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JOURNAL

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Learn how Mentor EV and other Ohio districts are taking new approaches to instruction.

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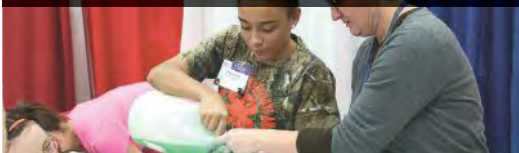
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OSBA leads the way to educational excellence by serving Ohio's public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.

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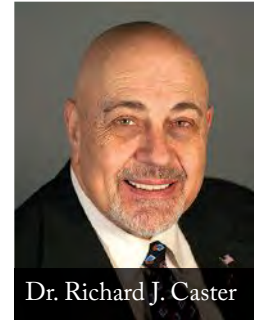
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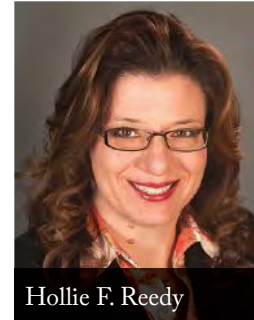
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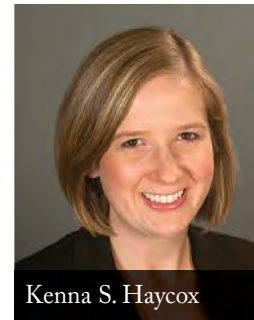
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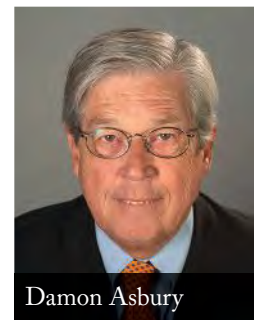
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Cindy Crowe lived her 'dash' to the fullest

Richard Lewis, CAE, executive director

During my 30 years at the Ohio School Boards Association, more than 12,000 school board members have completed their tours of duty as citizen servants.

By setting an example with their outstanding service, they knew their school districts would be in good hands with their successors. The great ones knew that leaders simply didn't create followers — they created future leaders with the vision and commitment to carry on.

On July 12, public education lost one of the great ones — a strong supporter, tireless advocate and dear friend. **Cindy Crowe**, a former **Westerville City Board of Education** member, passed away at the age of 50. She left behind a loving family, a grateful community and an indebted OSBA, which she served in myriad ways. We all are stronger from knowing her, yet greatly saddened by our collective loss.

She is not the first school board member to be taken from this world far too soon; unexpected illness and tragedy have taken many community leaders. This year, we also have lost veteran board members **Niklaus Amstutz, Boardman Local (Mahoning); Don E. Carpenter, Barnesville EV; and Timothy Meyer, Wood County ESC**, among others. These outstanding people and those who passed before them touched countless individuals, bettered their communities and profoundly changed lives.

Crowe's passing reinforces the difference a school board member can make in this world. In many ways, her story epitomizes the spirit of paying forward

that is synonymous with school board service. It is a story worth sharing.

What matters long after you are gone is what you did in your dash.

Crowe was like many board members you know and respect. She served her district and community with an unwavering commitment and energetic zeal for nearly 14 years. Then her world turned upside down. In March 2013, she was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), more commonly known as **Lou Gehrig's disease**. There is no known cure, and the disease cruelly claims 80% of its victims within five

years.

When she received the devastating news, Crowe addressed the question of her board seat by insisting, "I have no intention of leaving until I can't speak any more, because education is so important to me."

True to her word, she ably served on the school board until May of this year. She also continued her public service work on causes important to her, such as the Rotary club, the Westerville Chamber of Commerce Education Committee and the Westerville Education Challenge, which raises money and coordinates the Challenge Day anti-bullying program in the district's high schools.

In addition to her steadfast devotion to public education, she did everything she

Administrative salary analysis

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could to bring hope to others with ALS. She participated in research studies seeking to find a cure. She teamed up with patients and families touched by the disease to form a foundation called Crowe-Wentzel “Winning the ALS Fight.” While her voice might have been silenced, her words spread far beyond Westerville. For example, seniors at Westerville’s cross-county rival, **Olentangy Local (Delaware)**, promoted ALS awareness, and a boys volleyball team “volleyed” against the disease.

Crowe told her local newspaper the blessing in disguise that came with the diagnosis was the outpouring of love and support from people in the community, some of whom were strangers.

“What it’s brought out is beautiful people who have been connected with the disease that have become my friends,” she said. “I love that and,

hopefully, we can work to make a difference.”

In the end, she lost her courageous battle nearly 75 years to the day that New York Yankee Gehrig delivered his famous “luckiest man on the face of the Earth” farewell speech before more than 60,000 fans in Yankee Stadium. Crowe would have made the same speech.

Her colleague, former Westerville City board member **Rick Bannister**, recalled some impressive figures associated with her time on the board:

- 49,000 — how many times a Westerville resident voted for Crowe to continue her board service;
- 21,000 — the number of graduates Crowe greeted, spoke with, addressed or hugged at a high school commencement;
- 70,000 — the number of children Crowe directly advocated for over the past 14 years.

This courageous woman should not be remembered for how she died, but how she lived. Every tombstone is a testimony to an individual who was very special to someone. We tend to look at the dates on these markers. But what’s more important is what’s between those dates. It’s called your “dash.”

What matters long after you are gone is what you did during your dash. Who did you help? How did you make an impact in this world? In short, how did you use your dash? Think of your best vacation. You probably don’t remember the dates you left and returned. But you do remember what you did. You remember the camping, the baseball games, the road trip, the family. You remember the good stuff, your dash.

As board members, you can’t control everything in your district, so focus on what you can control. Make the most of your limited time by living your dash to the fullest — just like Cindy Crowe. ■

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Message sent, but was message received?

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

“I am responsible for everything I say. However, I am not responsible for what you understand.”

When first introduced to this saying, I found it very intriguing. It was posted as a caption following the name of a board member in his email. After some thoughtful reflection, I concluded that those of us serving in a leadership capacity wish this were true, but it is not realistic.

