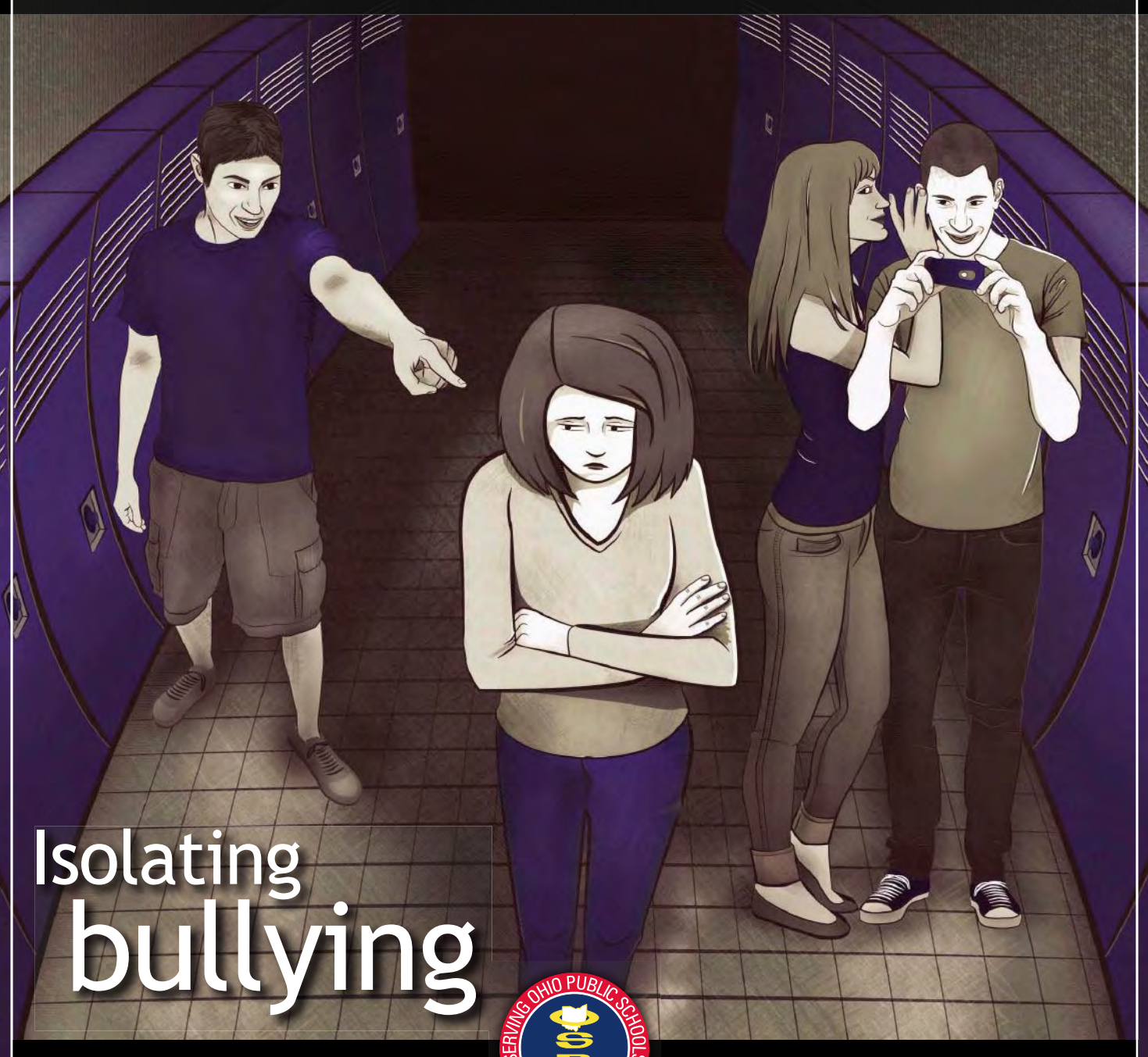


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JOURNAL

OHIO SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION



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New digital edition available!

You can access the *Journal's* new digital edition on the OSBA website at www.ohioschoolboards.org/journal.

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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 and creative solutions.

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Boiling water, banners and school boards

Richard Lewis, CAE, executive director

Contents under pressure

Long-time readers of OSBA's *Journal* know that I frequently learn and share insightful lessons from my children's experiences in school and sports. This month is no different.

My 10-year-old son **Jacob** is fortunate to participate in our community's travel baseball program. He is even more fortunate to be coached by two educators in the **Olentangy Local (Delaware)** school district: **Matt Lattig** and **Todd Baker**. The instruction they provided over this past season was not just about baseball. The boys gained experiences that hopefully will stick with them throughout their lives. I believe the same lessons learned by these fourth-graders could benefit many school boards as well.

Lesson one — 212°

At the first practice, each team member was given a practice shirt with the team logo on the front and a number on the back. It was not the player's jersey number, but one with more meaning — 212.

The 212 metaphor was unclear at first, but the team and parents would soon get the gist. At 211° water is scalding hot, but at 212° it boils. When water reaches the boiling point it produces steam and steam is power. It can move a train. It can propel a ship. During the industrial revolution, steam became this nation's primary source of power. The ability to create transformational change was made possible by one extra degree.

The message to the team was that a commitment to that one extra degree can make an enormous difference. In 1992, **Al Unser Jr.** won the Indianapolis 500 by 0.043 second. In 1998, thoroughbred **Victory Gallop** denied

rival colt **Real Quiet** the coveted Triple Crown, overtaking him and winning the 1.5-mile Belmont Stakes by a nose. In the 2008 Olympic games, **Michael Phelps** trailed **Milorad Cavic** with less than a meter to go, yet in his final half-stroke in the 100-meter butterfly touched the wall a mere 0.01 second before his competitor, earning the gold medal.

These competitors pushed themselves to victory. Their extra degree of effort produced amazing achievements. **Sam Parker** and **Mac Anderson**, authors of the book, *212°: the extra degree*, challenge you to imagine the possibilities of incorporating the 212° philosophy into all aspects of your life. Beyond the motivational message lies an important analogy: 212° reflects the ultimate definition of excellence. It affirms that one extra degree of effort, whether it is in sports, education or life, can "separate the good from the great."

Lesson two — the poster

Before our first game, the coaches asked every player to bring in five photographs of something important in their lives. There was only one restriction. The photos could not be about baseball. The boys brought in photos of pets, family, video games, friends — you name it. But, what were the coaches up to?

At the next practice, the coaches unveiled a large poster incorporating the 60 photos from our dozen players in a collage. Their message was simple and refreshing. Baseball is supposed to be fun and is only one part of your life. While athletes may surpass or fall short of their goals, our coaches insisted the kids keep those moments in perspective and be mindful of the other challenges, priorities

and accomplishments in their lives.

This poster hung in the dugout each game. Whether a player struck out, committed an error or hit a home run, he saw the poster on his way back to the bench. Whether the team won or lost, the poster was there as a reminder. The message reinforced that both successes and shortcomings of the moment were simply part of a much larger picture.

How can this apply to school boards? Most of the boardrooms I visit have a reminder of why you took on your job. In some districts it's the mission stenciled on the wall. In others, banners of student achievement line the room. Some boards display students' accomplishments in arts or athletics. Others simply display photographs symbolizing the reason public schools exist: to prepare students for success in a safe and productive learning environment with the support of a dedicated team of educators.

B.C. Forbes, founder of *Forbes* magazine, said "history has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats."

Never lose sight of the fact that while we continually strive for excellence, there will be disappointments. Next time your board experiences a setback, take a long look at those photos on the wall — those reminders of your many successes and your reasons for serving.

We cannot allow success to go to our head or failure to go to our heart. Your next success may be just one degree away. ■



Education for all

Enrolling homeless and other undocumented pupils

Sara C. Clark, deputy director of legal services

Every fall, school districts across the state enroll new students. As part of the enrollment process, new students and their parents are asked to provide a number of documents, including birth certificates, records from any school the student most recently attended, immunization records and proof of residency. Frequently, students show up with varying degrees of the information needed. Sometimes this is due to parents not bringing in the required documents or having incomplete records. Other times, it's because the records do not exist.

In the latter case, school districts are left wondering what to do with a student who arrives ready to be admitted, but lacks the required paperwork. Let's look at homeless and other undocumented students and strategies for enrolling them.

Undocumented students

First, let's start with the basic premise that all children in the U.S. are entitled to a basic public education regardless of their race, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status or the status of their parents. In 1982, the United States Supreme Court held in *Plyler v. Doe* that the undocumented or non-citizen status of a student (or his or her parent or guardian) is irrelevant to that student's entitlement to an elementary and secondary public education (457 U.S. 202 (1982)). This means that school districts that either prohibit or discourage children from enrolling in schools because they or their parents are not U.S. citizens, or are undocumented, may be in violation of federal law. This ruling does not apply to exchange and visitor students

who, unlike immigrant children, must meet certain obligations to attend school in the U.S. These obligations include holding an appropriate visa and sometimes paying tuition to the district.

Districts will frequently ask whether, after enrolling the student, they have a duty to report the undocumented student and his/her family to immigration authorities. A federal district court addressed this issue

Districts must ensure that students are not barred from enrolling in public schools on the basis of their own citizenship status or because they are homeless.

in 1995 and held that reporting undocumented students could conflict with the *Plyler* mandate that all undocumented children have access to education. If school authorities report an undocumented student to immigration authorities and the student is then removed from school as a result, the school district's actions could be viewed as having denied that student access to school.

In addition, there is no statutory obligation in Ohio law to make such a report. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) also protects the confidentiality of education records

of students, and the voluntary release of such information by a school district could violate FERPA. As a result, districts should be wary of voluntarily reporting undocumented students to immigration authorities.

Homeless students

In 1987, Congress enacted the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which was designed to require school districts to provide homeless children the same educational opportunities available to other children. The McKinney-Vento Act defines "homeless children" as individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. It includes children who are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing (often referred to as "doubling-up"); children living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping groups due to lack of alternative accommodations; children living in emergency or transitional shelters; children abandoned in hospitals; and children awaiting foster care placement. It also includes children whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not ordinarily used as a sleeping accommodation for human beings, such as cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings and other such places.

Under state law, homeless students are permitted to attend either their "school of origin" (the district they attended upon becoming homeless) or their "school of residence" (the district where they have temporary shelter). Students have the right to remain in the school of origin for the duration of their homelessness. In addition, if the student moves into permanent housing

during the school year the student can finish that academic year in the school of origin. Homeless students may not be denied enrollment because they lack previous academic records, proof of residency or other documents that schools typically obtain from new students.

Practical implications

To comply with these laws, districts must ensure that students are not barred from enrolling in public schools on the basis of their own citizenship status or because they are homeless. Moreover, districts may not request information with the purpose or result of denying access to public schools. To help you meet these obligations, I have provided some examples of several enrollment practices, as well as examples of the types of information that may not be used as a basis for denying a student entrance to school.

- Proof of residency — Most school districts require individuals to provide proof that they live within the boundaries of the school district. Copies of phone and water bills, lease agreements or other documents are frequently requested for this purpose. A school district should not ask about a student’s citizenship or immigration status to establish residency within the district. Homeless students may move frequently and live in places lacking traditional addresses, which can make verifying residency difficult. A district could consider developing affidavits of residence or other forms to replace typical proof of residency for homeless students. These forms should be carefully crafted with input from your board counsel to ensure they do not create further barriers or delay enrollment.
- Birth certificate — A school district may require a birth certificate or similar certification of birth (see below) to ensure a student falls within district-mandated minimum and maximum age requirements. However, a district may not bar a student from enrolling in its schools based on a

foreign birth certificate. If a student does not have a birth certificate, the district may request a passport or attested transcript of a passport showing the date and place of birth of the child; an attested transcript of the certificate of birth; an

attested transcript of baptism showing the date and place of the birth of the child; an attested transcript of a hospital record showing the date and place of the birth of the child; or a birth affidavit.

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- Social Security Number (SSN) — A district may not deny enrollment to a student if he or she chooses not to provide a Social Security Number. If the district chooses to request a SSN, it shall inform the individual that the disclosure is voluntary, provide the statutory or other basis upon which it is seeking the number, and explain what uses will be made of it.



Although a district may request enrollment information, certain information may not be used to deny access to public schools.

Frequent moves, lack of personal space and many other factors can make it difficult for homeless families to maintain the documentation schools require for enrollment. If the family has lost or misplaced their cards, the district's

homeless liaison could help the family obtain cards or new copies from the Social Security Administration.

- Race or ethnicity data — School districts have some federal and state obligations to report race and ethnicity data about the students in their schools. A school district may request individuals provide a student's race or ethnicity for this purpose. However, the district may not bar the student's attendance if an individual chooses not to provide his or her child's race or ethnicity.
- Educational/immunization records — If the records are not in English, a translation will be required to determine the student's academic level or school credits. If a translation is unavailable, consider asking the parent to have a private service, community organization or a member of the country's embassy provide a verbatim translation on official stationery. If student records cannot be obtained or records are not available, the district should consider adopting a procedure for immediate screening, which may include an academic diagnostic test to help determine the student's skill level and appropriate placement. The National Center for Homeless

Education has additional best practices for enrolling students without the appropriate records. These best practices are available online at: <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/18392>.

A homeless student may not be barred from enrollment due to lack of immunization until an effort has been made to obtain records. If records cannot be obtained, the district should provide assistance in getting the student properly immunized. In the meantime, the child must be admitted to school. The district's homeless liaison should work with the families and students following enrollment to gather the necessary enrollment documentation.

Districts should handle enrollment issues on a case-by-case basis. If you have questions about a specific scenario, please call your board counsel. For general information about attendance and tuition, contact the OSBA Legal Services Division at (800) 589-OSBA. ■

"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.

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Reaching stakeholders

Effectively communicating handbook, policy changes

Megan Greulich, policy consultant

Communication is essential to building strong relationships. Boards of education have the unique responsibility of creating ties with a variety of groups, including administrators, staff, students and the community.

