another strategy to leverage technology with learning.”

Because it is such a critical component of success with the Common Core, messages about technology should be repeated frequently to the public. We can borrow a tenet of marketing called “The Rule of Seven” to help us understand that to not just remember, but to “know” the information, and to break through all the other communication noise that is out there, your audience needs to hear that message at least seven times. Thanks to all the communication channels available to us these days, repetition of our messages is not as daunting an effort as it used to be.

### Listen to and engage the public at your local level

In spite of the fact that Ohio and many other states have already implemented the Common Core standards, we hear increasing objections to them.

Dr. **Bob Piccirilli**, a Bay Village City Board of Education member, kept an open mind as he listened to a number of friends and neighbors express doubts about the Common Core standards.

“What I kept hearing was that this was a push by the federal government to take away our local control of schools,” he said.

Piccirilli did his own research and found that, in fact, it was the nation’s governors who took the lead in advancing the idea of a common set of rigorous academic standards across the country.

“I heard them out,” Piccirilli said. “I was invited and went to a local meeting of Ohioans Against the Common Core. They have their own experts who say that not only is it a blow to local authority in education, but that the standards are not as rigorous as they should be.”

By that time, Piccirilli had learned much about the standards, and he felt he could truly support them.

“While I listened to their point of view,” he said, “I found that they were politely not interested in hearing my point of view at the meeting.”

Still, he feels that by engaging with local detractors of the new standards, he may have softened, if not eliminated, some of the community members’ fears and resistance to the changes in their schools.

### Challenge your residents to engage them

There is no better way to help people understand how the Common Core will change teaching and learning than by letting them take the new tests themselves. Ten prototype Common Core test questions, in both math and English/language arts, were placed on Bay Village City’s website and emailed to staff members. The program was dubbed the “Superintendent’s Common Core Challenge.” Respondents completed a brief survey about each question just after they tried them.

“The response from our staff members, whether teachers, secretaries or cafeteria workers, was great,” Keener said. “The comments we received were extremely thoughtful. You could tell that by actually taking the test questions, people had to stop and really think about what students would need to know in order to be successful.”

Just as applying knowledge drives student learning and understanding, hands-on engagement also is the best way for adults to grasp complex information. The Bay Village district will continue to promote prototype questions in engaging parents and residents on the Common Core.

If your community members still aren’t clear on what the Common Core standards are all about (and a national Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll last fall suggested that 62% of respondents had never heard of them), consider this a great opportunity to get them accurate information and warn them of the myths circulating about the plan. It’s a great opportunity to build relationships through communication.

Most important, engaging with the public over these challenges will make the critical difference in staff members, parents and residents all pulling in the same direction for student achievement and success. ■



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# Deconstructing Ohio's New Learning Standards

## Creating learning targets helps promote success

*Virginia Ressa, Ohio Department of Education*

Ohio's New Learning Standards represent a significant opportunity for students. The new standards are intended to ensure students are college and career ready and prepared to compete in a global economy. They also represent a challenge for Ohio's educators. The new standards are more rigorous and require educators to plan for instruction and assessment in new and innovative ways.

Educators across the state are already using the

new standards, but how can we be confident we are implementing the standards with the appropriate levels of expectation and rigor?

An essential step in ensuring curriculum, instruction and assessment are all aligned to the standards is to deconstruct the standards. Deconstruction is the process of breaking down a broad or complex standard into smaller, more explicit learning targets. The terms "unpack" or "unwrap" often are used to describe the same process.

Why is this step so crucial? Following are four ways that working through the deconstruction process can bring clarity to standards implementation.

### Clarifying expectations

Deconstruction helps teachers better understand the content that is embedded in the standard so it can be accurately taught and assessed. Standards are broad statements about what students should know and be able to do. Often, they are complex and need to be broken down into smaller, more focused learning targets.

For example, Ohio's New Learning Standards for social studies include broad content statements organized around conceptual understandings. These content statements are not meant to be taught in a single lesson or even a single unit of study. Teachers will need to break down these broad statements of content into focused learning targets for daily instruction and assessment.

An example from seventh-grade social studies, on page 29, shows how a complex standard can be deconstructed into smaller, more manageable learning targets. Clear learning targets are the foundation of formative instructional practice (FIP). They serve as incremental steps to bigger,

### Benefits of clear learning targets

#### Clear learning targets help teachers:

- Know what to teach
- Know what to assess
- Know what instructional activities to plan
- Avoid "coverage" at the expense of learning
- Interpret and use assessment results
- Provide a system for tracking and reporting information
- Create common ground for working collaboratively with other teachers

#### Clear learning targets help students:

- Understand what they are responsible for learning
- Understand how to act on feedback
- Self-assess and set goals
- Track, reflect upon and share their learning

#### Clear learning targets help parents:

- Understand the expectations of new standards
- Help their children at home
- Understand the grade report
- Have more focused conference discussions about progress

more conceptual understandings built over time, providing clarity to both teachers and students about the intended learning.