School boards must continually find ways to communicate with their various communities and cultures, remembering that not everyone is comfortable with the same delivery system. To do that effectively, board members must take the time and effort to find out how those different communities and cultures wish to receive information about their schools.

The issue here is how is the district’s message being delivered? Most of us use the direct and inexpensive means of email. To many of our constituents, that is a well-accepted vehicle.

However, to many, the printed word is still critical. Does your district meet those individuals’ needs through newsletters and other printed materials?

We live in a world that demands individualization. That may seem to be an almost narcissistic attitude, but it is a reality. Boards must be sensitive to this, while at the same time trying not to be all things to all people.

With all the technology available, do not forget the power of face-to-face communication. Taking board meetings

“on the road” is an old idea that is sometimes forgotten. When you decide to move meetings away from the board office, think beyond the boundaries of your schools. Is there a civic center or other facility the community frequently uses? If so, approach those responsible for its operation and see if they would be willing to host a board of education meeting. Schools are your turf; this is an attempt to meet the community on its turf.

The point here is to not assume the language of education is a common language — it is far from it.

Once we believe we are delivering the message in a variety of suitable formats, it’s time to focus on effectively wording the message. Education is no different than any other profession — we have our own language and thousands of acronyms. “School board studies OTEs while simultaneously studying the district’s CAFR.” What does this mean to our readers?

Taken at face value, it means absolutely nothing; it’s a foreign language to most people. Would it be that difficult to state, “School board studies Ohio Teacher Evaluation System while simultaneously studying the district’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report?” With the many concerns over fiscal responsibility, the word “financial” will spur much more interest than expecting readers to search for the

definition of OTEs and CAFR, which most will not do.

As a school district leader, how often have you heard the accusation, “You do not communicate with us?” What often lies behind that critical statement is an attitude of, “I don’t like your answer so, therefore, you are not communicating.”

Do not fall into this trap. It is not unusual for community members to “shop” for the answer they want. They will contact different board members, trying to find discrepancies in the answers they get. If one board member does not give them the answer they want, they will go to another board member and another and another trying to get that answer.

This is when the superintendent becomes critical to the integrity and honesty of the board and district. Most questions or complaints can be explained or answered in board policy. The superintendent and his or her staff deal with board policy every day. Take advantage of their expertise by listening to constituent concerns and then referring them to the superintendent. This assures an informed and legitimate response.

The point here is to not assume the language of education is a common language — it is far from it. Take total responsibility for what you say, while also taking some responsibility for what your community understands. Accept the fact that your employees are far better versed in the daily routine and policies that drive the district. Your position as board member is to ensure the adequate implementation of those practices and policies. ■



A look at what's new on crisis planning, the MBR

Hollie F. Reedy, chief legal counsel

I'm part of the first generation of kids that had personal computers in their homes. My parents, both educators, bought an Apple IIe in the early 1980s for their kids. We were so excited. It was hard to use, slow and I still remember how the screen would gradually render pictures from video games on floppy disks.

Today, I'm still excited about technology and video games. If you aren't a video gamer, you might not be familiar with the fact that programmers and game designers sometimes hide things for gamers to find in their games. They are called "Easter eggs."

The midbiennium budget review (MBR) could, if you can look at it with a positive attitude, be viewed as a large video game in which one of your objectives is to find the Easter eggs in the voluminous legislation. I looked through the provisions and will share some of the details. OSBA is reviewing the entire bill and incorporating its changes into policy and developing resources to share with districts. I also will share some of what I learned about school safety at a recent Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) event, because the questions asked are worth taking back to every district.

Planning for after-school crises

At the Safe Schools Summit, an OHSAA event co-sponsored by OSBA and other education associations in June, one question was: "What is your plan if a crisis event happens after school?"

It's a simple question with many layers. Districts probably have very good plans for responding to issues that might occur

during the school day — a medical emergency for students or staff; domestic violence incident or custody dispute; bomb threat; building fire; and tornado or other weather incident. You might have a plan, but is it specific enough? Do enough people know and understand it? Have the people who may be called upon to implement the plan practiced it to see if it can be successfully executed?

OHSAA Commissioner Dr. **Daniel B. Ross** recounted a story of a student athlete who experienced a medical emergency at a practice. The coach sent two students to open the gate for an ambulance, but when they got to the gate it was locked and they did not have the key. The automated external defibrillator (AED) also was locked in an office.

This is an example of the critical details that need to be worked through before a crisis happens. Teach students and staff where the AED is, ensure there is access to it and let people know that the machine practically walks you through the steps needed to use it. When confronted with an emergency, people sometimes freeze. Practicing the plan gives people a concrete map that can help them remember the steps needed to act decisively.

Think about the after-school activities in your buildings: meetings, athletic events, clubs, students visiting from other schools, musical performances, senior citizen activities and more. Most districts probably have thought about the most common issues, but what about an active shooter, bomb threat, mentally ill parent, fight or out-of-control individual?

The public address announcer for your events is not just a cheerleader for the school — he or she is an important part of the district's crisis response plan. The announcer should be prepared and know how to announce evacuation plans and give information that will prevent mass panic and injuries. Announcing, "There is a bomb threat, please evacuate the building" is a prime example of what *not* to say.

Plan, train and practice evacuation drills with your public address people. At events, walk through an evacuation drill with attendees early in the season and remind people periodically via your public address system where the exits are and how to evacuate. Have your staff trained to step to the doors, open them and help people evacuate safely. Staff members should know their assigned sections and scan them throughout each event.

Ross asked coaches and athletic directors to devote at least 15 minutes every season, for every sport at every grade level, to practice an emergency medical response and evacuation for both attendees and athletes. A walkthrough of the plan for each type of emergency can make a critical, life-saving difference when a crisis occurs. From a legal perspective, working out your plans and practicing them shows the district is taking its duty to train and supervise students seriously and is competently carrying out that duty.