Nowhere is this responsibility more important than in effectively communicating changes in district policies and procedures. Failing to convey these changes to those who will be affected by them can cause a variety of problems. However, these problems can easily be avoided with good communication and planning.

With the first day of school just around the corner, districts should consider whether handbook and policy changes made over the last year and summer have been effectively communicated. This is especially important at the beginning of the school year, since school boards adopt updated handbooks annually. Boards should take stock of recent changes, whom they will affect and how they should be communicated.

Defining roles is particularly important because it is a key first step in determining who needs to know about policy and handbook language changes. It also helps identify what each person needs to know and how that information can best be presented to each group.

Failure in this area can cause problems among stakeholders at all levels. It can create confusion about roles and responsibilities, as well as a loss of trust in the policymakers. A lack of trust in

leaders can diminish respect for them, which leads to more problems.

A closer look at stakeholder groups reveals potential problems on every level.

Students and parents need to be aware of policies and procedures to understand what is expected of them and what the potential consequences of not meeting those expectations are. Without clear understanding on this level, the rules fail to serve their purpose and become irrelevant. This, too, can lead to a loss of respect. This can create a host of problems. The school board as the rule-makers and the staff as the rule-enforcers must maintain respect to effectively lead and operate the district.

Teachers and administrators must be adequately informed to effectively implement policy and handbook changes. If they do not fully understand what the rules require, they will be unable to implement the standards set by the board. Poorly communicated changes can leave staff members without a firm understanding of the rules and unable to enforce them properly.

This frustrates staff and creates confusion among students and parents. Students have no reason to follow the rules if they know the staff does not understand the policies and, thus, will not enforce them. This can turn into a circle of distrust, with students not trusting staff members and staff members not trusting the school board and administration.

The good news is that there are ways to minimize and avoid these pitfalls by effectively communicating changes

to main stakeholders. The first step is to identify those stakeholders. The means of communication a district chooses will then depend on a variety of factors, including which group is being addressed and the topic of the changes. These factors constitute the second step in determining the best way to communicate changes.

Effective communication can consist of email blasts to parents and staff, in-service training for staff or online grading programs to reach parents and students. Beyond the means of communication, districts also should consider the timeliness of updates.

For example, what do students need to know about the handbook prior to the beginning of the school year? How much advance notice do students and staff need to be able to comply with changes? Should policy updates be distributed prior to their effective dates? All of these questions should be considered at the district level prior to action.

Regardless of how they communicate, districts should know who their main stakeholders are and reach out to them — both as stakeholders for input during the updating process and as interested parties once the rules are finalized. Adequate communication and personal interaction can help ensure these groups understand and respect the rules.

Effective communication is valuable on all levels and lends itself to successful school district operations. But, it is especially important when implementing handbook and policy changes. ■



Identifying with students

The three 'Rs' of the high school student

Dr. Richard J. Caster, senior school board services consultant

The three Rs are no longer reading, writing and arithmetic. The world of today is dramatically different from the world many of us grew up in. Let's take a look at today's three Rs.

Respect

Students today expect and deserve

respect. OK, I understand they also need to give respect. What we have just determined is that respect is a two-way street. You need to give it to get it and to get it, you must give it. This simple concept — which is clearly understood by most adults — probably will not be understandable to a 16-year-old.

other?

In today's world, is that a relevant question? The point of this is that most students are willing to do the work assigned to them by teachers if they are provided some relevancy to their own world. Many adults ask the same question: why am I doing this? How is this required task relevant to my life or work?

Relationships

This section hits at the heart of ongoing debates in our schools. How important are extracurricular activities? I had many opportunities during my years as a high school principal to talk to students about this. Literally all of them heading to college considered their extracurricular activities "critical."

If every school district in Ohio eliminated extracurricular activities as a cost-saving measure, I believe the harm done to the "relationships" part of a high school student's experience would be devastating. Whether you are a sports enthusiast or not is not the issue. I would venture to say that a Friday night football game is a major community activity, no matter if it is a rural, suburban or urban environment. Extracurricular offerings have, for many years, become a fabric interwoven into the entire school experience.

As you work hard to govern your school district, please take some of these observations to heart. We act as stewards of our schools. We are responsible for providing the essentials needed for a quality education and preserving the system for future students. ■

Somewhere along the line the concept of respect has been put on the back burner. Who put it there? Adults! If you do not believe me, turn on the so-called news channels on television and notice how similar the formats are: interrupt and yell over the person you are debating. For many students, this is typical behavior in their homes, as well. What kind of role-modeling is that for our young people?

Relevancy

Most of us remember being asked to provide the correct answer to the following: A train leaves Los Angeles at 8 a.m. travelling east at 55 mph. Another train leaves Chicago at 10 a.m. travelling west at 65 mph. At what time will they pass each

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OSBA loses a leader



OSBA Executive Director John M. Brandt, left, confers with Warren Russell, OSBA director of legislative services, in this undated photo. Brandt, who served the association for 30 years, died in June at the age of 65. Russell passed away in 2002 at 55.

Bryan Bullock, assistant editor

A champion of public education and former OSBA leader, **John M. Brandt** passed away on June 12. He was 65.

Brandt served OSBA for three decades, and was the association's executive director from 1994 until his retirement in 2006. He was known throughout his career — and especially around the Statehouse — for his leadership and experience in advocating for public boards of education and Ohio's children.

"John was an unwavering advocate for public education and schoolchildren, both in Ohio and across the nation," said OSBA Executive Director **Richard Lewis**. "His

passion for serving public schools will live on through the accomplishments of this association under his leadership and through those he influenced and mentored."

Brandt joined OSBA as the association's first labor relations negotiator in 1976. A U.S. Army veteran and graduate of Ohio State University, Brandt moved up quickly in the association. He went on to serve as labor relations director, chief lobbyist and legislative director. In 1985, he was appointed deputy executive director. He succeeded **Craig Gifford** as executive director on July 1, 1994.

During his tenure at OSBA, Brandt saw many changes.

School board members' skills dramatically improved, thanks in no small part to OSBA training. Programs expanded, services multiplied and the staff nearly doubled, which created the need for a new office building.

Brandt was known for his leadership and experience in advocating for public boards of education and Ohio's children.

OSBA moved from its Westerville office to its current headquarters in 1999. The association had outgrown its previous two buildings, but the new one, at 8050 N. High St., was designed to accommodate OSBA for the road ahead.

When asked in a 2006 OSBA *Journal* interview what part of his work he was proudest of, Brandt cited the new building and association staff:

“This building is a milestone in OSBA’s history. We were bursting at the seams at Brookside (Boulevard in Westerville), with nowhere to expand. Now the association is well set for the future.

“The other point of pride I want to emphasize is the people who work here. I didn’t hire everybody on the staff, but I’m very aware that the people who work here *are* the association. We’re very labor intensive, and the quality of our work, the quantity of our work and how we’re perceived and received by the members depends very much on the people here.”

Brandt witnessed a number of innovations, improvements and milestones while holding the reins at OSBA. They include the creation of the Board Leadership Institute, Education Tax Policy Institute, *Kids* PAC, OSBA website and an electricity purchasing cooperative, among many others.

Over the years, Brandt represented OSBA on dozens of statewide and national committees. He also was a popular speaker, invited to make presentations at numerous National School Boards Association and American Association of School Administrators national conferences, as well as OSBA’s own workshops, Capital Conference, and regional spring and fall meetings.

Brandt was preceded in death by his parents, **John “Jack”** and **Helen Brandt**, his sister **Mary Lou** and his sister **Barbie**. He is survived by his son, **John**, and daughter-in-law, **Tammie**; grandchildren, **Tyler**, **Kalie** and **Reid**; five brothers and sisters; and many nieces and nephews. ■



John M. Brandt, second from right, joins three retired OSBA executive directors for a photo during 1998 groundbreaking ceremonies for the association’s new Columbus headquarters. The retired directors and their years of leadership are, from left, Craig Gifford, (1984-1994); David B. Martin (1972-1984); and Dr. Willard Fox (1970-1972).

Challenging



Ohio educators and experts discuss improving school climate

Now, perhaps more than ever, bullying is a hot issue. The documentary film “Bully” and high-profile bullying incidents — like the 68-year-old New York bus monitor reduced to tears by middle school students — have generated news coverage and conversation across the country this year.

But for all the well-publicized cases of bullying, there are many more that go unreported. Bullying happens at every school — and it often takes place behind teachers’ backs and

under parents’ noses. It can be tough for adults to catch and hard for adolescents to discuss.

“Most bullying at school happens in the classroom and is undetected by teachers,” said **Jim Bisenius**, founder of Bully-Proofing Youth, which provides bullying prevention training to educators, students and parents.

Bullying can take many forms. While most people think of physical or verbal attacks, it also includes making threats,

bullying

*Bryan Bullock,
assistant editor*

spreading rumors and purposefully excluding someone from a group.

“The sophisticated bullies know how to torment someone with a whisper or by looking over at their friends and mocking someone when the teacher isn’t looking,” said Bisenius, a Westerville resident who works with schools across Ohio and has spent 18 years combating bullying.

About 28% of students ages 12 through 18 said they were bullied at school during the 2008-09 school year, according to the most recent National Crime Victimization Survey. The survey found students who were bullied also were significantly more likely to be in a physical fight, live in fear of being attacked and bring a weapon to school.

Bisenius believes bullying is more of an issue now than it was generations ago in large part because of technology like cell phones, social media and the Internet.

“It used to be once a student made it home, they were in the clear,” he said. “But cyberbullying doesn’t give kids respite — it’s 24/7 and those issues can spill back over into school.”

Targeting bullying in school

Navigating cliques and social groups is hard enough for students, but bullying can make going to school unbearable.

Bullying makes victims feel alienated and overwhelmed. Not only is it damaging to their mental and emotional health, but studies show children and teens who are bullied are more likely to dislike school, distrust peers, struggle in class and act out with violence.

Bisenius estimates adults catch about one out of 10 acts of “blatant bullying.” When it comes to “sophisticated bullying,” he said the chances of an adult witnessing it fall to about one out of 50. His program (www.bullyproofingyouth.com) helps students stand up to bullies and also assists educators in their role of promoting a healthy school climate.

“One of the best ways staff can increase the odds of catching bullying is communication,” Bisenius said. “When a boy or girl comes to you and says this student is doing something they don’t like, chances are it is happening in other classes too.”

He said schools can also survey their students to gauge the school climate and find out who is being bullied and who is bullying others. Bisenius said teachers can use that information for classroom mapping.

“Normally, as adults, we have no clue who the bullies are,” he said. “Part of classroom mapping is to put more controlling kids toward the front so they can’t control kids behind them.”

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program includes a student survey component, as well as an effort to find “hot spots” in school where bullying happens. The data serves as a benchmark to gauge efforts to fight bullying. Olweus (pronounced Ol-VEY-us) is a comprehensive, schoolwide program designed to prevent bullying and improve peer relations. The evidence-based international program (www.violencepreventionworks.org) is used by a variety of schools in Ohio.

District perspective: Valley View Local (Montgomery)

In Valley View Local, fourth-graders are introduced to Project Charlie (CHemical Abuse Resolution Lies in Education). While the national program began as an anti-drug effort, it has emerged as a vehicle to address bullying. Standout Valley View High School students are selected and trained by teacher advisor **Shannon Longman** to provide instruction to younger students. They teach 30-minute lessons that focus on good decision making, making friends and avoiding drugs.

At Valley View Junior High School, peer mediators work with guidance counselor **Stephanie Carmack** in groups to discuss problems with other students who sign up to “talk.” Students who bare their problems to peers tend to find new solutions and often find friends. The district’s junior high and high school both have a section in their health classes focusing on bullying and how to recognize and stop it. The junior high school also plans to bring back Rachel’s Challenge, a national program designed to help students combat bullying, increase respect and improve school climate.

Source: Submitted by **Debbie Bruner**, Valley View Local communications director



Stark County ESC is supporting an effort to implement the Olweus program in schools in Columbiana, Stark and Summit counties. **Kay Port**, director of Stark County ESC's CARE Team Initiative, said 19 people from Stark County, including herself, have been provisionally certified by Clemson University as Olweus trainers. A Sisters of Charity Foundation grant funded most of the training. The Olweus program is aligned with and supports the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) climate goal.

"Between May of this year and September, we are going to train 18 schools in Stark County on the Olweus program," Port said. "Some are public, some are parochial."

She said the program includes a comprehensive approach to strengthening school climate, including a consistent set of

District perspective: Orange City

At **Orange City's** Moreland Hills Elementary School, every student is required to review a "No Bullying Allowed" policy and sign an agreement of understanding. The school also has a program to help new students fit in and a peer mediation program. During recess, student mediators wear bright orange vests to identify themselves as students assigned to assist with conflicts that day.

Bradley Middle School students have participated in Challenge Day, a national program intended to help kids gain a greater awareness and appreciation of each other's differences and abilities. Adult facilitators led students in getting-to-know-you games and thought-provoking discussions.

Orange High School social studies teacher **Gail Price** helps students confront bullying in her program Facing History and Ourselves. One school year, the senior class set up a flash mob dance to show students the horrors of bullying. The students also did a project exploring and mapping bullying "hot spots" in the school. They later posted signs in those areas and worked to monitor them for possible bullying. Finally, they took their efforts to the elementary school to work with students on anti-bullying programs. A national film crew shot a documentary exploring the school's anti-bullying programs and efforts.

Source: Submitted by **Staci A. Vincent**, Orange City communications assistant

rules and reporting policies for a district to follow. Port said Olweus also puts an emphasis on the role of school staff, parents and the community in addressing bullying.

"One of the strongest pieces of this program is that it addresses the bystanders, the kids who watch, laugh or do nothing," Port said. "If we can empower the kids who see bullying to report it to an adult, that will have a huge impact on the emotional well-being of our students."

Dispelling myths about bullying

As is often the case, the first part of addressing any problem is recognizing there is one.

It's important to understand what is bullying and what isn't, said **Todd Walts**, president and chief executive officer of Campus Impact, which provides bullying prevention training to educators, students and parents.