**Building understanding and ownership**

Collectively working through the deconstruction process helps teachers understand and take ownership of the expected learning. Ohio’s New Learning Standards require that teachers work together — across grade levels and between subject areas — to create learning progressions that make sense for *their* students. Working together to write learning targets helps create a shared understanding of expectations for student learning. Teachers can come to an understanding of what the standard requires students to know and be able to do, informing decisions about instructional strategies and assessment methods.

Districts across the state are finding the deconstruction process valuable to implementing new standards.

“We do want to deconstruct and look at some of these things for ourselves, because that’s when we really start to internalize and then we take ownership as a building or district,” said **Anthony Elkins**, supervisor of elementary curriculum at **Olentangy Local (Delaware)**. “With the new

Seventh-grade social studies	Strand: Economics	Topic: Scarcity
Content Statement 20: The variability in the distribution of productive resources in the various regions of the world contributed to specialization, trade and interdependence.		
<b>Sample learning targets:</b>		
Explain that productive resources are distributed unevenly throughout the world.		
Discuss why geographic variation in the availability of productive resources fosters specialization, international trade and global interdependence.		
Draw conclusions about how an abundance or lack of productive resources affects opportunity costs.		

standards, you’re not going to be able to implement well without collaboration time built in. Without a common understanding, you’re running in isolation.”

Understanding and ownership of expectations also can be fostered in students by sharing learning targets. When students understand where they are going, they can determine where they are in relation to the learning targets

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and take more ownership for how they will move forward.

### Meeting rigorous expectations

Deconstructing the standard can help teachers understand how to teach and assess at the level of rigor or cognitive demand that is the intent of the standard. One of the goals of Ohio’s New Learning Standards is to increase the rigor of our expectations for student learning. This goal can only be realized if we are providing students with instruction and assessment at the appropriate level of rigor as defined by the standards.

“Clear learning targets are very important as you’re looking at assessment practices and really making sure that your assessments are aligned to standards and to instruction,” Elkins said.

### Creating learning progressions

Finally, the deconstruction process helps teachers understand the learning that comes before and after the standard. Strong formative instructional practice includes creating learning targets at three levels: laying the base, mastery and going beyond. Looking at the learning that comes before and after mastery can help teachers create learning progressions for their students that start where students enter the learning and take them to mastery and beyond.

Sometimes the relevant “before-and-after” learning comes within a school year or course, while for some standards the relevant before-and-after learning comes in the grades or courses before and after the standard being taught. In the English/language arts example (see chart below), the foundational learning, shown in the laying the base sample target, comes from the prior grade, while the going beyond learning is from the subsequent grade.

Vertical alignment and learning progressions are two more

English language arts, fourth grade	Strand: Writing	Topic: Text types and purposes
Standard 1: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.		
<b>Sample learning targets</b>		
Laying the base	Use linking words when writing.	
Mastery	Use linking words and phrases (such as: another, for example, also, because) to connect ideas within categories of information.	
Going beyond	Recognize, determine and use clauses to link ideas within and across categories of information.	

reasons that collaborative time for educators to deconstruct standards is so important.

“With the new standards, you have to have that vertical articulation,” Elkins said. “If you’re only focused on your grade level, it can lead to a checklist mentality. Instead, you need to understand what comes before, what comes after and what the common expectations are. It is possible.

“Like with anything else, if it’s something you value, you’re going to make time for it. Sometimes you have to be creative in how you structure the time.”

*Collectively working through the deconstruction process helps teachers understand and take ownership of the expected learning.*

### Resources to help with the deconstruction process

Through FIP Your School Ohio, the Ohio Department of Education, in collaboration with Battelle for Kids, has created resources to assist educators with formative instructional practices, including the deconstruction of standards. All of Ohio’s educators have access to free online learning modules, blended learning tools, deconstruction templates and content area examples.

Of course, using clear learning targets to drive instruction and assessment isn’t a new idea. But the complexity and rigor of Ohio’s New Learning Standards make the deconstruction process even more important to ensuring that teachers and students truly understand what the new standards entail.