Changes to school safety plans

The MBR legislation changes the term used for school safety plans to "emergency management plan." Significant changes to the statute, Ohio Revised Code (RC) 3313.536, include requiring districts

(including JVSDs and ESCs) to submit their emergency management plans to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). The department is required by RC 3313.536(F) to develop rules on the plans, including their content and procedures for submitting them to ODE. The plans must be submitted on standardized forms developed by ODE. They must include a floor plan for each floor of the building; a site plan for the building and surrounding property; an emergency contact sheet; and protocols for addressing serious threats and responding to emergency events compromising the safety of students, employees or property. Protocols for addressing serious threats and emergencies must include procedures for notifying law enforcement, calling emergency response personnel and contacting parents.

Plans must be submitted to ODE once every three years, whenever a building modification has been made requiring changes in procedures or whenever emergency contact information changes. Prior to July 1 each year, the superintendent must certify to ODE that he or she has reviewed the plan and that it is accurate. The plan also must be filed with each law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the building.

ODE also will supply requirements and procedures for the annual emergency management tests that need to be conducted. The emergency management tests referred to are defined as "... a regularly scheduled drill, exercise or activity designed to assess and evaluate an emergency management plan." They are specifically exempted from public records law.

The superintendent is responsible for developing and submitting the plans. The statute provides that failure to comply with the provision can result in licensure discipline for the superintendent and/or principal. The superintendent is required to involve community law enforcement and safety officials, parents of students assigned to the building, and teaching and

nonteaching employees assigned to the building. This language probably is more in the nature of "in consultation with" as the plans are developed. For buildings with documented safety problems, the law now requires "remediation strategies" to be incorporated into the plan for that building.

Before school begins, the district must notify students' parents of the notification procedures that would be used in an emergency. Stay tuned for more information on the rules that ODE will develop.

Extracurricular participation in public school by charter school students

The budget bill extended a right for charter school students to participate in extracurricular activities in the public

district they otherwise would be entitled to attend and at the school to which the superintendent would assign them. Students must be at the appropriate age and grade level to participate in extracurricular activities and meet the same eligibility requirements (academic, nonacademic and financial) as any other student. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) schools also are included in the extracurricular activities revisions.

Schools may offer participation to charter or STEM school students who are not entitled to attend the school district if the school in which the student is enrolled does not offer that activity and it is not interscholastic athletics or interscholastic contests or events in music, drama or forensics (RC 3313.537).

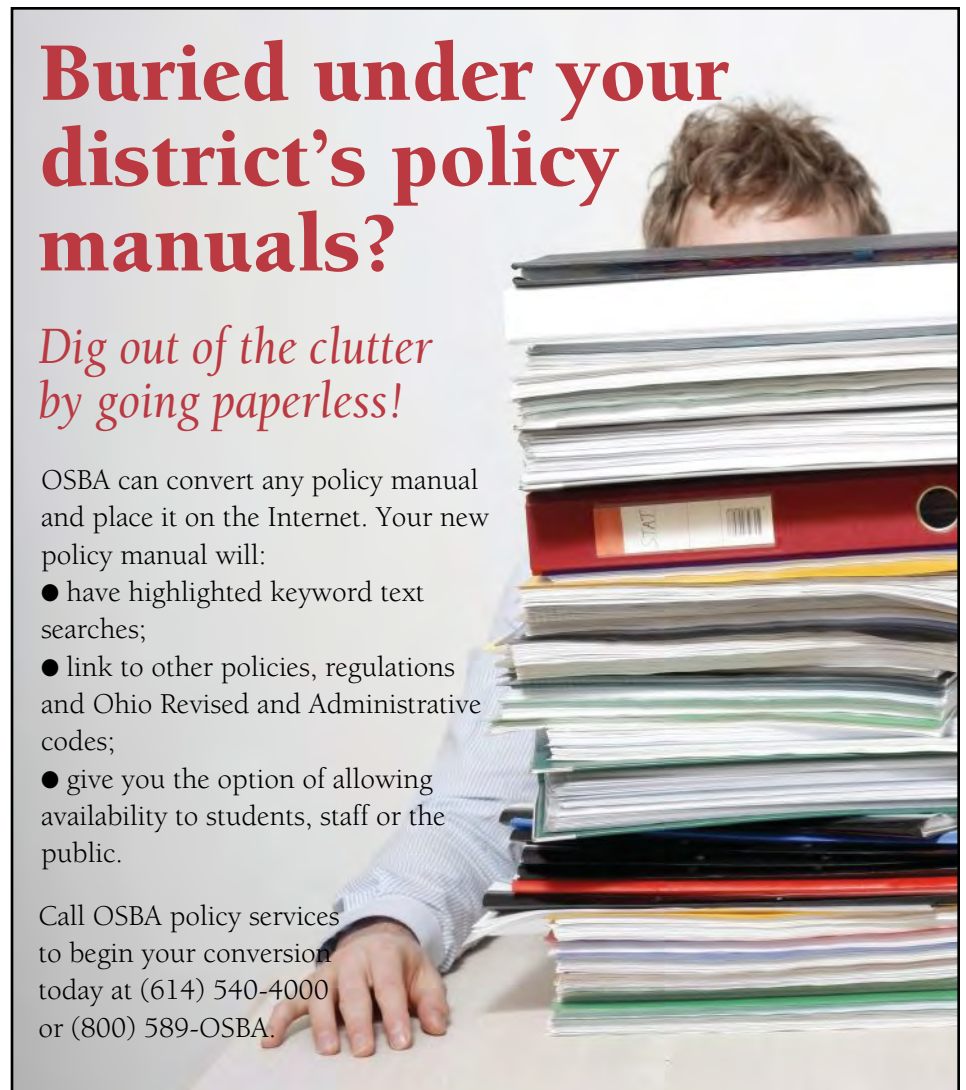
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Districts may not impose additional rules that do not apply to other students participating in the activity.

College Credit Plus and Postsecondary Enrollment Options

Ohio's Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program has been extensively revised and will become the College Credit Plus (CC+) program. These changes will be discussed in a new OSBA fact sheet, but for now, a review of the uncodified law sections of the budget bill reveals information school board members and administrators should know.

The first is that Section 6 of the uncodified law provides that the PSEO program will stay as it is for the 2014-15 school year, with all rules remaining in effect. When the budget bill becomes effective, ODE and the Ohio Board of Regents will adopt rules and guidelines and create forms and documents to make CC+ fully operational in the

2015-16 school year.