"Unlike an isolated student conflict, bullying is continuous, aggressive behavior that has to do with an imbalance of power," Walts said. "That power imbalance might be physical size or perceived popularity."

An Amherst resident and former youth pastor, Walts has worked with a variety of Ohio schools over the past 10 years. Campus Impact (www.campusimpactusa.org) produces bullying prevention instructional materials used by schools nationwide.

"I think bullying is recognized more now than it used to be," he said. "People used to think, and some people still do, that it is something a kid will grow out of or it's just kids being kids, but that's simply not true."

Walts said research shows that, without intervention, students who bully others are likely to continue their aggressive behavior as they advance in school and move into adulthood.

"Bullying becomes more evident in sixth through eighth grade, but it does exist in the elementary school too," he said. "We know, statistically, that once students reach eighth grade, they stop reporting the issues because it becomes very uncool."

Walts said schools have to work with parents, businesses and the community to address bullying.

"A lot of times people just focus on the school, but it takes a broader partnership to make progress in bullying prevention," he said.

Students confront bullying

Amherst EV has a number of initiatives in place to raise awareness about bullying, but it was a student project that

brought the issue to the forefront of the school community last school year.

A handful of Steele High School students went on camera and intimately discussed the cruel, inconsiderate things bullies have said and done to them. Their responses were shown to the entire school as part of an 18-minute television news broadcast created by students on the topic of bullying.

“You could really hear a pin drop when this video went on,” said high school Principal **Mike Gillam**. “The video was very real — it wasn’t meant to pull punches. It took a lot of courage for these kids to come forward and be a part of it.”

The video, a special report created by students in TV Class, was later shown on local public television and posted online, where Gillam said it has been viewed about 17,000 times. It is available at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/23972>.

The news broadcast, he said, made a lasting impact on school climate.

“It was received extremely well,” Gillam said. “The fact that students took what it had to say so seriously really reflects well on our students.”

He said the school plans to use the video as a part of bullying awareness efforts in the future. Other districts, Gillam said, have called and asked to use it as well. The special report received a Student Emmy Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Science Lower Great Lakes Chapter.

“I know bullying is the word right now, but I tend to think it is more of an issue of intolerance,” he said. “As staff and students, we want to try to model diversity and embrace it as much as possible.” ■

Editor’s note: The commercial anti-bullying programs mentioned in this article are only a few of such programs available for school districts to choose from. Their appearance in the *Journal* does not constitute an endorsement by OSBA.

More district perspectives

Groveport Madison Local (Franklin)

Groveport Madison Local began using a new tool to combat bullying last school year. Students disciplined for bullying offenses can be required to attend a bullying workshop. Suspended students can reduce the length of their suspension by attending the workshop with their parents.

Students and parents meet in three-hour sessions for three Saturdays to learn how their behavior impacts others and the consequences of bullying. Moderators help students deal with their feelings and teach them how to resolve conflicts. The Educational Council, a consortium of Franklin County schools, developed the workshop after being approached by Groveport Madison Local. Source: *The Columbus Dispatch*

Southeastern Local (Clark)

A school project created by two Southeastern Local students to raise awareness about bullying made a big impact on their peers — and now it’s receiving national attention. Southeastern High School senior **Tyler Gregory** and junior **Scott Hannah** created a powerful five-minute video featuring statistics about bullying and students holding signs explaining how bullying impacts them.

The students entered the video in the National Great American NO BULL Challenge, a contest to empower teens to create anti-bullying messages. More than 200 videos from across the nation were submitted for the competition and voted for online. Gregory and Hannah were selected among 15 finalists and invited to San Francisco for a live awards ceremony. To view their video, visit

<http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/77171>.

Source: *Springfield News-Sun*

Cincinnati City

More than 8,500 Cincinnati City students were bused to movie theaters in the spring to see the movie “Bully.” The showings were part of a nationwide initiative called “The Bully Project: 1 Million Kids,” which provides schools with free access to the movie. The project is designed to increase awareness of bullying and prevention efforts.

The movie, which focuses on the impact bullying has on children and families, has received national attention. Cincinnati students in grades eight through 11 watched “Bully.”

Source: The Associated Press

Buckeye Valley Local (Delaware)

A Buckeye Valley Local student group was recognized by the Ohio Department of Education last year with an Asset Builder Award for its efforts to combat bullying. Buckeye Valley High School junior **Abbey Fields** helped create Thanks Goodness I’m Female (TGIF).

Fields wrote and secured a grant that trained high school students to lead self-esteem building meetings with small groups of middle school girls. The TGIF meetings focus on improving relationships and promoting strategies to reduce bullying through discussion and interactive activities.

Source: *The Delaware Gazette*



By the numbers

Bullying and school climate

Bryan Bullock, assistant editor

It's a sad truth, but a truth nonetheless: Bullying occurs at every school. It takes many forms — both physical and verbal — and it can happen in person, online and even via text message.

Whatever the form, bullying has the potential to make life overwhelming for victims. Studies show children and teens who are bullied are more likely to struggle academically; dislike school and miss classes; distrust peers and have problems making friends; experience declined mental and emotional health; and engage in violence and hurt themselves or others.

Amid the growing challenges of instant communication through smart phones and social media, schools across Ohio and the nation are stepping up stronger against bullying. It's a tough battle though. Bullying has always been around — and more than likely always will be — but awareness and prevention efforts can make a difference in a school. Here's a look at some sobering statistics about bullying and school climate. ■

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, 2010; Ohio Department of Education; and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011

As many as
160,000
students may stay home on
any given day because they
are afraid of being bullied.



of students ages
12 to 18 said they
were cyberbullied.

28%

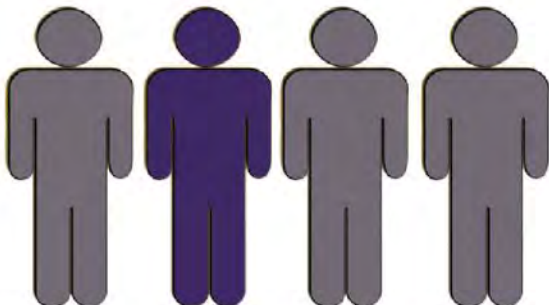
of students ages 12 to 18 said
they were bullied at school.

Among those who said they were bullied,
only 36% said they reported it
to an adult at school.

Students who are bullied
 are **7x** more likely
 to be in a physical fight in school
 and **2x** more likely
 to bring a weapon to school.

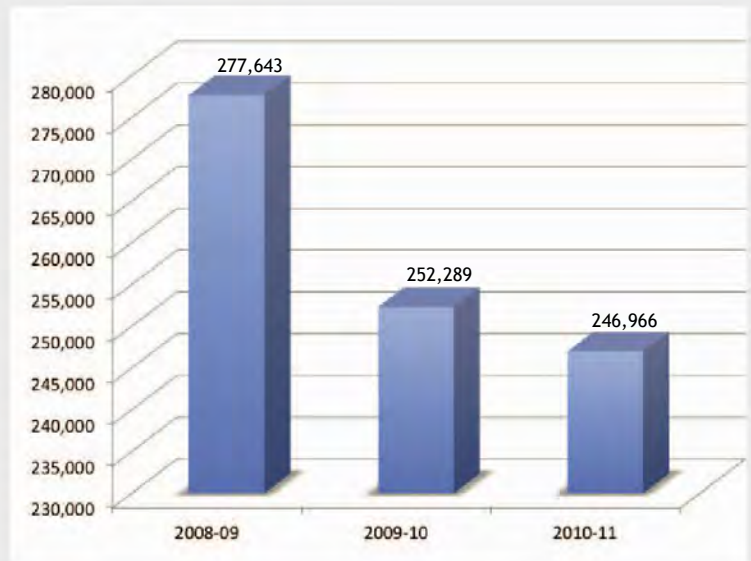


Among students in grades fifth through eighth, 26% of boys and 24% of girls reported homophobic teasing directed at a friend.

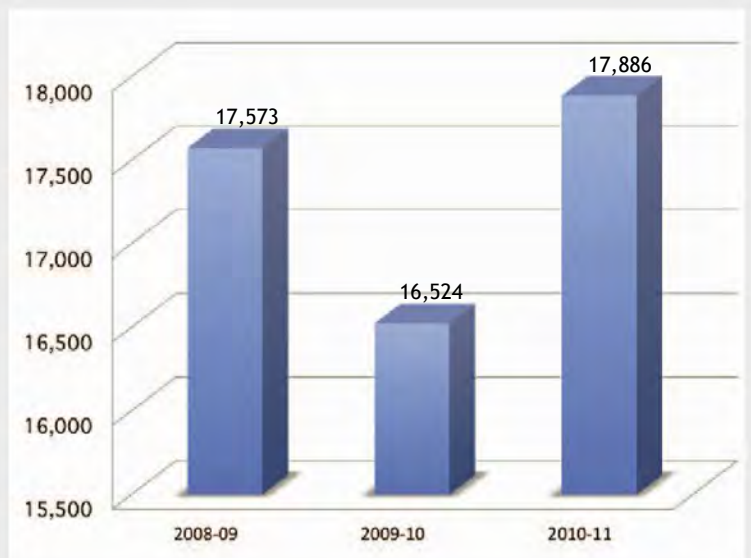


Stats from Ohio schools

Incidents of disobedient/disruptive behavior



Harassment/intimidation





School climate sessions at the 2012 Capital Conference

Capital Conference sessions cover a rich range of topics, including school climate and bullying. You won't want to miss the following presentations focusing on school climate, security and safety.

Monday, Nov. 12, 12:30 p.m.–1:45 p.m.

Monday Conference Luncheon speaker **Rosalind Wiseman** is an internationally recognized expert on bullying, parenting and leadership. She will be speaking on creating a culture of dignity in schools. Read more about Wiseman on page 33.

Monday, Nov. 12, 2 p.m.–3:15 p.m.

• Free speech — how far can they go?

Attorneys from OSBA's legal and management services divisions provide practical suggestions for applying the First Amendment in schools. Learn

about current law and policies as they relate to a wide range of issues, including student and teacher dress codes, student publications, curriculum choices and bullying.

Tuesday, Nov. 13, 9 a.m.–10:15 a.m.

• Peer facilitation — using peers to teach

Learn about **Northmont City's** Peer Facilitation Program in which students develop leadership and teaching skills while instructing younger students about conflict mediation, tobacco education and anti-bullying skills. This program provides learning opportunities for all students at little or no cost to the district (*see story, page 22*).

Tuesday, Nov. 13, 3:45 p.m.–5 p.m.

• Challenge Day — an anti-bullying initiative

Tools you need to be bully free

Crystal Davis Hutchins, editor

In partnership with the National School Boards Association (NSBA) and the Pearson Foundation, OSBA is offering a tool kit full of resources to help school districts across Ohio combat bullying. As part of the "Students on Board" program, the three organizations are encouraging school board members across the country to gauge their school climate and work toward improving it by starting conversations and building relationships with students.

Researchers for NSBA's Center for Public Education recently found that feeling welcome and connected at school can greatly increase student achievement. They discovered that honest conversations with students could be the fastest way to gain the information needed to build a plan to sustain or improve school climate. NSBA's Council of Urban Boards of Education conducted school climate surveys and used the data to create guidelines that walk school board members through the process of engaging students. The guidelines include: scheduling meetings with them, key questions to ask during the meetings and what to do after the meetings to let students know what actions were taken based on

the information they provided.

Log onto www.ohioschoolboards.org/students-on-board to find this valuable tool kit, which is filled with reports, articles, videos, OSBA anti-bullying policy guidance, links and other information aimed at keeping kids safe and free from bullying in school. You'll find a PowerPoint presentation detailing why school climate is important, and have an opportunity to share your reflections about Students on Board conversations.

Board members also are encouraged to extend the conversation with students beyond anti-bullying efforts by asking them to take the Million Voices Survey, which analyzes student perceptions to improve teaching and learning. ■



Learn about Challenge Day, a powerful program that transforms the way students view and interact with each other. **Westerville City** shares how fun and engaging school activities can help stop bullying, peer pressure and violence, as well as increase understanding and acceptance among students.

• **Partnerships to eliminate bullying**

Learn how the University of Toledo partnered with **Washington Local (Lucas)** and other school districts in Lucas County to create and implement an anti-bullying campaign.

Wednesday, Nov. 14, 9 a.m.–10:15 a.m.

• **Stop bullying — where do we start?**

Working together, educators, parents and community members can support the implementation of bullying prevention programs, reinforce bullying prevention messages and advocate for bullying policies to be put into place. Join the Ohio PTA to “Connect for Respect.”

Student Achievement Fair

Districts will share how they are improving school climate during the Student Achievement Fair on Tuesday, Nov. 13, from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Stop by the following booths to speak with district students and staff and learn how to

implement similar programs in your district.

• **Clyde-Green Springs EV — S.T.A.R.S.** (Students Taking A Right Stand), booth 2000

Learn about S.T.A.R.S., a fourth- and fifth-grade anti-bullying program. Participants teach younger children and get involved in community fundraisers and events, and schoolwide initiatives.

• **East Liverpool City — PRIDE** classes, booth 1805

Hear how this class for fifth- and sixth-grade students focuses on organizational and leadership skills. Heavy emphasis is placed on anti-bullying efforts.

• **Greenfield EV — Project Trust**, booth 1713

Discover how Project Trust (Teaching Respect, Understanding and Student Teamwork) breaks down the barriers among cliques and reduces bullying in middle and high schools.

• **Licking Heights Local (Licking) — Bullying**, booth 1852

Learn how students discuss bullying with others and host a presentation at the beginning of the school year.

• **West Geauga Local (Gauga) — Our House — All Welcome, All Accepted**, booth 1757

Hear about the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, an evidence-based program aimed at preventing and reducing bullying behaviors, along with improving peer relations through transforming the school climate. ■

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Strategies and resources for creating a safe school climate

representatives of the Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Initiative

We would all like to think every Ohio student feels welcomed, respected and motivated to learn in school. When youth are connected to school, they are less likely to engage in disruptive and destructive behaviors and more likely to graduate from high school. But the reality is that, nationwide, 20% of students in grades nine–12 experience bullying, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

One job of the local board of education is to support the

district’s schools in creating environments where students and staff are safe and encouraged to succeed. The first step in this effort comes when local boards evaluate school data to develop and approve district policies that protect students. This includes anti-bullying, teen dating violence prevention and cyberbullying policies that promote positive behaviors.