Creating clear learning targets also can be beneficial to parents. If parents are wondering what’s expected of their children in the new standards, sharing these smaller, easier-to-understand statements can be useful in communicating learning expectations.

If your school is working through the deconstruction process, you may want use the FIP Your School Ohio resources and video library. Visit [www.FIPYourSchoolOhio.org](http://www.FIPYourSchoolOhio.org) to access these tools and learn more about formative instructional practices. ■

*Editor’s note:* Virginia Ressa is project coordinator for FIP Your School Ohio in the Ohio Department of Education’s Office of Curriculum and Assessment. She can be reached at (614) 728-6920 or [FIPOhio@education.ohio.gov](mailto:FIPOhio@education.ohio.gov).





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# Legislative conference focuses on funding, accountability

► *Rep. John Patterson (D-Jefferson) discusses the early work of the Education Funding Caucus at the March 13 OSBA/BASA/OASBO State Legislative Conference.*

▼ *Hudson City Board Member James D. Field, right, speaks with Sen. Frank LaRose (R-Copley) during the lunch with legislators. An article covering the event was published in the April 14 OSBA Briefcase.*



▲ *OSBA Director of Legislative Services Damon Asbury explains the latest bills impacting education.*

► *LaBrae Local (Trumbull) Superintendent Anthony J. Calderone, left, greets Rep. Gerald L. Stebelton (R-Lancaster). Visit OSBA's Flickr page at [www.flickr.com/OHSchoolBoards](http://www.flickr.com/OHSchoolBoards) to view more photos from the conference.*







◀ *Rep. Bob D. Hackett (R-London) talks with school leaders in the Statehouse Atrium.*

◀◀ *Rep. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard) speaks with constituents during the lunch with the legislators.*

▼ *J. Kenneth Richter reviews calls to action provided by lobbyists from OSBA, the Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) and the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA). Richter serves on the Sycamore Community City and Great Oaks ITCD boards.*



▲ *Senate Minority Leader Joe Schiavoni (D-Boardman) answers questions after his presentation.*

◀ *Keystone Local (Lorain) Superintendent Jay G. Arbaugh asks a legislator about charter school accountability.*



# Turning a vision into reality



*Madison Local (Lake) Superintendent Dr. Roger J. Goudy chats with students in Madison High School's new cybercafe.*

## *Madison Local students take the lead in converting high school library into cybercafe*

*Gary Motz, managing editor*

Just a few years ago, the Madison High School library was a deserted, unwelcoming place. A peek inside showed a silent room with few students. Rows of barely read books lined the shelves. Lists of students who owed fines were taped to a window near the entrance.

Fast-forward to today.

The library is filled with students learning and collaborating with computers, iPads and whiteboard tables. In one corner, a teacher standing at a video screen leads her class in a

discussion on the Great Depression. Across the room, teens sitting around high tables chat next to a student-run booth serving coffee and snacks. Others lounge on beanbag furniture, talking, working on laptops and reading books. In another corner, three students work out on treadmills while watching CNN or reading.

The once-empty library has been reborn as **Madison Local's** new Brew Streak Cyber Cafe, the name a nod to the Lake County district's nickname, the Blue Streaks. Although students can still check out books, now they also can check out

iPads and access the library's Wi-Fi system on their own devices.

### 'A philosophical shift'

What created the dramatic turnaround from stodgy library to 21st century learning space? A "philosophical shift," according to Madison Local Superintendent Dr. **Roger J. Goudy**.

"When I first came to the district, I would walk through the library — the second largest room in the building — and there were never any kids in there," Goudy said. "I thought about how on a college campus you don't see kids in a traditional library, you see them in cybercafes at student centers. We were in the middle of a facilities project and had put cybercafe learning centers in our new K-five building and middle school, and I thought, 'Why not put one in our high school?' That way the kids who come from the K-five to the middle school to the high school would have the same type of environment.

"Administrators and school board members started talking about it and decided to get Student Council involved in the project. It was a philosophical shift for us because we were moving from a traditional view of a library as a quiet, restrictive room to one that would make it a place where students want to go."

As a first step, the 3,100-student district created the Cyber Cafe Committee, which started meeting in October 2011. It included the Student Council; the school board; high school and district administrators; and the building's maintenance and information technology staff. Following that initial meeting, the group divided into subcommittees to research different issues, such as floor plans, technology, wiring, staffing, furniture and more.

"We also researched how the library was being used, compared to other schools in the district," said Student Council member **Luke Ingalls**. "We found out that the elementary schools check out thousands of books a year, and the middle school fewer than that, but still a decent amount. But at the high school, fewer than 100 books a year were being checked out. So we decided to put our library to a lot better use."