All students who are enrolled in or have taken action to enroll in PSEO during the 2014-15 school year will continue under that program for the school year and any agreement entered into between schools and colleges will likewise continue. ODE will make all payments it is obligated to pay for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years.

Your source for legal information

If you would like to obtain legal information from the OSBA legal division, please call. OSBA attorneys are actively licensed and represent OSBA; however, we are ethically prohibited from representing OSBA members, which means we may not render legal advice, write opinion letters for members or represent you in a hearing or other proceeding.

But, it is part of our mission to share up-to-date legal information and our

considerable education law resources with you. Don't worry about whether your question requires legal information or legal advice; OSBA lawyers know when to refer you to district counsel or give you a referral to an attorney practicing school law who is a member of the Ohio Council of School Board Attorneys.

Creating a connection with OSBA's legal division can provide many day-to-day benefits. The division has a Web page on the association website offering 17 fact sheets, FAQs, articles and links to further information, including tool kits on frequently requested topics, like criminal background checks, board vacancies and the Sunshine Law. ■

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Managing social media through board policy

Kenna S. Haycox, policy consultant

Social media is one of many innovative tools districts are using to increase student achievement and enhance community engagement. You are likely familiar with the do's and don'ts of social media, but here are some considerations from a policy standpoint.

Your district probably does not have a stand-alone social media policy, but many of your current policies can be applied to social media use. As your teachers use social media tools for collaboration and engagement with students, it is important to ensure appropriate expectations for conduct are in place.

OSBA recommends addressing these interactions in the board policy dealing with staff-student relations. The language should state that using social media tools created for curricular or extracurricular purposes is not prohibited and, in fact, encouraged. However, make clear that fraternization between district staff and students through personal social networking sites is prohibited.

It also is recommended that districts include a statement emphasizing that staff members are prohibited from posting data, documents, photographs or inappropriate information that might disrupt classroom activities. Establishing guidelines helps teachers and students understand expectations and encourages them to focus on using social media in a way that will benefit the curricular and cocurricular purposes it is designed for.

As you look at using social media accounts for the district or a particular school, establish clear guidelines and

expectations for who is responsible for updating these accounts. One consideration is to look at board policy addressing news releases. Usually, the established procedure is that building principals speak on topics impacting their schools, the superintendent speaks on behalf of the district and the board president speaks for the board. Consider applying these procedures to social media.

Posting on behalf of the district should be the responsibility of the superintendent or board president, based on the topic. The superintendent may choose to delegate the responsibility of posting the information to another staff member, but the superintendent would develop the content. Other board members or administrators may comment on or suggest ideas for posts, but clear guidelines and expectations help districts effectively communicate with stakeholders.

Another place to look for guidance in your board policy manual is the section covering district websites. While this may not address social media specifically, once again the principles on expectations for conduct, updates and other issues can be applied to social media.

Districts also need to understand there could be public records implications. If social media content meets the definition of a public record in state law, it must be retained in accordance with the district records retention schedule. Once you determine it constitutes a public record, you must find out if the information or social media content duplicates information kept elsewhere, such as in a press release or meeting minutes. If the content is a duplicate, it can be

considered a secondary copy and does not need to be maintained in accordance with the records retention schedule.

If you determine the social media content *is* the official public record, it must be retained in accordance with the records retention schedule. Identify the type of record the information is and determine if it can be integrated into an existing retention schedule. If the content cannot be linked to an existing schedule, a new one should be created and approved. You may consider addressing social media content in your records retention policy to clearly communicate this content needs to be evaluated to determine if it is a public record.

For many of us, social media is so much a part of our everyday lives that when we consider using it at work, it is tempting to approach it in the same way we would our personal social media accounts. However, not properly managing these sites can lead to communication issues and potential public records problems for a district. We wouldn't write business emails the same way as an email to a friend or family member; the same should be true when using district social media sites. A professional, structured approach is necessary.

Begin by reviewing board policies that address communications with the public, records retention and staff-student relations. You may be surprised at what policies and procedures already are in place that can be applied to social media. Understanding how current policies and procedures can be used with social media can help you more effectively and efficiently manage this valuable form of communication and collaboration. ■

Advocacy drove positive changes to OTES bill

Damon Asbury, director of legislative services

The legislative process is usually relatively straightforward: a bill is introduced, hearings are held, the bill is voted out of committee, either as introduced or amended, and then approved by the full chamber. The approved bill is then forwarded to the other chamber, where a similar process of hearings, amendments and approval is followed. Once approved by both chambers, the bill goes to the governor for signature and it becomes law.

However, the pathway of the most recent legislation on teacher evaluation illustrates that it is not always so simple

and straightforward. The process for this legislation illuminates what can happen when the Senate and House have markedly different opinions and how those differences can ultimately be resolved. It also highlights how ongoing, organized advocacy can help create and move desired legislation forward.

The new Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) came into being through legislation included in the two most recent budget bills, House Bill (HB) 153 in the 129th General Assembly and HB 59 in the 130th General Assembly. Both bills were sponsored by

Rep. **Ron Amstutz** (R-Wooster). The general intent of the legislation was to improve teacher evaluation and enhance accountability for student performance. There were some concerns expressed during the legislative process, but OTES became law and districts have been engaged in the new evaluation system for the past two years.

In September, Sen. **Randy Gardner** (R-Bowling Green) convened a meeting of constituents in his Senate district — superintendents, treasurers and school board members, along with representatives of the statewide education management associations — to hear firsthand about issues and concerns surrounding recent education reforms. The meeting was well attended by those in the district, as well as by staff from OSBA, the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) and the Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO).

One issue that received significant attention during the meeting was the amount of time and resources demanded by the new teacher evaluation system, as well as issues related to the proportionate weight of student growth measures to be included in the system. Subsequently, Gardner, working with ideas generated by the attendees and supported by the associations, introduced Senate Bill (SB) 229 in November.

The bill was intended to reduce the cost of implementing OTES by easing administrative requirements and limiting the number of required evaluations for teachers rated as “accomplished” or “skilled.” The bill, as introduced, also proposed reducing the proportion of the

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evaluation based on student performance from 50% to 35%.