It also is important to make sure the policies are not only effective, but also implemented fairly and consistently. So there are additional steps for a school board to take, which will be discussed later.

At the state level, Ohio has formed the Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (Anti-HIB) Initiative. Members behind the initiative include the Ohio attorney general, Ohio Domestic Violence Network, eTech Ohio and the Ohio departments of Education, Health, Mental Health, and Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services.

During the 2011-12 school year, the initiative produced a series of webinars to support districts in their efforts to combat bullying and violence. Topics include cyber safety, anti-HIB on the bus, teen dating violence, girl aggression, support for policy implementation and legal ramifications. Each webinar includes a question-and-answer segment that can be used in school or district meetings to launch local discussions with families, teachers and administrators.

The Anti-HIB Initiative plans a webinar series for the 2012-13 school year, which will be at 3 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. The series was launched earlier this month. Find a schedule and information about these free webinars by visiting www.education.ohio.gov and searching the keyword “bullying.”

The initiative recommends four additional steps for local school boards to take after they establish district policies:

- Request feedback from students, families and educators involved in implementing anti-bullying policies. Ask such questions as: How are policies

Resources for promoting a positive school climate

Anti-HIB Initiative members offer the following resources to Ohio school board members at www.education.ohio.gov (use search keyword “bullying”):

- Ohio’s Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Model Policy Overview;
- Creating and Promoting Positive School Climate in Ohio’s Schools and Communities;
- Fact Sheets for School Personnel, Parents of Teens and Parents of Young Children;
- Free local presentations, called Parent Academies, on Ohio’s Anti-HIB model policy.

Other state resources available at www.education.ohio.gov include:

- The Ohio School Climate Guidelines show how educators, families and communities can work together to create schools where all students succeed (use search keywords “Ohio School Climate Guidelines”).
- The Comprehensive System of Learning Supports helps local district and school building leadership teams create plans and policies to ensure every student benefits from a safe and supportive learning environment that enables them to achieve high academic content standards (enter search keywords “Learning Supports Guidelines”).

working for those impacted by incidents in your district over the last year? Are the policies effective? What tells you that? Is there a clearly identified coordinator responsible for implementing the district policy?

- Review data, including attendance and graduation records, student surveys, discipline reports and audits of existing programs, that promote safety, good nutrition, health care and substance abuse avoidance. Look into what data need to be improved. For example, does your attendance record tell you why students are calling in sick?
- Support professional development programs to help teachers, administrators and families better understand the social and emotional development of children and how it affects academic success. Find out if your district is partnering with local service providers for training and referrals.
- Identify potential partnerships with your community to learn positive ways to resolve conflicts and deal effectively with bullying, harassment and other violent or offensive acts. For instance, is your district partnering with other community agencies in a bullying prevention task force to coordinate programs and services available during school and non-school times?

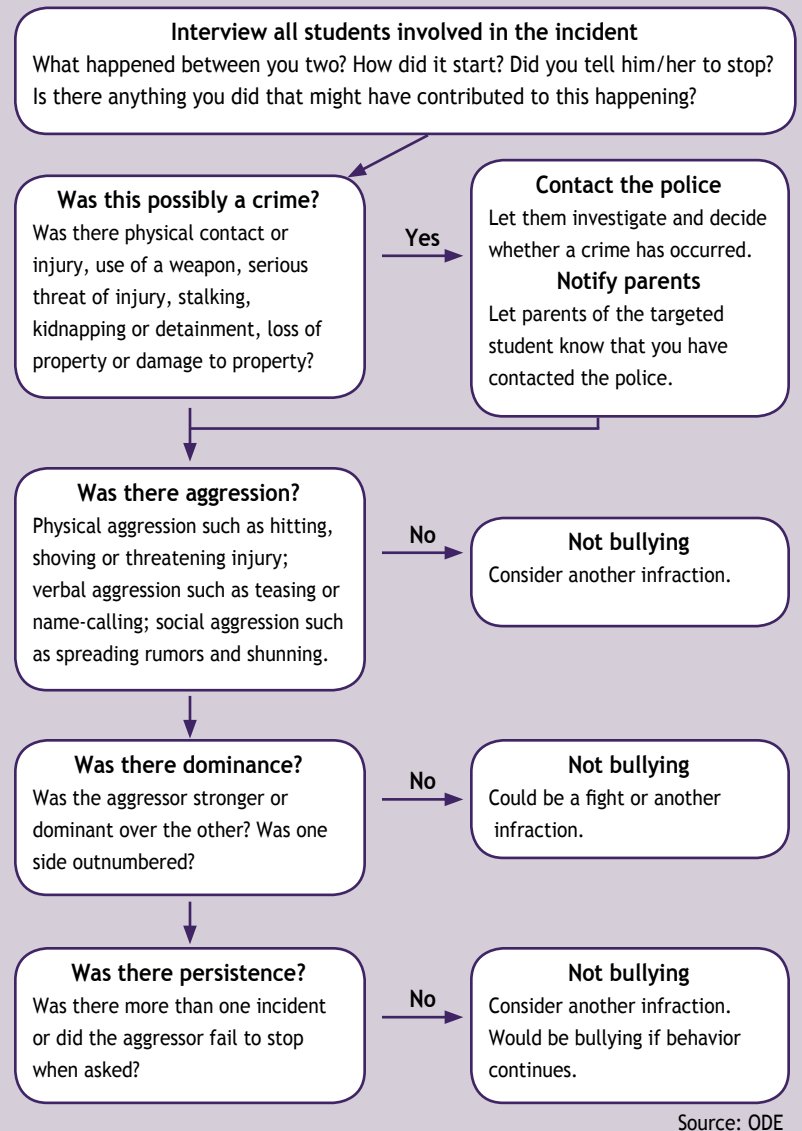
The initiative suggests that the best strategy for bullying and violence prevention is promoting healthy relationships. Initiative members point to Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in collaboration with the Futures without Violence Fund. It is the largest-funded national program aimed at preventing relationship violence and abuse among young people by promoting healthy relationship behaviors.

The initiative targets youth 11 to 14 years old. In addition, Start Strong communities are engaging “teen influencers” (older teens, 15-18); parents and caregivers; teachers; coaches; and other mentors. Start Strong funded programming from 2008-2012 in 11 communities across the U.S. This work is posted at www.startstrongteens.org under the “Communities” tab.

For example, youth in Start Strong Indianapolis are leading a social marketing campaign to educate peers about teen dating violence and abuse. Speak Up Speak Out is a blog for teens in Austin, Texas, to discuss topics such as, “Facebook can be a way to build friendships, but it can also be used in destructive ways to hurt people. What effect is it having on teen relationships?”

Boston’s Start Strong website features a critical look at the messages in songs from Billboard’s “Hot 100” chart for 2011.

Bullying assessment flow chart



Source: ODE

For the third year in a row, program youth have created a Top 10 Healthy and Unhealthy Relationship Song List to help other teens think through which songs can serve as models for their own lives and relationships, and which should not.

Ohio districts can review all the Start Strong programs for ways to shift the emphasis from the negative — eliminating bullying — to the positive, spotlighting what healthy relationships are.

“Bullying exists because of a lack of adult intervention,” said **Stuart Green**, founder and director of the New Jersey Coalition for Bullying Awareness and Prevention and the New Jersey Chapter of the National Association for Social Workers’ 2011 Social Worker of the Year.

Ohio Anti-HIB agrees with Green’s assessment. ■

'KEY' strategy helps defuse bullying

Wayne Wlodarski, counselor, Northmont City Schools

Everyone has had the experience of being bullied at least once. In some situations, it is considered a rite of entry: "If you want to be a part of this group, then ..." Or, it could be a rite of passage: "It will toughen you up!"

What has become increasingly clear, however, is that bullying is *not* an essential childhood experience. Humiliation, physical and emotional abuse, harassment and ridicule are not benchmarks for maturity and must not be tolerated in schools.

According to i-SAFE, a nonprofit Internet safety foundation, teens in grades six through 10 are most likely to be involved in activities related to bullying. About 30% of students in the U.S. are regularly involved in bullying, either as a target, a bully or both. Recent school bullying statistics show that cyberbullying is prevalent on school property, and also involves students when they are not at school. "Bullycide," referring to the tragedy of students who kill themselves in the face of excessive persecution by peers, is becoming common.

With the number of children affected by bullying increasing throughout the country, schools are looking for effective strategies to stop it. Students at **Northmont City's** Northmont High School have taken a unique approach to address this critical school safety issue. Under the direction of counselor **Sheree Coffman** and teacher **Matt Maiken**, the Northmont Peer Facilitator program trains students to become effective mediators.

Available during the school day, Peer Facilitators help fellow students resolve personal issues by addressing emotional turmoil and forming problem-solving relationships. For several years, Peer Facilitators have chosen another mission — anti-bullying. They have taken this message to the Northmont elementary schools.

Peer Facilitators worked for several weeks to write, direct, rehearse and present original skits to address bullying in school. Last school year, the two skits were "Bullying in Physical Education Class" and "Bullying in Cyberspace." These skits were presented to fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students in the district's elementary schools.

Each skit creatively demonstrated the four primary components of bullying: the bully, the bystanders, the agitators and the target (victim). Students were presented with "KEY," a pragmatic strategy to address bullying situations:

- Keep telling an adult until someone listens.
- Exit the bullying situation, if possible.
- You are not alone.

Too often, targets of bullying feel helpless, humiliated and isolated. A narrator, playing the role of the "locksmith," handed out keys to "unlock the problem of bullying." The acronym "KEY" was developed by the Peer Facilitators as a helpful reminder of how to face a bully.

After performing the skits, Peer Facilitators held small group discussions to reinforce the message and answer questions. Judging from the elementary students' ongoing discussions the following day, the message came through loud and clear: "Remember: Bullying is the lock and you are the KEY." ■



Northmont High School senior Katelyn Gibson, left, portrays a gym teacher and trusted adult as she listens to a bullying victim, played by senior Kinzie Jacobs-Johnson. The girls, part of the high school's Peer Facilitators team, were presenting a skit at Northmont City's Union Elementary School addressing school bullying.

Training, tracking essential to anti-bullying efforts

Tom Strasburger, PublicSchoolWORKS vice president

You don't have to go very far or search very long to see the negative impact bullying is having on districts and their students. In fact, it is rare when you can turn on a TV or enter a school and not see the way in which bullying is captivating the nation and shaping the classroom.

If instances of bullying go unnoticed for too long, the results can prove to be tragic. With bullying issues on the rise, it is important for school districts to have the tools and training to stop it in its tracks. Following are essential ingredients to any quality bullying reporting system.

Staff awareness

Training school staff to recognize the signs of bullying, understand its dangers and manage bullying situations is the first step in ensuring a safe and healthy school environment. Administrators need a way to ensure training expectations and requirements are met and all staff are up-to-date. If training expectations are not being met, administrators need to know who has fallen through the cracks and be prepared to intervene to make sure training takes place. Once staff members are trained, the necessary tools need to be available to easily report bullying so that no incident goes unnoticed.

Student awareness

Students must be trained to understand that bullying will not be tolerated in the school environment and that staff and administrators are prepared to intervene on a victim's behalf. For students who are not comfortable speaking with staff or administrators, other tools should be available to allow them to make a report confidentially. It is important that students are not afraid to report a bullying incident affecting them or other students. With so much technology available to give bullies access to their victims, it is important to give victims multiple tools to report bullying.

Board policies

Bullying and other issues are constantly evolving. That means board policies need to adapt to meet changes brought about by technology and cyberbullying. When

policies change, districts need a way to ensure all staff are aware of the new requirements. With customized courses to train staff and a way to track all training, administrators can focus more of their time on education and have the peace of mind to know they are in compliance with board policies.

Better data

Many schools keep a record of detentions, suspensions, expulsions and other disciplinary actions. When dealing with bullying, it is important to be able to access information and recognize trends with victims and bullying. Having robust data that tells the date, time, name of the victim and accused bully allows administrators to intervene with students to see if a larger issue may be taking place. ■

Editor's note: Don't miss PublicSchoolWORKS' presentation on student bullying reporting and intervention at the OSBA Capital Conference on Monday, Nov. 12 at 2 p.m. in room D 244-245.



Staff, as well as students, must be trained to recognize the signs of bullying and how to manage a bullying situation.



Bullying from a policy perspective

Kenna Haycox, policy consultant

A school climate in which students feel safe is essential for student learning and growth. Bullying and harassment is a very serious issue in schools and there has been a great amount of discussion and legislation around this topic.

The most recent changes came with the passage of Ohio House Bill (HB) 116, the Jessica Logan Act. The law is named for an Ohio teenager who committed suicide in 2008 after she was subjected to relentless cyberbullying and other harassment.

As you look to address school climate, particularly with respect to bullying, it is important to review your board policies to ensure they are in line with current laws and reflect the district's zero-tolerance stance. There are several policies districts are required to adopt that address harassment, intimidation and bullying.

Essential policies

Three of the key policies that a board must adopt are: zero tolerance; hazing and bullying; and Internet safety policies. Let's take a look at these three policies and highlight some of the information they must include.

Zero tolerance: In accordance with state law, all school boards must adopt a zero-tolerance policy. This policy should contain a statement that "the board has 'zero tolerance' of violent, disruptive, harassing, intimidating, bullying or other inappropriate behavior by its students." Within this policy, it is important to state that students will be disciplined for failure to comply with it. The policy does not have to outline the specific discipline, but rather refer to discipline procedures outlined in student handbooks.

The district must provide written information about the zero-tolerance policy to students and parents annually. In 2009, HB 19 added the requirement for districts to "provide continuing instruction in dating violence prevention in health education courses in grades seven through 12." This training should be stated in the zero-tolerance policy and in

the district's hazing and bullying policy.