### A bump in the road

The project had everything going for it: widespread enthusiasm; buy-in from board members, administrators, students and parents; and a policy change to allow students to use cellphones in the school.

But, it was missing one thing — funding.

"Not having enough money to do what we planned turned into a very big factor," Ingalls said. "Because of that, the project really slowed down."

Then, in January 2013, came what Goudy called, "a gift from the gods."

"We had gotten the kids excited about it and the committee's making great progress and we still don't have any money," Goudy said. "Then, along comes FirstEnergy with a check for \$50,000 — and it was really bizarre the way it came about."

Goudy said a parent with a second-grader in the district, **Ben Holt**, had entered FirstEnergy Solutions' Thanks a Million Giveaway contest — and won. The prize: \$25,000 for Holt and \$50,000 for Madison Local Schools. Goudy knew nothing about it until FirstEnergy contacted him.

"FirstEnergy called and said they're sending a check for \$50,000," Goudy said. "I thought somebody was pranking me and told them, 'OK, send it.' The next thing I know, a \$50,000 check arrives."

With much of the planning completed and money in hand, the Student Council took charge. But, even with the funding problem solved, there were many challenges ahead — furniture and technology to buy, floor plans to design, books and shelves to move and walls to paint.

"Deciding what we wanted, where to get it and how much it would cost was a struggle," said Student Council member **Sydney Sines**. "Laying out the room was a challenge too, because we had to figure out how to incorporate all our ideas for the room in a way that was effective for classes and for individual students."



*Madison High School Student Council member Luke Ingalls adjusts the settings on a treadmill in the school's cybercafe. The council was instrumental in converting a little-used library into a popular cybercafe.*



“We thought about different places we’d been to, like Starbucks, and tried to keep in mind what people would want. We talked about how certain places have high tables and some have low tables and some have couches. We tried to use the most efficient ideas from each place.”

Goudy said the district only had to use about half of the FirstEnergy check for the project.

“We were fortunate to repurpose some wireless equipment and other furnishings that became available when we opened our two new buildings,” he said. “We also had people put in a lot of volunteer time because they became so engaged in the project and working with our students.”

### A schoolwide sense of ownership

Student Council members consulted with the rest of the student body as their plans moved forward. They gathered ideas from classmates and polled students on what kind of furniture and other amenities they would like in the cybercafe.

They also recruited students to lend their talents to the project, which helped develop a sense of ownership throughout the school. For example, a technology club student helped install the Wi-Fi system. A computer-aided design class prepared floor layouts. Members of the football team moved bookshelves and furniture. And art students created a large blue-and-white montage of handprints for which carpentry students built a frame.

“When we first told everyone about the cybercafe, they didn’t believe it would happen,” said Student Council member **Kasie Beris**. “We’d hear things like, ‘OK,’ ‘yeah, right’ and ‘sure.’ But when we told them about the FirstEnergy check and the different ideas and we got people voting, they took it more seriously and got really stoked about it.”

*“Making the library, which wasn’t being used at all, into a cybercafe just made a lot of sense.”*

– Luke Ingalls

Students also worked closely with maintenance and information technology staff, a unique collaboration that benefitted everyone.

“One of the kids’ original ideas was to build a wall to separate the book part of the library from the cybercafe,” said high school Assistant Principal **Colleen Triana**. “But after talking with the maintenance staff they decided to create a more open space. They also worked with maintenance on electrical needs for the treadmills and vending machines.”

“I really enjoyed seeing our technology specialist working with the kids on the Wi-Fi and other technology,” Goudy said. “Our maintenance supervisor really got involved too. So staff members who traditionally wouldn’t interact with students



*Students discuss **John Steinbeck’s** *Of Mice and Men* while sitting around a whiteboard table. The students, whose class was being held in the high school’s cybercafe, were using the table to chart themes from the novel.*



were collaborating with them.”

“I found that to be a really powerful piece of this,” said Assistant Superintendent **Angela Smith**. “Because staff working in technology and maintenance are usually so busy with their daily jobs that they don’t always get to see the end result of what we are all here for every day — the students.”

After the FirstEnergy check arrived, students and staff spent the following months finalizing floor plans, ordering and arranging furniture, hiring painters and applying many finishing touches. In September, the Brew Streak Cyber Cafe was ready for its grand opening.

The event was held in conjunction with a home football game and included students, staff, school board members, community members, parents and local dignitaries. Instead of lists of delinquent library patrons, the window at the library entrance was adorned with the words “Brew Streak Cyber Cafe,” complete with a painting of a steaming cup of coffee, and overhung with a striped awning.