SB 229 was favorably received by Senate Education Committee Chair Sen. **Peggy Lehner** (R-Kettering) and Sen. **Tom Sawyer** (D-Akron). Sawyer said his side of the aisle supported several provisions and noted they had been included in amendments offered to SB 316 in the last General Assembly.

Buoyed by support on both sides of the aisle, SB 229 was passed in a rare unanimous vote of the full Senate in early December. The House was expected to take up the legislation following the December break. But, surprises were ahead.

No formal action took place on the teacher evaluation issue until late March. House Education Committee Chair Rep. **Gerald L. Stelton** (R-Lancaster) had convened some interested-parties meetings, but no formal House action occurred until the March 26 House Education Committee meeting, where a substitute version of SB 229 was introduced.

Substitute SB 229 included numerous changes to the Senate-passed version. While some committee members, such as Rep. **Teresa Fedor** (D-Toledo), characterized the substitute version as a “total hijack” of the Senate bill, Stelton noted that the changes were intended merely to “tighten up some things” through definitions and guidance to the Ohio Department of Education and State Board of Education.

Stelton also noted that the teacher evaluation law had only gone into effect during the current school year and he questioned whether the Senate had held enough hearings on the bill. He indicated he planned to take his time with the bill and would not rush the process. Three House hearings were held in May, with most of the testimony taking issue with the House-proposed amendments and expressing a desire to return to the Senate version. The House Education Committee accepted a second substitute

version in mid-May, but it remained markedly different from the original Senate version.

OSBA, BASA and OASBO were among the groups noting their preference for the Senate version, but expressing support for two of the House amendments; namely, the exemption from evaluation for teachers who had either expressed plans to retire at the end of the year or been on leave for a substantial portion of the year.

With the two chambers on an apparent collision course, the General Assembly nearing completion of work on midbiennium budget review (MBR) legislation and the announced date for the legislature’s summer break rapidly approaching, the future of the teacher evaluation components seemed bleak. This is where the art of compromise, the commitment of legislators to “do something” with teacher evaluation and the intricacies of the conference committee process all contributed to resolve the issue.

The Senate incorporated its version of SB 229 and a few of the House substitute amendments into HB 487, the education portion of MBR, sponsored by Rep. **Andrew Brenner** (R-Powell). By doing so, the Senate set up the possibility of negotiating a favorable outcome with the conferees. Over a few days, the Senate members of the conference committee — Sens. Lehner, Gardner and Sawyer — were

able to reach a tentative agreement to be presented to both chambers.

But, then another twist occurred.

By coincidence of perhaps fortunate timing, a bill sponsored by Rep. **Timothy Derickson** (R-Oxford), HB 362, was scheduled for Senate concurrence during the last days of session. The Senate pulled its amendments from HB 487 and substituted its version into HB 362; Derickson supported the changes. The Senate passed the bill with a vote of 30-3 and the House concurred with a 94-0 vote. Problem solved — for now.

One amusing aspect of the final version reflects the desire to compromise, regardless of the appearance. The original Senate version reduced the proportion of evaluation based on student performance from 50% to 35%, with the difference to be determined at the local level. The House version had suggested an alternative of 40% based on student performance, 40% on teacher performance and 20% on student surveys. The compromise in the final version was 42.5% student performance, 42.5% teacher performance and the remaining 15% to be based on one of four alternatives: student surveys, self-evaluation, peer evaluation or portfolio.

Now that that’s settled — for now — the next step might well be adding a line item in the budget to buy calculators for all the teacher evaluators. ■

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Capital Conference offers best in leadership learning



Dr. Yong Zhao addresses the Second General Session during the 2013 OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show.

Angela Penquite, senior communication design manager

The 2014 OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show is quickly approaching, and will bring school board members, district administrators and staff, students and guests under one roof to learn from education experts across Ohio and the U.S.

“Leadership for Learning” epitomizes the focus of the event. The conference — Nov. 9-12 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center — is the nation’s second-largest education convention, featuring professional development for all levels of school district personnel and a wealth of information to boost student achievement in every school district.

The conference includes more than 150 workshops, information sessions and networking events. It is organized into specific topics, making it easy to find learning sessions to meet your needs.

On Nov. 11, conference attendees can visit the Student Achievement Fair, where they’ll find fresh ideas and new

approaches to increase student learning. In addition to 100 booths of Ohio’s best student programs, the fair features a student art exhibit and student performance groups from all five OSBA regions.

The Trade Show — with more than 600 booths — is a vast marketplace of all the goods and services school districts need to boost student achievement and maximize resources.

The General Sessions are hallmarks of the Capital Conference, featuring student performance groups, awards and recognitions. But what makes the sessions even more special are the outstanding keynote presenters that take the stage each year.

Inspiring speakers also lead the Early Bird Workshop and Conference Luncheons. Don’t miss the opportunity to learn from these experts during this four-day celebration of learning, sharing and networking. Following are the 2014 keynote presenters.



Bailey



Sáenz



Wilen



Thurmon



Smith

Early Bird Workshop — Sunday, Nov. 9

Simon T. Bailey is a leadership catalyst whose expertise equips emerging leaders with tips, tools and techniques on how to unleash potential in the world’s most important asset — people. He is the former leader of the world-renowned Disney Institute and founder of the Brilliance Institute Inc. Harrison College in Indianapolis has partnered with him to launch the Simon T. Bailey Emerging Leaders Certificate for individuals, corporations and organizations.

He is a weekly columnist for *American City Business Journal* and has been featured in *Entrepreneur* magazine. He has spoken in front of worldwide audiences and impacted more than a million people, working with brands like Verizon Communications Inc., Chevron Corp., McDonald’s Corp., Nationwide, Wells Fargo & Co. and Subway.

Bailey is the author of seven books, including *Release Your Brilliance*. His most recent book, *The Vuja De Moment! — Shift from Average to Brilliant*, is receiving rave reviews.

Britton, Smith, Peters & Kalail Co. LPA is sponsoring this session. Registration is \$95. Board members should notify their treasurer to register. On-site tickets will be sold on a space-available basis.