Hazing and bullying (harassment, intimidation and dating violence): This required policy defines hazing — as well as bullying, harassment and intimidation — and prohibits such behaviors on school property or at school-sponsored activities. Districts should already have a hazing and bullying policy in place. The Jessica Logan Act (HB 116) was signed into law on Feb. 2, 2012, and the provisions become effective Nov. 4, 2012. The publicity surrounding the bill has brought increased attention to school board policies related to bullying.

Your current policy should already contain the definition of bullying set forth in law. As a result of HB 116, "electronic act" (defined as an act committed via cellular telephone, computer, pager, personal communication device or other electronic communication device) was added to the definition of harassment, intimidation and bullying. It is important to update your current definition to reflect this change.

Your policy also must include a statement prohibiting harassment, intimidation or bullying of any student on school property, on a school bus or at school-sponsored events. "School bus" was added as a result of the Jessica Logan Act, and it is important to check your policy to make sure this language is now included.

Your policy must include a procedure for reporting, documenting and investigating prohibited incidents. School personnel are required to report prohibited incidents of which they are aware to the school principal or other designated administrator. These requirements are not new and should already be reflected in your existing language. What the Jessica Logan Act added to the reporting procedures is that districts must allow for anonymous reporting of incidents. Additionally, your policy must contain a statement prohibiting false reports, and a disciplinary procedure for students found responsible for deliberately making a false report.

The requirement that the custodial parent or guardian of any student involved in a prohibited incident be notified and have access to any written reports pertaining to the prohibited incident, to the extent permitted by law, is an existing requirement that is only slightly adjusted by the Jessica Logan Act. HB 116 clarifies that this notification is provided to the “custodial parent or guardian” rather than simply “parents or guardians.”

Next, your policy is required to include a strategy for protecting a victim or other person from new or additional harassment, intimidation or bullying, and from retaliation following the report. This is an existing requirement, slightly adjusted by the Jessica Logan Act, which adds the phrases “or other person” and “new or.”

Your policy must include a disciplinary procedure for any student found guilty of harassment, intimidation or bullying that does not infringe on the student’s rights under the First Amendment. This existing requirement has not been changed and should already be addressed in your existing policy language. Your policy also must include a statement expressly allowing for suspension of students found guilty of harassment, intimidation or bullying by an electronic act.

Finally, the district administration is required to provide the board of education president a semiannual written summary of all reported incidents and, to the extent permitted by law, post the summary of those incidents on the district website, if it has one. Since this requirement has not been changed, it should already be addressed in your current policy.

Your board policy should already be included in your student handbooks. The Jessica Logan Act added some additional training and notification requirements. The board-adopted policy *and* an explanation of the seriousness of cyberbullying must now be made available to students and their custodial parents or guardians.

Once each school year, the board is required to provide a written statement describing the policy and consequences for policy violations to each student’s custodial parents or guardians. This can be done with the regular student report cards or sent electronically.

The Jessica Logan Act also added the board’s harassment, intimidation or bullying policy to the annual in-service training requirements for staff. To the extent that state or federal funds become available for this purpose, the district must provide annual, age-appropriate instruction on the board’s policy to students. It is important to make sure your district is complying with the new training and notification requirements.

Internet safety/acceptable use. At first thought, this may not



Each district must develop a local plan to educate students on issues related to Internet safety and cyberbullying.

be a policy you would check and update in regard to bullying. However, cyberbullying is a hot issue in schools today. As a result, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) added requirements that any district that participates in the E-Rate funding program must include language in its Internet safety policy stating that the “district will educate minors about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms, and cyberbullying awareness and response.” The district must develop a local plan to educate students on these issues. When developing your local educational plan, visit www.onguardonline.gov to find helpful resources.

Tying it all together

These are some highlights of what needs to be included in board policies related to bullying, but there are many details not covered here. It is important for you to review your student conduct and Internet safety policies and ensure the policies you have adopted comply with federal and state law and any other requirements, such as FCC regulations. Work with your policy service provider to get the most current versions of these policies for board adoption.

Keeping your board policies up-to-date and compliant is important to help create a safe learning environment and protect the district from litigation. With harassment, intimidation and bullying being at the forefront of community and media attention, now is the time to check the policies discussed here to ensure they are current and compliant.

For details on the extensive policy services OSBA offers, contact the author at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or khaycox@ohioschoolboards.org. ■



Peer bullying: What is a district's liability?

Sara C. Clark, deputy director of legal services

When bullying occurs, there is a potential for lawsuits. In recent years, the two most common claims filed by parents seem to be lawsuits brought by the victim under federal civil rights statutes and lawsuits brought by the bully under the First Amendment.

Federal civil rights statutes

The National School Boards Association recently collected a sample of complaints filed against school districts by victims of bullying and/or harassment. Of those complaints, more than half alleged that the bullying constituted harassment based on a characteristic protected by federal civil rights statutes, for example, race, color, national origin, sex or disability.

The legal standard for district liability for peer-to-peer harassment comes from the 1999 case *Davis v. Monroe County Bd. of Edn.* In that case, a fifth-grade student alleged that she was the victim of bullying/harassment and that the school's complacency about the harassment created an abusive environment that deprived her of an educational opportunity. In reviewing the case, the U.S. Supreme Court stated that, in order for the district to be liable, the parents had to show that the bullying/harassment was so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it deprived their daughter of access to educational opportunities or benefits; that school officials had actual knowledge of the harassment; and that the district was deliberately indifferent to the harassment. This is a relatively high standard for recovery of damages.

In 2010, the federal Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued additional guidance in a "Dear Colleague Letter" on the subject. OCR enforces five federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability and age in programs that receive federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education. The Dear Colleague Letter reminded schools that certain student misconduct falling under the school's anti-bullying policy might trigger responsibilities under federal anti-discrimination statutes. In doing so, however,

OCR seemed to outline a tougher standard than the court outlined in the *Davis* case (see sidebar below).

OCR standard	Davis standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knows or reasonably should have known• Interferes with or limits participation in educational benefits• Effective measures to address and eliminate harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actual knowledge• Must effectively bar access to educational benefits• Response must not be clearly unreasonable

So where does this leave us? Courts are likely to apply the *Davis* standard. As a result, lawsuits under the federal civil rights statutes will turn on whether the district was aware of the bullying and whether it acted in a manner that was not clearly unreasonable or deliberately indifferent to the bullying.

First Amendment

Schools increasingly find themselves in the lose-lose situation where both the victim and the perpetrator of harassing or bullying conduct sue the district. Frequently, when these situations come to light in a district the parents of the bully will allege that the discipline or other anti-bullying measures imposed by the district exceeded the district's authority and violated the student's First Amendment rights. As hard as it may be to believe, parents are actually winning some of these cases. This has led some scholars to opine that sometimes students are "free to be mean." OCR's Dear Colleague Letter added fuel to the fire by pointing out, without further clarification, that "some conduct alleged to be harassment may implicate the First Amendment rights to free speech or expression."

One approach is for the district to try to categorize the bully's conduct into a speech category that schools have traditionally been able to control: substantial disruption,

true threat, school-sponsored speech, obscenity or drug promotion. For decades, public school officials have had the authority to regulate student expression that causes, or is reasonably likely to cause, a material or substantial disruption to the work or discipline of the school. The issue of these cases then becomes whether the bullying/harassment caused a substantial disruption.

Unfortunately, there is no bright-line test that establishes when bullying/harassment causes a substantial disruption and when it does not. This issue is further muddled when the conduct occurs off campus. (For a review of a district's ability to apply school discipline to bullying behavior that occurs off campus, see OSBA Chief Legal Counsel **Hollie F. Reedy's** April 2012 *Journal* article "Cyberlaw and schools — confusion and clarity." (A digital version of that issue is available at www.ohioschoolboards.org/Journal.) Conflicting court opinions and unclear guidance at the federal level leave many districts without a road map for how to handle these issues.

A framework for school districts

How should a district address bullying, while at the same time avoid suits from the alleged victims and/or bullies? I suggest the following framework, with the caveat that each situation will be unique and should be discussed with board counsel.

- Investigate — Ask questions. Did the bullying/harassment fall under the district's bullying policy? Did the student violate school rules? Was there protected-class harassment? Did the harassment limit the student's ability to benefit from school? Did this occur on or off campus? Prepare your investigation documents as if they were exhibits at trial. The district should carefully summarize the investigation's results into a report that includes a description of the incident, a determination of whether bullying acts were verified and a recommendation for intervention, if warranted. Be prompt with the investigation. Looking into the matter in a timely manner can help the district defend a claim that it was "deliberately indifferent" to the

bullying or harassment.

- Intervene — Don't do too much or too little. Districts tend to run into problems when they either do too little to address the alleged bullying or overreact and impose excessive discipline on a student. Consider holding a meeting with parents to develop an intervention plan that identifies specific, practical and timely intervention strategies. Recognize that the remedial actions will vary widely based on the facts and circumstances of each situation. Common strategies include: implementation of positive behavioral interventions; discipline; schoolwide seminars; counseling; increased supervision to observe and intervene in bullying situations; and training.
- Inform — Under state law, school personnel are required to report prohibited incidents of bullying to the school principal or other administrator designated by the principal. The parents or guardians of any student involved should also be notified and, to the extent permitted by law, should have access to any written reports pertaining to the incident. It is important to remember that Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.666 expressly states that this access must comply with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

FERPA allows parents and guardians to receive information pertaining to their own children, but prohibits districts from sharing personally identifiable information about other students without consent. As a result, the district may not share information about any disciplinary action or non-disciplinary interventions that were taken against other students, and may not share any other information obtained from the other student's education records.

In all cases, districts are encouraged to consult with their board counsel about the evolving requirements of state and federal law in this area. Hopefully, these steps will help keep the school out of court and, more importantly, go a long way toward addressing the problem of peer bullying. ■

Administrative salary analysis

Need help determining how to compensate your administrators? It's more complicated than most people think, and OSBA has considerable experience in this area. We are able to assist school districts with a variety of important initiatives, including compensation/classification system design; job description creation/modification; and performance evaluation system design.

For more information, contact Van D. Keating, director of management services, at (614) 540-4000, ext. 241; or (800) 589-OSBA, ext. 241; or vkeating@ohioschoolboards.org.

Dogs rule in school



Pickaway-Ross Career & Technology Center students visit with Bak, a K-9 “officer” that works with the center’s school resource officer, Ross County Sheriff’s Deputy Brad Parrett. Parrett and Bak comprise one of just two school resource officer K-9 units working full time in an Ohio public school district.

Full-time K-9 units at schools set a trend in school safety and security that others are watching

*Jeff Phillips, communications and community relations coordinator,
Pickaway-Ross Career & Technology Center*

The lid of a plastic container holding an illegal narcotic is removed and placed in an empty metal locker at **Pickaway-Ross Career & Technology Center**. The locker door is closed and the brightly lit hallway is cleared. Ross County Sheriff’s Deputy **Brad Parrett** enters and unclips a lead from the collar of his partner, a German shepherd named **Bak**. He utters a command in Czech to let the dog know it’s time to get to work.

This is only a test.

Bak’s nose dances over each metal locker in rhythmic, side-to-side movements, starting from one end of the hallway, his tail wagging a counter-beat. Parrett encourages the dog, still speaking in Czech. Suddenly, Bak freezes, his nose now pointing at one locker. In English, Parrett encourages him, “Do you want your toy?”

Visibly more excited now, Bak paws at a particular locker and barks; it’s the locker with the plastic container inside. Parrett approaches, pulls a tubular, cloth toy from under his belt and

begins playing tug-a-war with the dog, who at this point looks more like a family pet at play than a purpose-trained animal. Bak pulls Parrett from the hallway, his jaw gripping the toy, his tail still wagging.

When they are gone and the hallway is empty, the container is retrieved and the cap tightly replaced. The contraband is locked in a school safe, but will be returned later that day to an evidence locker at the Ross County Sheriff's Office.

This ends the test at Pickaway-Ross, but it's one that also could have been seen any day last year in one of five buildings that make up the **Field Local (Portage) School District** in northeast Ohio.

Parrett and Bak, and Brimfield Township Police Sgt. **David Knarr** and his partner, **Havoc**, were the only K-9 unit resource officers working full time for Ohio school districts during the 2011-2012 school year. Both are preparing to begin their second year of full-time service to their respective districts. Parrett is contracted to serve Pickaway-Ross through the **Pickaway County ESC** in Circleville, while Knarr is paid through a grant received by the Brimfield Township Police Department to serve Field Local.

Seeing K-9 units in schools is not unique, as nearly all Ohio school districts engage K-9 units from local police and sheriff's departments to conduct periodic sweeps to sniff out illegal substances. For the most part, those sweeps occur only a couple of times a year, and are usually conducted under "lock down" circumstances, so students and school staff rarely interact with the dogs when they are at the schools.

What is unique about Parrett and Bak and Knarr and Havoc is that they are part of the school communities at their districts. For the most part, Knarr keeps Havoc in a caged area of his police cruiser when he's not working in a building; the vehicle is heated or air-conditioned, depending on the weather. Parrett has an office at Pickaway-Ross. When he is not policing or performing special duties, Bak rests in a crate next to Parrett's desk. A sign on the office door alerts unsuspecting visitors that Bak may be in his crate and to use caution entering the office.

Pickaway-Ross Principal **Shara Cochenour** said the Pickaway-Ross Board of Education had a few concerns when it decided to hire a K-9 unit when reinstating a full-time resource officer at the 600-student career center before the start of the 2011-12 school year. So far, the experience has been positive and the unit is praised for its work in thwarting and/or preventing incidents where disciplinary action is needed.

District records show that Pickaway-Ross had 247 reports of disciplinary actions (called "due process/suspension cases") during the 2011-12 school year. That compares with 314 cases reported for the 2010-11 school year, 371 for 2009-10, 574 for 2008-09, and 414 for 2007-08.