“It was a very neat event,” Smith said. “We had refreshments and a representative from FirstEnergy was there, as was Mr. Holt, who won the money for the district. We even had Madison graduates who came back to see the cybercafe.”

#### **Collaborative learning, real-world experience**

The cybercafe’s focus on collaborative learning goes hand-in-hand with the objectives of the Common Core and Ohio’s New Learning Standards, Smith said during a presentation on the Brew Streak at the OSBA Capital Conference in November. Other Madison Local representatives presenting at the workshop included school board member **Rex Reigert**, Triana, Goudy and Student Council members Ingalls and



*Students work on iPads in the cybercafe. The facility — which provides wireless Internet access — has 30 iPads that students can check out.*

**Taylor Goudy**, the superintendent’s daughter.

The open, welcoming atmosphere of the Brew Streak offers students ample opportunities to collaborate on group projects, brainstorm ideas and compare notes on college and career plans. Having wireless access for laptops, iPads and cellphones literally puts the world at their fingertips. And it provides a taste of the kinds of real-world environments they’ll be working in when they leave the high school.

Creating the cybercafe also taught them important lessons on collaboration and the adult world.

“It’s been an incredible experience for these kids,” Dr. Roger J. Goudy said. “You talk about real-life experience — how much more real can this be? These kids helped plan it, design it, get it off the ground and keep it going. They managed a budget and worked collaboratively with the maintenance and technology staff, teachers, administrators and each other.”

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“We got a lot of real-world experience, between working with all the teachers and other staff to pick out furniture and decide on different layouts,” Taylor Goudy said. “And it was especially valuable for people going into those fields. It was really a great experience.”

“Being seniors, making the library, which wasn’t being used at all, into a cybercafe, just made a lot of sense,” Ingalls said. “Dr. Goudy always talked about how college kids don’t go to a quiet library to work. They’re going to Starbucks and getting on the Internet and working with other students. They’re used to getting their work done in lounge-type areas. That’s the way it’s going to be in college, so it just made so much sense to create something like that here.”

### A work in progress

Asked how she felt when the Brew Streak was finally complete, Student Council member **Molly McGill** said, “It’s not really finished yet; it’s still a growing project.”

Dr. Roger J. Goudy agreed.

“We’re not where we want to be yet, but we’re only six months into it,” he said. “Like Molly said, it’s ongoing, it’s an evolving process. I still want more community involvement. There is always something going on here. Football, basketball,

wrestling matches — people are in our facilities all the time. Our vision is to open the cybercafe whenever community members are in the school so they can take full advantage of it.

“That would be the ultimate, because then we’re truly the community’s school. And it would give people another reason to support us because we would become a more valuable resource for them.”

While work remains in getting the community more involved, district groups have embraced the Brew Streak. It’s become a place for teachers to conduct classes, school board sessions and athletic team meetings.

“Anybody who wants to use this space is welcome to it,” Dr. Roger J. Goudy said. “It provides a nice change of pace for teachers who want to hold class somewhere other than the classroom. We’ve had student athletes signing NCAA letters of intent in here, athletic directors meetings and staff coming in after school to work out on the treadmills. People just come and go — that’s what the concept is all about.” ■

*Editor’s note:* To learn more about Madison Local’s cybercafe project, contact Dr. Roger J. Goudy at [roger.goudy@madisonschools.net](mailto:roger.goudy@madisonschools.net), (440)-983-4900 or (440) 796-0503.



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# School safety, preparedness go hand in hand

*Amanda Finney, senior marketing coordinator*

The landscape of the school safety climate has changed dramatically. OSBA knows school safety is a crucial component in your district's daily operations. To help with this ever-changing environment, OSBA endorses NaviGate Prepared, a school safety emergency response software.

NaviGate Prepared provides effective and affordable emergency management. This highly secure, cloud-based system offers a variety of features that make creating a safe environment as simple as possible. Administrators and first responders can be confident in knowing that NaviGate Prepared:

- secures and organizes schools' critical safety information in an easily accessible digital cloud environment;
- provides first responders accurate information prior to arrival on the scene of an emergency;
- creates greater eyes-on visibility in real time.

"This system is very comprehensive and will provide our first responders with vital information should they ever have to arrive on the scene of a tragic incident," said **Belpre City Superintendent Tony A. Dunn.**

Additionally, the emergency response system helps school districts comply with guidelines announced by the Ohio Attorney General's School Safety Task Force. NaviGate Prepared was developed by Lauren Innovations, an Ohio-based company that is committed to providing this school safety system to districts at a very cost-effective price.