OSBA Black Caucus Dinner — Sunday, Nov. 9

This annual event helps raise funds for the Leo Lucas Stipend, which provides graduating African-American seniors funds for college. The program is named for the late **Leo Lucas**, a **Dayton City** school board member and educator who founded the Ohio Black Caucus, the forerunner of the OSBA Black Caucus.

Music and networking begin at 6 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m. The cost is \$70; the reservation deadline is Oct. 31. To register for the dinner, notify your district treasurer or indicate your request on the conference registration form. Registration is required; limited tickets will be sold at the door for \$75. Please indicate any special accommodations needed. All conference attendees are invited.

First General Session — Monday, Nov. 10

How did he go from handcuffs to Harvard University? Dr. **Adam Sáenz** will tell you: it was the power of a teacher. You will be inspired by his story and walk away knowing that

as a board member or educator, you are in the business of changing lives.

Sáenz is a beneficiary of two teachers who took the time to help him understand his true identity and believe that he could be something great. His story begins like that of many troubled kids — drugs, jail, discipline problems at school and on down the spiral to what could have been a very bad end. Instead, he was reminded that he had potential and used that encouragement to change the trajectory of his life forever. He credits his success to two of his high school English teachers, **JoElla Exley** and **Polly McRoberts**, who literally changed his life.

He would eventually earn his doctorate from Texas A&M University and study at Harvard University and the University of Oxford. Sáenz is a featured education blogger for The Huffington Post and serves as the clinical director of the Oakwood Collaborative, the Texas counseling and assessment clinic he founded in 2003. He also is the author of *The Power of a Teacher: Restoring Hope and Well-Being to Change Lives*.

Monday’s General Session is sponsored by Pepple & Waggoner Ltd.; Ross, Sinclair & Associates LLC; and Walter Haverfield LLP.

Monday Conference Luncheon

Dr. **Tracey Wilen** is a prominent leader on the impact of

Group registration provides best deal

Here’s another great reason to participate in the OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show — an opportunity for some members of your team to attend for free. 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. Registration is \$275 per person for each of the first six people from a member district. Group registration — more than six people — is a flat fee of \$1,700. That means your principals, food service directors, treasurer’s staff, transportation supervisors, curriculum coordinators and other staff can come for one day or the entire conference without additional registration fees.

technology on society, work and careers. A former visiting scholar at Stanford University, she has held leadership positions at Apple Inc., Hewlett-Packard Co. and Cisco Systems Inc.

The author of *Employed for Life: 21st Century Career Trends* and *Society 3.0: How Technology Is Reshaping Education, Work and Society*, Wilen has appeared on CNN, Fox and CBS News and in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Tribune* and *USA Today*. She contributes to the The Huffington Post and is a guest expert on radio shows across the U.S.

Wilen, a global speaker, was honored by the *San Francisco Business Times* as a 2012 Most Influential Woman in Bay Area Business.

Sponsors for the Monday Luncheon are CompManagement Inc. and FirstEnergy Solutions Corp. Registration is \$55. Board members wanting to register should notify their district treasurer or OSBA. On-site tickets will be sold for \$60 at the conference registration desk on a space-available basis.

Second General Session — Tuesday, Nov. 11

Dan Thurmon is an author, renowned speaker and recognized expert in delivering peak performances — on stage and in the workplace. As president of Motivation Works Inc., he has delivered thousands of presentations worldwide, helping organizations and individuals implement action plans and move confidently through transitions.

He began his performance career at age 11, crafting a one-man show incorporating comedy, juggling and acrobatics. This enabled him to, at a very early age, develop a strong work ethic and learn fundamental lessons about performance excellence.

A recent inductee to the prestigious National Speakers Association Speaker Hall of Fame, Thurmon delivers experiences that go beyond motivation, teaching concepts and skills in a highly engaging manner. His philosophy can be summarized by the title of his book, *Off Balance On Purpose*. He believes that people will never achieve “perfect balance” and should embrace uncertainty and seek positive changes that lead to growth. He also believes people should go beyond the pursuit of “success” and enhance their life experiences and professional endeavors with purposeful contributions.

Tuesday’s General Session sponsors are Peck, Shaffer & Williams, a division of Dinsmore & Shohl LLP; Scott, Scriven & Wahoff LLP; and Squire Patton Boggs (US) LLP.

Tuesday Conference Luncheon

One of the most decorated professional basketball players of all time, **Katie Smith** was a star at **Logan-Hocking Local’s (Hocking)** Logan High School, Ohio State University and in the American Basketball League and WNBA. She is the all-time leading scorer in women’s professional basketball, having notched more than 7,000 points in her American Basketball

League and WNBA careers. In 2011, fans voted to recognize her as one of the Top 15 players in WNBA history.

While at Ohio State, Smith took the Buckeyes to a Big Ten championship and the NCAA national championship game in her freshman year. She was an All-American in her freshman and senior years, as well as an Academic All-American. Ohio State later honored her as the first female Buckeye athlete to have her number retired.

Smith recently completed her master’s degree in medical dietetics at Ohio State and is an assistant coach for the WNBA’s New York Liberty.

The Tuesday Luncheon sponsors are CompManagement Health Systems Inc.; NaviGate Prepared; and OSBA Insurance Agency in partnership with Assurant Employee Benefits. Registration is \$55. Board members wanting to register should notify their district treasurer or OSBA. On-site tickets will be sold for \$60 at the conference registration desk on a space-available basis.

Third General Session — Wednesday, Nov. 12

A veteran of television, film and the Broadway stage, **Jeffrey Tambor** is one of the most iconic and respected character actors of his generation.

Most people know of Tambor’s stellar TV and feature film career, including unforgettable roles in the popular programs “The Larry Sanders Show” and “Arrested Development,” as well as the movies “And Justice for All” and “Meet Joe Black.” These roles and others display his unique acting gifts, for which he has received numerous honors, including two Screen Actors Guild Awards, six Emmy nominations and a Television Critics Association Award nomination.