It is important to note that the district had its first full-time resource officer during the 2008-09 school year, and the dramatic increase in reported incidents from previous years is due, in part, to a "zero-tolerance" policy regarding off-task behavior by students and a more proactive approach in policing such issues, Cochenour said. The district did not have a full-time resource officer in 2010-2011, although Cochenour believes the district sent a strong message that carried over. Having Parrett and Bak in the building only reinforces that standard, she said.



Bak sniffs lockers during a search drill at Pickaway-Ross CTC. Bak has become part of the school community, and having him in the building has helped the school resource officer build a rapport with students.

"(Parrett) is an all-around student advocate," Cochenour said. "A lot of students will come to him first before they come to (district administrators) when issues arise. It seems that having the dog in the building has helped (Parrett) build a rapport and sense of trust with the students."

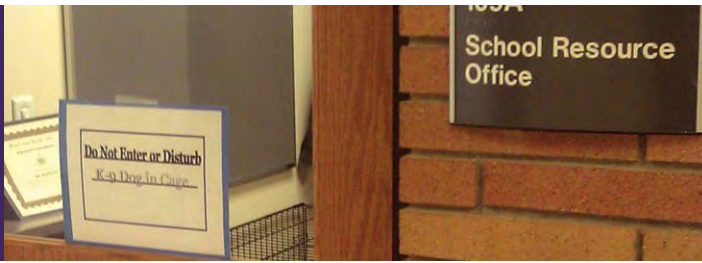
Field Local Superintendent **Beth Coleman** said her district also has seen a decrease in incidents of fighting, bullying and other off-task, violent or illegal activities. Knarr and Havoc keep tabs on the 2,000 students that attend the district's two elementary schools, middle school, high school and Falcon Academy of Creative Arts.

"We've been happy with the results," Coleman said. "It's like getting two police officers for the price of one."

Special-purpose K-9s

Bak is a 5-year-old male German shepherd. He was imported from the Czech Republic by Parrett, who paid \$10,500 out of pocket for him when he was 8-months-old. They are one of two K-9 units that work out of the Ross County Sheriff's Office. Bak is Parrett's first K-9 partner.

Bak is trained for evidence, building and area searches; obedience and handler protection; and criminal apprehension. Bak's well-trained nose can detect a variety of illegal narcotics, including methamphetamines, marijuana, cocaine and heroin. The dog is trained and responds only to commands in



A sign on the door of the Pickaway-Ross CTC school resource office cautions visitors that a K-9 dog could be in his crate inside the office.

Czech, so that Parrett is assured that Bak listens only to him.

Before being assigned to Pickaway-Ross, Parrett and Bak worked third-shift patrol for several years. Parrett readily credits Bak for saving his life on at least two occasions. One of those was an incident during what Parrett believed was a routine traffic stop on a deserted section of U.S. Route 50 near Bourneville one night in 2009. When he arrived, Parrett found an intoxicated man covered in blood, standing in the middle of the highway, waving a knife, and threatening to kill anyone who came close. The deputy sheriff learned from the dispatcher that the suspect had been in a bar fight and had stabbed a patron, who was rushed to the hospital with life-threatening injuries. Parrett also learned from the dispatcher that his closest back up was at least 15 minutes away in another part of the county.

When Parrett exited the car with Bak, the dog immediately placed himself between the suspect and his partner as he is trained. The man threatened the dog, telling Parrett that if Bak got any closer or tried to bite he would, "Kill him." Parrett completes the story:

"Fortunately, the man decided to give himself up after I explained that if he kills the dog, it's the same as killing a police officer, and that I would have no choice but to shoot him," he said. "The man put the knife down and laid face-down on the pavement with his hands stretched above his head. I cuffed him and Bak kept a close eye on him until our backup arrived."

Havoc is a 3-year-old, American-bred German shepherd that Knarr purchased from Whited K-9 Services of Brimfield Township. Havoc responds to commands spoken in German. Like Bak, Havoc is trained for evidence, building and area searches; obedience and handler protection; and criminal apprehension. He also can detect an array of illegal narcotics.

Havoc is Knarr's second K-9 partner, and one of four K-9 units operated by the Brimfield Township Police Department. Both Bak and Havoc are state and nationally certified through the North American Police Work Dog Association.

Since Knarr also works as a trainer of K-9 units, it's not uncommon to see up to 20 police dogs and their partners training on school properties, Coleman said. While the 2011-

12 school year was their first working full time for Field Local, Knarr has performed drug sweeps at the district since the 2009-10 school year.

"We requested (Knarr and Havoc) because of the positive experience we had with them before," Coleman said. "I make a point of seeing (Knarr and Havoc) once a day. We very much enjoy having them in the district."

Dog therapy

All school officials interviewed said that one of the most striking changes they've noticed is the calming effect the dogs have on students, especially those who may be having trouble at home, or with peers or teachers. The dogs also have had a positive effect on students with developmental disabilities at both districts.

"It's been extremely positive," Knarr said. "I notice the temperature and mood of a school completely changes when I walk through the building with Havoc. We're noticing violent tendencies going down having a dog in school."

"The kids have learned to ask me if Bak is working before they approach him," Parrett said. "If he is working, they respect the job he has to do and give him space. But if he's not working, it's not uncommon for kids to come up and pet him or give him hugs. He doesn't understand what they are saying, but he loves the attention."

While Parrett said he doesn't worry about Bak leading a



photo credit: Vision Photography by Swain

Havoc serves as half of a full-time school resource officer K-9 unit at Field Local (Portage). He and his partner, Brimfield Township Police Sgt. David Knarr, oversee 2,000 students in the district's schools.

double life of police dog and pseudo therapy dog, Knarr said he prefers to maintain some separation so that Havoc and the students respect the reason he's working for the district.

Parrett said he and Bak especially love to visit students in a licensed preschool the district operates, giving students in its Early Childhood Education program real-life experience.

"Since I have an office in the school, the kids see us every day," Parrett said. "I am confident that Bak can do his job and interact with the students. I think it's positive. I am always there when Bak interacts with students. I trust him, but he is still an animal and must be supervised."

Knarr quipped about the dual role his dog plays sometimes: "Here I've trained this big bad police dog and sometimes I think he's more therapy dog."

Both officers said they have students who open up to them about problems or challenges they are having while interacting with the dogs, and both said it helps them keep a finger on the pulse of what's going on in the district.

Parrett said he set the tone of why he and Bak were at school the first week, when he had Bak "sniff" a vehicle owned by his son, **Devin**, who was a senior from **Circleville City's** Circleville High School enrolled in the career center's Heavy Equipment Technologies program.

"It was important for the kids to know that we have a job to do, and that everyone was subject to being searched, including my son," he said. "It is our job to maintain a safe and secure learning environment."

Parrett said it did not surprise him that Bak did not detect illegal substances in his son's car, but that he was relieved nonetheless. Asked what he'd do if Bak detected something, Parrett responded without hesitation or emotion, "My job."

Evolution of an industry

While resource officers have worked in schools since the early 1970s — the first in the nation serving in Cincinnati — the practice has grown since the Columbine High School shootings in April 1999, said **Kari Parsons**, executive director of the 750-member Ohio Resource Officers Association (OROA).

Dublin-based OROA has seen interest in Ohio escalate since October 2007, when 14-year-old **Asa H. Coon** shot and injured two students and two teachers at SuccessTech Academy in Cleveland before he shot and killed himself, Parsons said.

"There was once a stigma attached to employing a resource officer, but that has changed," she said. "Many schools consider it a necessity. Having a full-time K-9 unit may be an evolution of changing attitudes about school safety."



Pickaway-Ross CTC school resource officer Brad Parrett and his partner Bak stand outside the school.

Parsons said that, to the best of her knowledge, Parrett and Bak and Knarr and Havoc were the only two full-time K-9 units working in school districts last year. She said the feedback she's received is encouraging.

"We've heard about the benefits of having a dog in the schools," she said.

If there were any concerns about having a K-9 unit at Pickaway-Ross, those concerns faded quickly, Cochenour said. In addition to his patrol, law enforcement and safety duties, Parrett regularly speaks to classes about the dangers of illegal drugs, fighting and bullying. He assists with truancy issues, and works closely with the district's Student Crime Stoppers group.

Are Parrett and Bak accepted by the students and staff? Decide for yourself.

When students in teacher **Ed Ryan's** Criminal Investigation and Police Science program learned that Parrett pays all of Bak's expenses out of pocket, they started an impromptu "Bucks For Bak" campaign, soliciting donations during lunch periods last winter and spring.

Parrett said he was touched and humbled by the gesture, but took the \$200 raised and donated it to the Humane Societies in Ross and Pickaway counties. The students had hoped to raise \$4,000, which is what it cost Parrett each year to care for and feed his partner.

"It's nice, but it's not right," he said. "The Humane Societies need it more than I do."

So goes the price of fame and being considered family. ■



Capital Conference 2012: An education sensation

Bryan Bullock, assistant editor

The OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show is just around the corner — and more than 10,000 public education leaders are expected to descend on Columbus for the event.

The nation's second largest education convention runs Nov. 11-14 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. The “must-attend” professional development event of the year offers school board members, administrators and staff the opportunity to learn about the latest issues and trends in public education. The conference provides attendees practical information they can take back to their districts about innovative programs, cost-saving strategies and impactful legislation, among other timely and important topics.

The theme of the 57th annual state conference is “Key into public education.” With world-class speakers and nearly

150 workshops, seminars, information sessions and networking events, the Capital Conference offers something for everyone involved in public education leadership.

The ever-popular Student Achievement Fair showcases new approaches to teaching and learning, including 100 booths of Ohio's most innovative school district programs. The Trade Show — the largest exhibition of school equipment, supplies and services in the U.S. — provides a marketplace of all the goods and services school districts need to boost student achievement and maximize resources.

The most heavily attended events at the Capital Conference are the three General Sessions. These gatherings feature talented student musical groups and a host of honors bestowed by numerous education associations, including recognition of the OSBA All-Ohio School Board and President's Award winner.

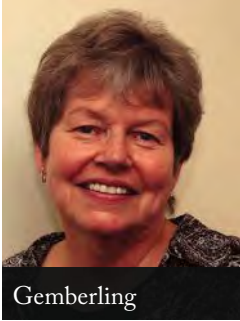
Keynote, luncheon and special event speakers provide some of the most defining experiences of the conference. Bringing with them a diverse range of experience, expertise and influence, these speakers are all proven leaders who know how to inspire others to reach higher levels of achievement. Following are the 2012 keynote, luncheon and special event speakers.

Early Bird Workshop — Nov. 11

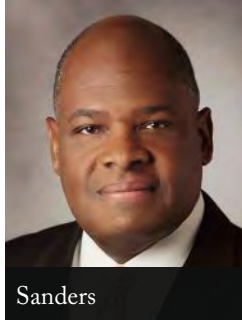
One of the foremost experts on data-driven decision-making, **Katheryn Gemberling** works with schools across the country on topics related to improving student achievement. She specializes in training school boards, administrators and other educators. A former deputy superintendent for Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland, Gemberling gained national recognition for her pioneering implementation of “Success for Every Student,” a strategic plan that significantly improved student achievement in the district of more than 130,000 students. Prior to becoming deputy superintendent, she served for more than 20 years as a school math teacher, principal and associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction.



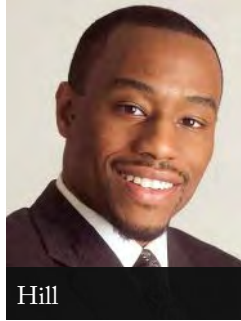
Attendees can choose from nearly 150 workshop sessions ranging from learning for the digital age to essential policies for 2013.



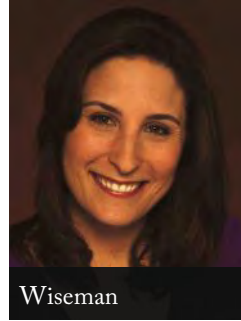
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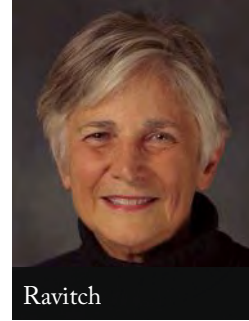
Sanders



Hill



Wiseman



Ravitch

Gemberling is co-author of the *NSBA Key Work Guidebook*, a publication designed to assist school boards in their critical role of improving student achievement.

Black Caucus Dinner — Nov. 11

Former **Cleveland Municipal** and **Toledo City** Superintendent Dr. **Eugene T.W. Sanders** has more than three decades of leadership experience serving children and communities. The former professor introduced an innovative transformation agenda in Cleveland that included the creation of new schools and programs, as well as efforts to close student achievement gaps and increase graduation rates for at-risk groups. He currently is interim superintendent at **Sandusky City** and CEO of The Sanders Transformation Group LLC, with offices in Cleveland and West Palm Beach, Fla. He is working on his second book, *The Transformation of American Schools: Leadership for the New Millennium*, which is scheduled for release this year.

First General Session — Nov. 12

An author and associate professor of education and anthropology at Columbia University, Dr. **Marc Lamont Hill** is one of the nation’s most notable African-American leaders. Adding a depth of insight to the country’s changing paradigms on diversity, hip-hop culture, politics, youth and more, Hill is a social justice activist and organizer with thoughtful perspectives on everything from education to religion. He is an award-winning author of numerous articles and books, including *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy*. His commentary has been featured in *The Washington Post*, *Essence* and *The New York Times*, as well as on National Public Radio and Fox News. Hill, who grew up in Philadelphia, works closely with the ACLU Drug Reform Project, focusing on drug informant policy. He also is a board member and organizer with the Philadelphia Student Union, which works with students in Philadelphia public schools.

Monday luncheon — Nov. 12

Rosalind Wiseman is a best-selling author and internationally recognized expert on bullying, parenting and leadership. She is the author of *Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends and the New Realities of Girl World*, the basis for the movie “Mean Girls.” Wiseman’s follow-up book, *Queen Bee*

Moms and Kingpin Dads, addresses the social hierarchies and conflicts among parents and is now being made into a major motion picture.