The system helps your district organize and prepare for all crisis scenarios while

enabling emergency responders to react quickly. NaviGate Prepared allows districts to share their critical safety information, providing immediate access to first responders and 911 dispatchers.

"Navigate is a software tool that allows your district to effectively prepare for an emergency situation by allowing your schools' information to be secured in an off-site, central location that can be accessed from any Internet source," said **Dan Coffman**, director of the **Mid-East Career and Technology Centers Buffalo Campus.**

Coffman said districts looking to use the program should not be concerned about collecting the information or the time constraints in doing so.

"Although it is time consuming to input the information needed for this program, I'm confident our districts and first responders are more adequately prepared to respond in an emergency situation," he said. "I spent over a decade in the fire service and this program would have assisted us in our response to a situation at a school."

Furthermore, NaviGate Prepared is offering an additional service that helps school districts gather their safety information and puts it into the system on the district's behalf. With this enhancement, known as Onsite Implementation Service, NaviGate Prepared specialists assist by photographing key infrastructure areas, uploading floor plans, attaching icons, working with local 911 centers and more.

In the past year, more than 100 Ohio school districts have committed to

enhancing their safety by organizing all safety protocols, information and floor plans with NaviGate Prepared. You can watch how this comprehensive school safety response system can help your district by viewing a free video offered by NaviGate Prepared. The video outlines how your current safety and security plans can be incorporated into this program.

For more information, visit [www.navigateprepared.com](http://www.navigateprepared.com) or contact **Thom Jones**, Lauren Innovations director of sales, at (740) 963-3141 to schedule an in-person demonstration. ■

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# Honoring board members



*Bedford City's Bedford High School Madrigal Singers perform for school board members and others before a board of education meeting.*

## *Tiles, smiles and more recognize the service of Ohio school board members*

*Crystal Davis, editor*

It's not often that school board members are given a piece of a new school building. But, that's what happened at **Northmont City's** January board meeting as the district's way of saying thanks during School Board Recognition Month. Students painted the Northmont "N" on six tiles, framed them, then added an engraved "2014 Board Appreciation" plaque below the tiles with each board member's name. As part of the construction of the new Kleptz Early Learning Center, students in grades one to six throughout the district painted the tiles, which will be

installed in the building as permanent art.

Each January, school districts like Northmont City recognize their board of education members in interesting and fun ways. Ohio's annual celebration of school board leadership coincided with a nationwide campaign highlighting the importance of board members to the public education system.

To support recognition activities across the state, OSBA provided members with a Web-based resource kit that

included tips on ways to honor board members; sample news releases, editorials, newsletter articles, public service announcements and resolutions; and a poster with the 2014 theme. This year's theme — "School Boards Empower Student Success" — illustrates the significant impact that board members have on the future of Ohio's 1.9 million schoolchildren.

In more than 700 school districts in the state, nearly 3,500 board members spend countless hours studying issues, reading reports and advocating for schools. When constituent concerns arise, board members are always "on call" no matter where they are. They also participate in scores of school and community events while making time for their own personal, professional and family obligations.

The decisions board members make have the power to shape the future of local communities for generations to come. Being a board member is demanding, with long hours and many responsibilities, yet very few "thank you's."

OSBA is delighted to spotlight the many celebrations conducted across the state to support School Board Recognition Month. In addition to the resource kit, the association provides personalized certificates — signed by the OSBA president and executive director — for every board member in the state.

School districts' celebrations are featured in the *Journal* as well as online at [www.ohioschoolboards.org/school-board-recognition-month](http://www.ohioschoolboards.org/school-board-recognition-month). Districts submit information and photos and OSBA staff gathers information from stories written by local news media.

While most districts honored their members with a proclamation, OSBA certificates and small gifts, others like Northmont City came up with more elaborate ways to say "good job." Northmoor Elementary's fifth- and sixth-grade chorus presented the "N" tiles mentioned above after singing a song about generosity and caring.

**Sycamore Community City** made its board members Facebook stars. The district posted bios of each board member on the social networking site and asked the community to thank them. The banner photo on the district's Facebook page was changed to a group picture of the board for the month of January, and members were presented with logo Tervis cups, lemonade, cookies and OSBA certificates during a board meeting.

"Sycamore's board of education members are ordinary people who have an extraordinary dedication to our public schools," said Superintendent Dr. **Adrienne C. James**. "Our board members work closely with parents, education professionals and community members to create the educational vision we want for our students ... these people unselfishly contribute

their time and talents toward the advancement of public education."