Tambor

Tambor earned a bachelor’s degree in drama from San Francisco State University and a master’s degree from Wayne State University. During this time, he developed a deep connection with education. He co-owns Skylight Books in Los Angeles and was a professor at Wayne State University. He has been a teacher for more than 40 years, educating everyone from actors to corporations to DreamWorks animators and more. He passionately inspires his students through lessons they cannot gather from textbooks. As a down-to-earth and personable educator, he uses his life experiences, both dark and entertaining, to advise others to face their fears.

This General Session is sponsored by CompManagement Inc.

For more Capital Conference information, visit <http://conference.ohioschoolboards.org> or call OSBA. ■

Student Achievement Fair: big ideas for busy people

Crystal Davis, editor

When you think about it, the Student Achievement Fair at OSBA's Capital Conference and Trade Show is a lot like speed networking. Both events involve participants talking with new people for a few minutes before moving on to the next and, at the end, making a list of those they are interested in getting to know more about.

During the four-hour Student Achievement Fair, you can chat face-to-face with some of the brightest student and staff minds in Ohio public education at 100 booths showcasing innovative student programs. The end goal is to

select the best ideas to take back to your district.

Like speed networking, you've got to keep moving at the Student Achievement Fair to check out all of your options. You would need to visit 25 booths an hour — or one every 2.4 minutes — to learn about every outstanding student program, and that doesn't include any time you might spend watching the five talented student groups scheduled to entertain in the performance area.

In its 16th year, the fair is one of the most popular events of the conference. It runs from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.



Franklin Local's (Muskingum) Philo Junior High School Science Club conducts an experiment during the 2013 Student Achievement Fair.



on Nov. 11 at the north end of Hall D in the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

OSBA's Student Achievement Leadership Team (SALT), composed of school board members and OSBA staff, started the fair in 1999 to emphasize the association's dedication to promoting academic excellence. The Student Achievement Fair is the largest of SALT's many initiatives.

School programs are selected to participate in the fair based on originality and creativity in increasing academic performance. Programs focus on topics like virtual learning; skateboard design; energy efficiency and conservation; dropout prevention; robotics; video and clay animation; biomedical science; computer programming; outdoor classrooms; and character education programs. See your *Conference Guide* for descriptions of programs and their locations.

Those staffing the booths are happy to share best practices as they demonstrate their accomplishments. The fair showcases the most cutting-edge programs so districts can learn from each other and help boost student achievement across the state.

Speaking of cutting edge, this year's student art exhibition has gone digital. Look for monitors displaying images of student art where the framed art used to be. Pepple & Waggoner Ltd. is sponsoring the art show.

"I am often told by students who participate in the Student Achievement Fair that it was a great learning experience for them as well, and that it is a highlight of their school year," said **Cheryl W. Ryan**, OSBA deputy director of school board services and one of the fair's organizers.

The student entertainment groups each represent one of

OSBA's five regions. Let these talented groups entertain you as you eat lunch at tables next to the performance area:

- Noon–12:20 p.m. — **Elgin Local (Marion)**, Elgin Energizers Show Choir;
- 12:40 p.m.–1 p.m. — **Mentor EV**, Sparkle Cheerleaders;
- 1:20 p.m.–1:40 p.m. — **Port Clinton City**, Touch of Class a cappella group;
- 2 p.m.–2:20 p.m. — **East Muskingum Local (Muskingum)**, PanJGea Steel Drum Band;
- 2:40 p.m.–3 p.m. — **Northwest Local (Hamilton)**, Colerain Show Cards Show Choir.

The performance area is sponsored by Britton, Smith, Peters & Kalail Co. LPA. Make sure you save the date of Nov. 11 and plan to spend some quality time getting to know more about the impressive programs featured at the fair. You never know, a new program or idea could end up having an everlasting effect on the lives of students and staff in your district.

School districts registered to participate in the 2014 Student Achievement Fair as of July 9 and their program titles are:

- **Amherst EV** — School Community Garden
- **Arcanum-Butler Local (Darke)** — Virtual Simulation — Safety
- **Aurora City** — Independent Learning Program
- **Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Local (Greene)** — Stephen Bell Character Kids Core Team
- **Berkshire Local (Geauga)** — Student Council
- **Bloom-Carroll Local (Fairfield)** — Expect Success!
- **Bloom-Carroll Local (Fairfield)** — Online Career Exploration Courses
- **Canton City** — STEAMMING Swinging Hornets
- **Canton City** — Paws for Reading
- **Canton City** — CAMP-CAST Apprenticeship and Mentoring
- **Carey EV** — Students Achieving Success
- **Central Local (Defiance)** — Creative Writing Publication
- **Champion Local (Trumbull)** — Central Super Six Positive Behavior Plan
- **Coshocton City** — Full STEAM Ahead!
- **Coshocton County Career Center** — Culinary Arts
- **Cuyahoga Heights Local (Cuyahoga)** — Student Advisory Council
- **Danville Local (Knox)** — Special-needs Equine Education
- **East Palestine City** — Awk-Land
- **Eastland-Fairfield Career & Technical Schools** — Welding
- **Eastland-Fairfield Career & Technical Schools** — Dental Assisting
- **Finneytown Local (Hamilton)** — Girls on the Run
- **Finneytown Local (Hamilton)** — Sparkle Cats



Elgin Local's (Marion) Chess Club shows how chess can teach problem solving.