She also has written *Owning Up Curriculum*, a book that accompanies her comprehensive social justice program of the same name. The program is designed for grades six to 12 and is used widely across the country.

Wiseman works regularly with educators, students and parents to create communities based on the belief that each person has a responsibility to treat themselves and others with dignity. She spoke at the White House Summit on Bullying and is a frequent guest on the “The Today Show” and “Anderson Cooper 360.”

Second General Session — Nov. 13

A tireless advocate for public schools, **Diane Ravitch** is a research professor of education at New York University and a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. At one time she was a strong backer of the No Child Left Behind Act. But after witnessing the law’s true impact, she now speaks out strongly against standardized testing, charter schools and voucher programs.

Ravitch served as U.S. assistant secretary of education from 1991 to 1993, and was responsible for the Office

Group registration lowers conference costs

The OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show is quickly approaching. If your district is still undecided about attending, consider this great deal. OSBA is again offering a special group registration rate that reduces the per-person cost once seven or more individuals are registered. Six people can attend the conference for \$1,500; there is no charge beyond that for an unlimited number of additional registrants. That means your principals, food service directors, treasurer’s staff, transportation supervisors, curriculum coordinators and others can come for one day or the entire conference without any additional registration fees.



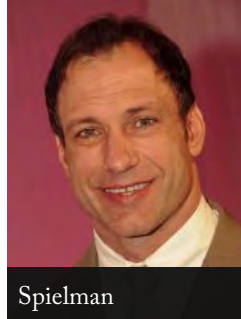
of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education. From 1997 to 2004, she was a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the federal testing program. From 1995 until 2005, she held the Brown Chair in Education Studies at the Brookings Institution and edited *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*.

A graduate of Houston public schools, Ravitch has lectured around the world. She is the author of numerous articles and books, including *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. She also blogs for *Education Week*, *Politico* and The Huffington Post.

Tuesday luncheon — Nov. 13

A two-time All-American and inductee to the College Football Hall of Fame, **Chris Spielman** is a Buckeye athlete Ohioans proudly remember. He was a football star at **Massillon City's** Washington High School, The Ohio State University and in the NFL. Now an ESPN college football analyst, he retired from the NFL to care for his wife, **Stefanie**, who lost her 12-year battle with cancer in 2009.

Other than being a dedicated father of four children, perhaps the job Spielman takes most seriously is his role as a warrior in the fight against cancer. He and his wife formed The Stefanie Spielman Fund for Breast Cancer Research in 1999 and have raised more than \$10 million for



Spielman



photo credit: Richard Termine

The Capitol Steps

cancer research. Spielman remains committed to his wife's legacy of hope and finding a cure for cancer. His recent memoir, *That's Why I'm Here: The Chris and Stefanie Spielman Story*, tells his story of family, faith and perseverance. It describes how some of the biggest challenges he has faced in life weren't on the football field.

Third General Session — Nov. 14

Inspired by the motto, "We put the 'mock' in democracy," the Washington-based comedy troupe The Capitol Steps is in top form during presidential election years. Members draw on experience working on Capitol Hill to craft sidesplitting satire. Although some of the current members have not worked with Congress, the combined cast has worked in 18 congressional offices and represents more than 60 years of collective House and Senate staff experience.

These astute political observers cast a sharp eye on current events in the Oval Office, on Capitol Hill and in other centers of power, and turn them into hilarious comedy and musical skits. The troupe has recorded dozens of albums, including "Take the Money and Run for President." Members of the group have appeared on "Good Morning America," "The Today Show," "Nightline" and National Public Radio's "All Things Considered."

For more Capital Conference information, visit www.ohioschoolboards.org/2012-capital-conference or call OSBA. ■

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Workers' comp: What board members need to know

Van D. Keating, director of management services

For school board members in Ohio, workers' compensation often is a difficult subject to master. Relatively few board members have had any personal experiences with the workers' compensation system from the claims side, and even fewer from the employer's side.

Workers' compensation has its own unique set of laws and rules, as well as a distinct state administrative agency. As employers, school districts must continually pay into it, yet only some employees ever seem to receive any benefit from it. So, what is it all about, what choices do we have and why is OSBA even talking about it?

Before any of these questions can be answered, there are some very basic points to cover. The main theory about why workers' compensation exists is fairly easy to understand. If you, as an employer, have an employee injured at work, he or she would suffer some loss as a result. The injury would need to be treated immediately, as well as long-term.

If the employee could not work because of the injury, that staff member would have to exhaust leave of some type to keep his or her job. But if the employee ran out of leave, he or she would most likely lose the job due to not being healthy enough to return to work and having no other time off. Some employees also would lose pay while they were off. All of this simply because the employee suffered an accident and/or injury at work. Of course, the employee's remedy for the loss would most likely be to sue the employer, which gets costly and messy. Here's where workers' compensation steps in.

All workers' compensation systems in this country are created by state, not federal, governments, so each system varies considerably from state to state. All are premised on the idea that if employees get injured at work, rather than seeing the courts flooded with claims, a state system processes, adjusts and pays for the injuries. Such a system is in both the employers' and employees' interests. In Ohio, injured workers cannot go straight to court for injuries

suffered in the workplace. They must file a claim through the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC), which the state established to manage this process.

Much like the Ohio Department of Education, BWC has its own specific laws and regulations that can be difficult to understand and navigate. However, the main point school board members need to be aware of is that all Ohio employers are initially divided into two categories: private and public sectors.

Workers' compensation programs can benefit both employers and employees alike, but board members need to be sure they are selecting the best program for their school district.

Ohio's public schools are classified as public sector, but it is important to note that the rules and costs differ significantly between the two sectors, and what happens in one does not necessarily have any bearing on the other. Furthermore, within each sector, employers are grouped together in what are referred to as "industries." In our school industry, libraries and two-year colleges also are included. This plays a large part in determining your rate or how much your district pays into the system.

OSBA became involved in this system some time ago when BWC started to allow sponsors to group their member employers to achieve better rates. The various industries had numerous related associations that performed services for their members. One such service, as far as BWC was concerned, was the ability to pool the various members into groups (based on factors such as size, payroll, number of claims, cost of claims and other factors), much like health

insurance pools. With judicious grouping, sponsors could then reduce workers' compensation costs for their members, and OSBA did just that as a service to its members. To manage this rather complicated process, sponsors hired third-party administrators (TPAs), which also are governed by BWC rules and regulations, to some degree.

Over time, the workers' compensation process has evolved. So have the various programs offered by sponsors and their TPAs. A couple of years ago, OSBA and the Ohio Association of School Business Officials merged their separate programs into one jointly sponsored program. CompManagement Inc. was selected as the program's TPA.

This very comprehensive program, known as SchoolComp, offers school districts choices among group savings programs, group retro programs and self-insurance. Unemployment services, safety training and managed care for recovering employees also are included in SchoolComp's offerings. Since Ohio's school districts select workers' compensation programs annually, boards must continually take action on joining workers' compensation programs.

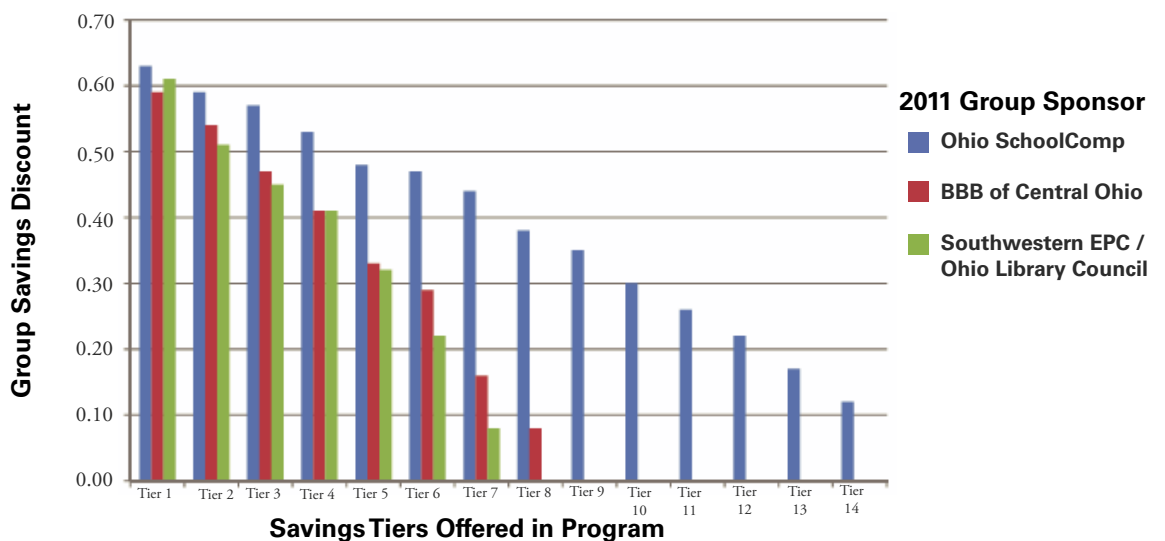
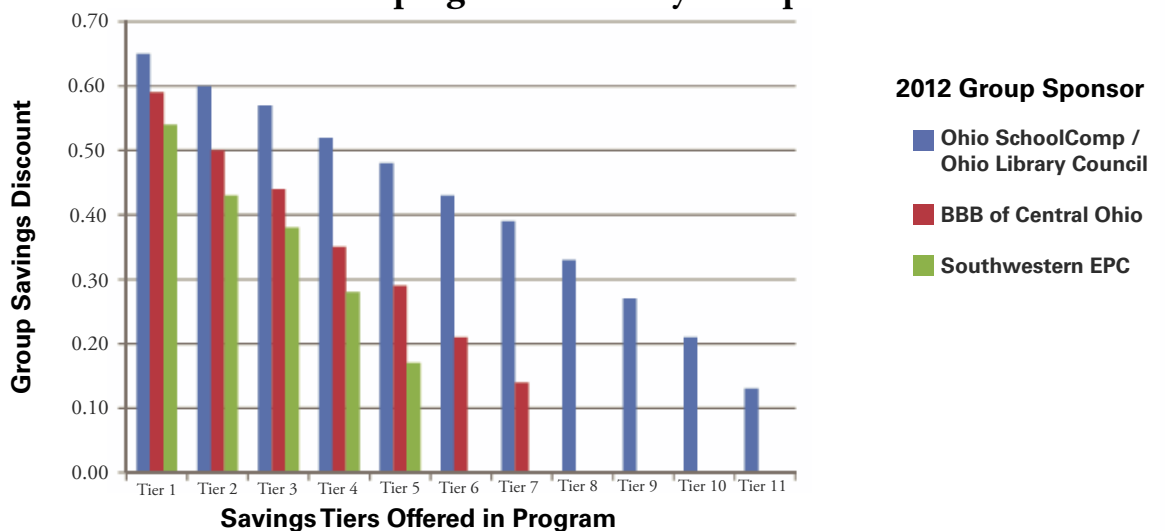
To any school board member, these choices can seem daunting and confusing. Most districts make their choice by relying on recommendations from their treasurer or business manager, who typically receive multiple offers (or invitations) from the various TPAs and sponsors. Unfortunately, these offers vary in content and clarity, so making apples to apples comparisons and selecting the

best program isn't easy. As a sponsoring organization, OSBA receives many questions on workers' compensation, how to select a program and to what extent board members should be involved in the process.

To answer these questions as succinctly as possible, programs should be selected based on which saves the district the most money and which program's TPA delivers the best and most consistent performance. For individual school districts, costs are normally considered in terms of fees paid to both BWC (premiums) and its TPA (administrative fees). In reality, administrative fees are much less important than actual savings from participating in a program.

Also, it is important to analyze the track record of the various program sponsors and TPAs. Invitations are marketing materials, but mean nothing unless the savings promised are actually delivered. All too often TPAs promise inflated

School programs' accuracy and options



Data source: Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation Public Information Requests, Feb. 2011 and Feb. 2012



savings to lure districts into their programs and then deliver far less savings. Be sure to check last year's invitations to see who did exactly what they said they would do.

OSBA has long been an advocate of board members macromanaging rather than micromanaging school districts. Boards employ vast numbers of administrators, teachers and support personnel to run day-to-day school district operations, and boards need to resist managing these affairs.

As mentioned, your district's administrators will usually bring a recommendation for a workers' compensation TPA to the board for action. However, board members need some assurance that they understand exactly what

they are voting on and are able to ask informed questions and receive informative answers. Therefore, we asked CompManagement Inc. to develop a short worksheet for board members to use when evaluating workers' compensation recommendations (*shown below*).

Whether or not your district participates in the SchoolComp program, every board member is encouraged to fill out this worksheet prior to joining any program. Similarly, a graph is also shown on page 37 that helps illustrate exactly why we believe our SchoolComp program should serve as the benchmark when comparing programs. Schools need — and demand — accuracy when it comes to accounting for their funds, and that is one of the focus points of our program, along with having a place for each and every public school district in our program offerings.

Dealing with a workers' compensation program is challenging, but OSBA has tried to make it as simple as possible for its members. Carefully review invitations to join programs based on past performance, accuracy and savings. Don't micromanage as board members, but verify recommendations and clearly understand what program your district is selecting and why.

Political allegiances don't always save money, nor do exaggerated promises of savings. Low administrative costs pale in comparison to savings, but savings need to be accurately projected. Obtain and review as many offers as you can using our simple evaluation form. Use the SchoolComp program as the benchmark for schools in Ohio. Workers' compensation programs can benefit both employers and employees alike, but board members need to be sure they are selecting the best program for their school district. ■

Group rating enrollment checklist

Who is the program sponsor? _____

Are you an existing member of the sponsoring organization (BWC requires that you be a member of the sponsoring organization to be enrolled in their group program)?	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

• If no, what are the membership requirements / dues?

What services are included in the enrollment fee?	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
• Actuarial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Claims Administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Hearing Representation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Unemployment Compensation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How many districts were enrolled in the program last year?

How many districts are currently enrolled in the program?