OSBA certificates were presented to **Tecumseh Local (Clark)** board members in January by Superintendent **Bradley A. Martin**. Martin told *New Carlisle News* he has witnessed firsthand the district improvements made by current board members. "It is a thankless job ... Tecumseh has grown by leaps and bounds, and most of it is because of the people here at this table," he said.

In **Bedford City**, the Bedford High School Madrigal Singers performed as board members were awarded OSBA certificates during their January meeting. Board member **Barbara A. Patterson** also was recognized for her past service as OSBA's Black Caucus president. In addition, newly elected Bedford Mayor **Stan Koci** was honored with a resolution. And, the crowd cooed over board member **Phil Stevens'** recent and first grandchild, **Rashad Smalls Jr.**



*Mogadore Local (Summit) students decorate poinsettias to present to school board members in honor of School Board Recognition Month.*

In **Ottawa Hills Local (Lucas)**, the elementary, junior high and high school student council presidents recognized board members individually with personal notes of thanks for "always putting the needs of students first." As part of the January board meeting, the students also presented board members with certificates of appreciation.

In **New Richmond EV**, the board chose to spotlight two members leaving the board. Superintendent **Adam Bird** presented New Richmond Lions football helmets signed by school board members and administrators to retiring board members **Frederick R. Heflin** and **Ben Bird**. Heflin retired



after 18 years as a board member and also served as district treasurer for five years. Bird served one term and did not seek re-election due to business demands.

**Deer Park Community City** art students at Amity Elementary School painted the district's Wildcat logo on serving dishes as a token of thanks to board members. Elementary art specialist **Hauna Laine** approached the students about getting involved in the project and was met with overwhelming support. The heartfelt and handmade gifts were presented to the board at its January meeting.

**Meigs Local (Meigs)** held an annual appreciation dinner to honor its dedicated board members.

"Our school board members are ordinary citizens with extraordinary dedication to the Meigs Local School District," Superintendent **Rusty D. Bookman** told *The (Pomeroy) Daily Sentinel*. Bookman also gave OSBA certificates to board members and former board member **Ron Logan**.

Describing public education as the backbone of American society, he credited the local school board with doing the most important work of the communities — "that of educating our youth."

**Lakota Local (Butler)** Superintendent Dr. **Karen L. Mantia** wrote an appreciation letter to board members, which was published at [www.todayspulse.com](http://www.todayspulse.com).

"The decisions school board members have to make are often difficult, with no easy answers," Mantia wrote. "Board



*Northmont City students painted tiles in honor of their board members. The tiles will be installed as art in the district's new Kleptz Early Learning Center.*

members spend much time understanding state law and Ohio Department of Education regulations.

"I'd like to correct a very common, but incorrect, impression that many people have. School board members are not employees of the district. They are not paid, other than a small meeting stipend. ... Everything they do as school board members is on their own time, over and above everything they're already doing in their own jobs and lives. I'm thankful that we have individuals in our community who are willing to step forward and take a leadership role in critically important work."

**Warren County Career Center (WCCC)** board members were thanked for their service with a special strawberry lemonade cake made by WCCC junior **Aubree Melvin**. They also were given gift certificates to the WCCC cosmetology salon, along with OSBA certificates.

In **Bucyrus City**, board members were recognized prior to the start of the varsity boys basketball game on Jan. 25. They also received certificates of commendation during their regular January meeting.

"The Bucyrus City School District is very fortunate to have a dedicated board that works closely with parents, education professionals and community members to create the educational vision we want for our students," Superintendent **Kevin D. Kimmel** wrote on the district's website. "On behalf of the students, staff and community, I would like to personally thank the Bucyrus City School District board for all of their efforts in providing the leadership for our schools."

District students wrote and presented notes of appreciation to **Fort Recovery Local (Mercer)** board members.

**Lisbon EV** Superintendent **Donald M. Thompson** thanked board members during their January meeting while noting the length of service of three individuals: **Gary Peruchetti**, 18



*The elementary, junior high and high school student council presidents recognize Ottawa Hills Local (Lucas) board members with personal notes of thanks.*



years; **Eugene M. Gallo**, 16 years; and **James Smith**, 14 years.

“To have a board with that much experience speaks for itself,” Thompson told *The (East Liverpool) Review*.

**Pickaway County ESC** Superintendent **Ty Ankrom** thanked the ESC’s governing board at its organizational meeting and published the following in the *Circleville Herald*.

“I am happy to recognize the board and all those who serve to make school districts strong,” Ankrom said.

In **Lincolnview Local (Van Wert)**, the crowd applauded board members for their service during their January meeting.

In **North Baltimore Local (Wood)**, the Powell Elementary School Show Choir performed to thank the board.

The Whitehall-Yearling High School Music Unlimited Show Choir performed for **Whitehall City’s** board. Board members also received certificates of appreciation from the district, along with various goodies.

**Highland Local (Medina)** Superintendent **Catherine L. Aukerman** handed out certificates to board members and expressed appreciation for their service and leadership, according to [www.akron.com](http://www.akron.com).

The website’s reporters also were on hand during **Springfield Local’s (Summit)** January meeting as Superintendent **William M. Stauffer** honored board members. “Board members make tough decisions and commit a significant amount of time to board matters for little pay,” he said.

**Euclid City** Superintendent **Keith M. Bell** read a proclamation recognizing board members for all their hard work.

In **Wellston City**, Superintendent **Karen Boch** presented certificates to board members and told the *The Jackson County Times-Journal*, “I just want to say that this is a very challenging time in education, and between budgeting constraints and all of the new mandates, your job is not an easy one. You put in countless hours, sometimes thankless hours, and a lot of time your job goes unnoticed or it’s not recognized.

“I encourage all citizens to publicly and privately thank the school board members for serving this community and their dedicated service to our children.”

The newspaper also published a report on the **Oak Hill Union Local (Jackson)** board meeting where Superintendent **Michael McCoy** issued a proclamation to honor the board.

“The school board keeps attention focused on progress toward the school district’s goals and maintains a two-way

communications loop with all segments of the community,” the proclamation stated.

**Bellaire Local (Belmont)** Superintendent **Tony D. Scott** said words of thanks to board members during the January meeting.

In **Toronto City**, “Each board member received a plaque, and we hosted a dinner for them,” Superintendent **Fred Burns** told the (Steubenville) *Herald-Star*. Burns also honored **Larry Davidson**, a board member who retired after serving 24 years.

In **Bexley City**, Superintendent Dr. **Michael L. Johnson** acknowledged the hard work of his district’s board during its January meeting. Biographies of each board member also were posted on the district’s website.



*New Richmond EV Superintendent Adam Bird, far left, presents New Richmond Lions football helmets to retiring board members Frederick R. Heflin, third from left, and Ben Bird, fourth from left.*

**Mogadore Local (Summit)** celebrated School Board Recognition Month in December. Board members enjoyed decorated poinsettias and recognition from students.

**Franklin Local (Muskingum)** Superintendent **Sharon McDermott** presented OSBA certificates to board members. They also received cards, a poster and a graduation cap signed by district students and employees. Duncan Falls Elementary School Principal **Steve Rice** presented the board with “Thanks a latte for all you do” Starbucks gift cards from that building’s staff.

To see how other districts celebrated School Board Recognition Month, visit [www.ohioschoolboards.org/school-board-recognition-month](http://www.ohioschoolboards.org/school-board-recognition-month). Photos and videos of celebrations also are posted on that page. ■



# Achievement, talents on display at conferences

▼ Southeast Region President David Carter, East Guernsey Local (Guernsey), left, and OSBA President Susie Lawson, Tri-County ESC and Wayne County Schools Career Center, recognize Larry E. Holdren, Ohio Valley ESC and Washington County Career Center, for his service on the region's executive committee during the March 4 Southeast Region conference. See the April 28 OSBA Briefcase for a roundup article about the spring conferences.



▲ Northeast Region President Denise Baba, Streetsboro City, welcomes attendees to the Northeast Region conference.

▲► Beverly D. Rhoads, Hillsboro City and Great Oaks ITCD, recognizes David E. Yockey, Milford EV and Great Oaks ITCD, with the Southwest Region outstanding board member in a neighboring district award.







◀ Streetsboro City's Streetsboro Theatre entertains attendees with scenes from "Alice in Wonderland" during the Northeast Region Spring Conference.

◀▼ Attendees enjoy the social period before the Northwest Region conference.

▼ The Great Oaks' Naval Jr. ROTC prepares to present the colors before the Southwest Region Spring Conference.

▼▼ Lawson congratulates Central Region President-elect Dr. Marguerite Bennett, Mount Vernon City and Knox County Career Center, for earning Master Board Member status at the Central Region conference.



◀ Northern Local's (Perry) Sheridan High School Show Choir performs during the March 6 Southeast Region conference.

◀◀ Northwest Region students share art they submitted for the silent auction held during the Northwest Region conference.





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