What discount percentage was quoted last year and how did that compare to the actual discount percentage? _____



A partner in your success

Strength in numbers, success in partnership

Amanda Finney, senior marketing coordinator

Consider this simple math problem. What does 6 plus 711 plus 850 equal? The answer is simple. The numbers add up to the strength and success of OSBA's Division of School Board Services serving hundreds of boards of education and their districts.

A breakdown in these numbers showcases the division's strengths and experience:

- 6 — the number of OSBA experts serving in the school board services division committed to helping board members succeed;
- 711 — that's how many meetings OSBA consultants have led in service to school districts;
- 850+ — The number of successful executive searches conducted by OSBA.

Since 1955, OSBA's primary focus has been serving board members with outstanding services. By working with OSBA, your district can be confident of partnering with the best.

The Division of School Board Services offers superior services, including executive searches, strategic planning, superintendent/treasurer evaluations, customized workshops and ESC Leadership Academies. In addition, the division has added a few new items to its suite of offerings. Following are the new services OSBA has designed to promote school board success.

Board meeting assessment service

Since the only time school boards can conduct official business is during their meetings, that precious time must be focused on vital school affairs to ensure effective decision making. Effective

meetings provide a variety of benefits to the entire school community.

This new service:

- improves the board's ability to raise its performance level,
- focuses board members' attention on vital matters,
- decreases the time the board spends on small administrative issues,
- encourages qualified people to serve on the board since they can see members' time is valued.

An OSBA school board services consultant will observe your board meeting and provide feedback that will help you conduct district business more effectively and efficiently. The summary report will come to you from the outside looking in and include analysis in the following areas:

- agenda format,
- the board table and room arrangement,
- making the most of recognitions,
- managing public participation,
- board interactions and team dynamics,
- board reports,
- dealing with hot topics,
- communication.

School safety and security service

School safety issues have always been an important focus and will continue to remain so with the ever-changing school climate. OSBA recognizes that districts need to have accurate and up-to-date safety information. Therefore, the association has created a new service for members to help fill this need.

The safety and security service offers

several options to help districts stay updated on school safety, including:

- Comprehensive school safety and security assessment — Designed for building administrators and superintendents, this workshop assesses the number of required and/or needed processes of data gathering. This evaluative tool focuses on existing safety hazards throughout district buildings, enabling administrators to develop a comprehensive plan to address safety needs.
- Development and in-service of school security personnel — This workshop benefits districts whether they have their own security personnel or law enforcement working in schools. Professional development in the areas of safety can be customized to your district's needs.
- School safety awareness seminar for the community — This three-hour seminar is presented to staff, parents, community leaders, police and fire officials, and community members. The content focuses on creating a safe school environment.
- School safety awareness seminar for district personnel — This three-hour workshop can be modified to fit any time period and will discuss the myriad threats facing students and staff.

To learn more about these workshops, please refer to the article on page 44.

Put these valuable services to work for your district today by contacting the Division of School Board Services at (800) 589-OSBA or (614) 540-4000. We're always ready to serve you! ■

Polaris program provides



Instructor Rod Munn coaches students as they “fly” over Cleveland on flight simulators. Munn taught the Cleared for Takeoff class during Polaris Career Center’s Camp Discovery summer program in June.

Innovative summer camp enriches students, serves as a marketing tool

Most kids were savoring their first days of summer vacation in early June. But at **Polaris Career Center**, more than 200 youngsters were heading back to school for the sixth annual Camp Discovery.

Billed as a way to “supercharge your summer,” the innovative program at the Cuyahoga County career-tech campus offers students four days of career exploration and enrichment. Polaris instructors and several outside professionals led classes

in topics ranging from aviation, automotive technology, electrical engineering and carpentry to law enforcement, culinary arts, robotics and more. In many classes, Polaris juniors and seniors assisted the instructors.

The camp is open to students entering grades seven through 10. Tuition is \$50 per class, and students can attend one morning class, one afternoon class or one of each. Attendance has grown each year since the program started.

career previews

*Gary Motz,
managing editor*

“Camp Discovery offers many benefits,” said **Jan Belz**, coordinator of community partnerships. “As a former career development coordinator, I’m always thinking about how students can make good, informed decisions about possible careers.”

“Some students know what they want to do in the fourth grade; others don’t know until they’re in college. By providing this program in the summer, it gives them a little snapshot of careers, a chance to see what they might like or not like.”

In addition to giving students a sneak peek at career options, Camp Discovery serves as a recruiting tool for the school. Kids become comfortable in the building and get to know the teachers.

“It benefits Polaris because it provides an awareness of our school, an awareness of our programs,” Belz said. “In that way, it’s a marketing effort for the career center.”

“We’ve found that a lot of students who take these summer classes end up being our students here at Polaris,” said Career Specialist **Debby Kennedy**. “It’s a good lead-in for them. It lets them get their feet wet and get a feel for the school and meet the instructors.”

Ed Yager teaches Explore the World of Trons, a beginning electronics class. His students learned the basics of electricity by building telegraphs and electric motors. Yager also teaches a class on robotics. Prior to becoming a Polaris teacher he was an electrical engineer with LTV Steel.

“Both of my Camp Discovery classes are STEM oriented — science, technology, engineering and math,” Yager said. “We use hands-on learning. We want to engage them, as well as do some career exploration, and we want them to have fun while doing it.”

“We start with the basics of electricity and go from there all the way to robotics. So we’re teaching electronics, controls, sensors, programming. It’s all about how to solve problems.”

One of Yager’s students was **Noah Broski**, an eighth-grader at **Olmsted Falls City**. This was Noah’s second year at Camp Discovery. The robotics students built small Lego vehicles and

programmed them to negotiate tabletop courses.

“My favorite part about working with the robotics is the programming, because it requires a lot of mental visualizing,” he said during a break from class. “You have to visualize things from different angles. It also helps you with math, because you have to figure out the programming grid to set the sensors. If it doesn’t work right, you have to reprogram it.”

In Mini Police Academy, students learned the requirements to become a police officer and participated in law enforcement training activities. Under the guidance of Polaris Criminal Justice Instructor **Jeff Traine**, they tried their hand at unarmed self-defense, traffic control, clocking speeders with radar and radio protocol.

Taking law enforcement into the investigative realm is what instructor **Stacey Wisniewski**, a former science teacher, does in her CSI: Crime Scene Investigators class. The focus in CSI is on forensics, and students investigated several “crime scenes” in a wooded area adjacent to the school.

They examined plaster casts of footprints made the day before,



Instructor Herb Baker guides a student as he cuts a piece of wood in Tool Time class. Students were building miniature picnic tables that served as condiment holders.



Students construct a telegraph system in Explore the World of Trons, an electronics class.

observed simulated blood splatter patterns created with “blood balloons” and monitored a large piece of raw chicken that had been tied to a tree two days earlier.

“The flies are swarming all over the chicken, but there’s no maggots!” one boy shouted across the woods during the outside session.

“Look inside it,” Wisniewski yelled back, but no one seemed interested in delving deeper into the decaying bird.

Standing next to the fly-infested chicken, North Olmsted City student **Nathan Mulgrew** explained the experiment.

“Insects are a key part in investigating a crime scene,” Mulgrew said. “Flies and insects and maggots can help detectives see how long a body has been there.”

Strongsville City eighth-grader **Krissy Pack** said she was drawn to the CSI class by her love of forensics shows on TV. Her favorite is “NCIS.”

“We’ve been talking a lot about forensics and about how real-life crime investigations are different from the TV shows,” Pack said. “We’ve also been learning about fingerprints and how to do footprint castings.”

“I like science. I really like the logic behind it.”

The automotive technology class, Start Your Engine, is taught by 29-year Polaris veteran **Bob Yuravak**. Again, the curriculum is

basic, but the learning is hands-on and engaging.

“Besides helping them understand our industry a little better, I also teach them things that they’ll take home,” Yuravak said. “For example, how do you check the oil in your parents’ car? How do you check the air pressure in their tires? How do you know when the tires need to be rotated? I also teach them to look for hidden body damage, which can help them when they go to buy a car.”

“Camp Discovery is a great chance for kids to experience industries that they might never have had contact with. It gives them an introduction to careers and a better idea about them.”

In **Rod Munn’s** Cleared for Takeoff class, students study the principles of flight, aerodynamics and navigation, and take turns “piloting” planes on flight simulators.

“Once they understand the principles, they get hands-on experience with flight simulators, and they find out it’s quite another thing to apply those principles,” said Munn, founder of the consulting firm Aerospace Enterprises Inc. “They have to figure out why the aircraft is flying or why it is not flying. How do we navigate from one point to another when we can’t see where we are?”



A Polaris Mini Police Academy student is all business as he gets in some punches during a tactical boxing exercise at Camp Discovery.

“They’re getting very good exposure on all of the key instruments in virtually every airplane. They’ve learned about all the instruments necessary to help them navigate and fly.”

Other Camp Discovery classes include:

- Anatomy Academy — a course covering very basic nursing practices;
- Babysitter Boot Camp — focusing on essential child care skills;
- Create, Color and Animate — an art and design class using computer software;
- Kitchen Creations — students prepare tasty treats to share and take home;
- Jewelry Junction — students design and make several types of jewelry;
- Mini Makeover — a cosmetics and hair-styling course;
- Tool Time — a basic carpentry course using hand and power tools.

The students had nothing but good things to say about Camp Discovery and Polaris Career Center.

“This camp is a great head start on thinking about a career,” said CSI student Mulgrew. “I would recommend it to anybody. I’m hoping to attend here when I’m in high school.”

His fellow CSI student Pack was just as enthused.

“This has made me think about attending Polaris,” she said. “Everyone is very nice here and I like that in a school. It’s been really fun.”

Kitchen Creations student **Olivia Bongiovanni** was marking her second year at the camp. She attends middle school at Olmsted Falls City.

“I enjoy getting to be creative and actually have freedom to work in the kitchen, put food together and see your creation,” Bongiovanni said. “I want to come back next year to Camp Discovery and attend Polaris later.”

The instructors were no less enthusiastic about the summer camp.

“I like seeing the excitement in the kids faces when they come back for another year,” automotive instructor Yuravak said. “And some of them enroll for my program here when they’re 16. They’ll come back and say, ‘I was in your summer program, do you remember me?’ It’s very rewarding.

“One of the young men who took my summer program came back to attend Polaris, finished my high school program and took sixth in the U.S. in an automotive competition. That was really rewarding.”

“We want to help kids discover Polaris, to discover our



Programming, design, and trial and error are all part of Camp Discovery’s robotics course. Students used creativity, logic and problem-solving skills to meet challenges, and learned STEM concepts along the way.

careers, to discover science, technology, engineering and mathematics,” electronics instructor Yager said. “Students get quite engaged when they see what we’re doing. Many of the students who go through summer camp end up coming to Polaris, either through my program or other programs. They know the instructors, they know the school and we just start right up.”

“My experience here at Camp Discovery has been great,” said Munn, the aviation instructor. “They are a really bright bunch of guys and girls, so it’s fascinating. In many ways, they are going to help us in the future, so it’s very important they get exposure to coming technologies.” ■

Editor’s notes

- Districts interested in learning more about Camp Discovery are invited to contact **Jan Belz** at jbelz@polaris.edu or (440) 891-7618, or **Debby Kennedy** at dkennedy@polaris.edu or (440) 891-7717.
- A video from OSBA’s June visit to Camp Discovery is posted at www.ohioschoolboards.org/polaris-video.



New OSBA service promotes school safety, security

OSBAs are launching a new service to help its members increase safety and security in their schools. It includes safety awareness seminars for staff and the community; school building safety and security assessments; and training for school security personnel.

Following are details on the different components of this new service OSBA is offering to help keep your students, staff, visitors and buildings safe and secure.

School safety awareness seminar for personnel

This three-hour workshop can be modified to almost any time frame. The honest and direct seminar will bring to light the myriad threats to students and staff. The session also will include an in-depth examination of a school's many vulnerabilities.

Hear and see firsthand, through documentary videos, what students are exposed to and the activities they engage in that are a threat to themselves and the entire school family.

Comprehensive school safety and security assessment

Designed with the building administrator and superintendent in mind, this assessment incorporates a number of required and/or needed processes and data gathering.

The assessment is led by a certified Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) assessor. An evaluative tool, CPTED examines existing safety hazards throughout an entire building. It allows for a post-evaluation meeting with key school personnel to review the results and enables the district to develop a comprehensive plan to address the needs.

It is important to note that the adults who work in our schools are vulnerable to the same safety risks as students. The assessment can provide valuable information that can help districts reduce the high cost of staff absences due to injury, as well as workers' compensation expenses.

The state of Ohio requires all schools to have a comprehensive emergency plan in place. The data

gathered from this assessment will prove invaluable to the development of quality plans. School districts also will have the comfort of knowing that a certified safety and security assessor gathered the information essential to developing the plan.

Community school safety awareness seminar

This seminar is geared toward parents, community leaders, community members, and police and fire personnel. It provides an outstanding opportunity to bring together everyone who is responsible for the safety of the community's children.

This session can serve as a terrific tool to engage the community and parents in creating safe schools. Including emergency first responders opens lines of communication that add even more depth and value to the safety and security discussion.

Developing and training school security personnel

Whether schools have their own security officers or sworn law enforcement personnel working in their schools, all need specialized attention for their own professional development. This in-service offering will be customized to the needs of each district. Potential topics include: understanding special-needs students; working with students and school staff; updates on the most recent school safety findings; and much, much more.

Dr. Richard J. Caster, senior school board services consultant, is leading OSBA's new school safety and security service. Prior to returning to OSBA last year, Caster served as an instructor and executive director for the National Association of School Resource Officers. This work took him across the country to talk with school-based law enforcement officers and school administrators on all matters of school safety and security.

Caster holds certifications with the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design program, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Ohio Peace Officers Training Commission. For more information, contact him at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or rcaster@ohioschoolboards.org. ■



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Visit www.ohioschoolboards.org/2012-capital-conference to learn more about the conference or download a registration form. Board members, superintendents and district staff should register through their treasurers.



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