- **Franklin City** — Franklin Fine Arts Celebration
- **Franklin City** — Pennyroyal's Peaceful Playground
- **Franklin Local (Muskingum)** — Veterans Celebration
- **Goshen Local (Clermont)** — STEM Engineering Middle Grades
- **Goshen Local (Clermont)** — Warrior U — Student Achievement
- **Green Local (Scioto)** — CATS Program
- **Greene County Career Center** — Culinary Arts
- **Greenville City** — Medical Tech Prep
- **Hillsboro City** — Blood Drive
- **Hillsdale Local (Ashland)** — CIA — Computers In Action!
- **Huber Heights City** — Valley Forge GEMS
- **Jefferson County JVSD** — Culinary Arts
- **Knox County Career Center** — Health Technology
- **Lakewood Local (Licking)** — Lakewood Robotics
- **Lakewood Local (Licking)** — Future City
- **Ledgemont Local (Geauga)** — One-to-One Chromebook
- **Lockland Local (Hamilton)** — Parker ThingLink Blended Learning
- **Logan-Hocking Local (Hocking)** — Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!)
- **Mad River Local (Montgomery)** — Boards of Glory
- **Mad River Local (Montgomery)** — Biomedical Science
- **Mapleton Local (Ashland)** — Mapleton Art Program
- **Marion City** — Hub Ex — Workforce Exchange Program
- **Marion Local (Mercer)** — Using Nearpod in the Classroom
- **Marion Local (Mercer)** — Strategies Are Ways We Help Ourselves
- **Maysville Local (Muskingum)** — Maysville Early College High School
- **Meigs Local (Meigs)** — After-School Kids Program
- **Mentor EV** — High-Tech Art
- **Miami Valley Career Technology Center** — Game Programming and Web Application
- **Mid-East Career and Technology Centers** — Health Technology
- **Middletown City** — All Eyes on Student Data
- **Middletown City** — Improved Teaching = Improved Achievement
- **Middletown City** — SPRINGBOARD
- **Middletown City** — High School Transition Continuum
- **New Miami Local (Butler)** — Clash of the Vikings OAA Competition
- **North Fork Local (Licking)** — Utica FFA
- **North Olmsted City** — Students Supporting Students
- **Northmont City** — Tile Project



Jackson City's Jackson High School Symphonic Choir entertains attendees during the 2013 Student Achievement Fair.

- **Northwest Local (Hamilton)** — OWN IT! Student Ownership of Learning
- **Northwestern Local (Wayne)** — Middle School Agri-STEM
- **Paulding EV** — Panthers + Pride = Progress
- **Pickerington Local (Fairfield)** — Young Gents
- **Piqua City** — Opportunity Matters
- **Plain Local (Stark)** — Daily Awesomeness — Agendas for Success
- **Plain Local (Stark)** — One-to-One Student iPads
- **Ripley Union Lewis Huntington Local (Brown)** — JrROTC
- **Ripley Union Lewis Huntington Local (Brown)** — Digital Video — Cable TV Producer
- **Sandusky City** — @The Center
- **Springfield-Clark Career Technology Center** — Project Search — Springfield
- **Steubenville City** — STEM Education
- **Streetsboro City** — Streetsboro Theatre
- **Triad Local (Champaign)** — History Fair
- **Trotwood-Madison City** — Flipped Learning
- **Trotwood-Madison City** — Freshmen Preparation for College
- **Twin Valley Local (Preble)** — Energy Transfers and Circuits
- **Vandalia-Butler City** — Planetears Energy Conservation Team
- **Vinton County Local (Vinton)** — Cultural Diversity Fair
- **Vinton County Local (Vinton)** — Social Studies in Action
- **Waynesfield-Goshen Local (Auglaize)** — Mandan Indian Village Diorama
- **Waynesfield-Goshen Local (Auglaize)** — Cherokee Indian Booger Masks
- **Weathersfield Local (Trumbull)** — History Club
- **Windham EV** — Bringing History to Life ■

Reimagining



Ridge Middle School students work together in an outdoor courtyard. Mentor EV's blended learning pilot program uses technology to emphasize small group, project-based learning and individualize instruction based on students' needs and interests.

Mentor EV uses blended learning to teach students in small groups

If you close your eyes and picture a classroom, odds are it's a room with linoleum floors, cluttered bookcases, inspirational posters and students lined up in rows of metal desks facing a teacher.

And, a little more than a year ago, that's pretty much what most classrooms looked like at Ridge Middle School. Today, however, the learning environments in the **Mentor EV** school look very different. Classrooms are minimally decorated, scattered with dry erase boards and collaborative spaces.

Mobile devices and electronic resources have largely replaced books and notepads. Classrooms have mobile furniture so desks can be easily moved and students configured in small groups based on their individual learning needs.

The northeast Ohio school district is redesigning its classrooms to make every inch of space support and enhance teaching and learning. The changes are part of a wider effort to help teachers and students use every moment of classroom time, cutting out busy work, yawn-inducing lectures and one-

instruction

*Bryan Bullock,
assistant editor*

size-fits-all instruction.

Mentor is using technology and new instructional practices to personalize learning and engage students like never before. The high-performing district is moving forward with a multiyear plan to transform instruction through blended learning, a broad term that refers to the combination of classroom and online learning. Mentor started a one-to-one, take-home iPad initiative in the seventh grade at Ridge Middle School last year and classrooms were remodeled to complement blended learning. Based on the success of the pilot program, Mentor plans to expand the instructional approach districtwide to its 8,000 students.

While technology is key to Mentor's blended learning initiative, administrators are quick to point out it's only one component of instruction.

"We're working to implement best practices from top-performing districts across the country, but our real emphasis is on one piece of research that really doesn't have any counter research," said **Jeremy Shorr**, Mentor's director of innovation and educational technology. "We've known for 115 years that small group instruction is the best way to reach students."

The district, he said, is providing technology, professional development and other supports to give teachers more flexibility in the classroom and enhance their ability to differentiate instruction.

"Blended learning is not about putting kids in front of a monitor for eight hours a day," said Mentor EV Superintendent **Matt Miller**, chairman of the Ohio Blended Learning Network. "Technology is a part of it, but it also involves project-based learning, problem-solving and student interaction in groups. It's about getting kids ready for what colleges and the workforce are expecting."

"And you can see it on the students' faces in class: this is what gets them engaged in learning. When you can engage them and they're focused, that's really an amazing thing."

Mentor is receiving awards, as well as state and national attention, for its innovative foray into blended learning.

The district had more than 75 groups visit last school year to observe its blended learning program, including representatives from Apple and Google.

Transforming learning

A single room served as the early incubator for many of Mentor's new instructional approaches. The large room in Ridge Middle School is divided in two by a long one-way mirror. On one side there is a state-of-the-art classroom with mobile devices and flexible furniture; on the other side, there are chairs for observers to sit in and speakers that pump in sound from the adjoining classroom.

The room, known as Catalyst, is a place for teachers in the district to explore blended learning firsthand. Administrators and other teachers have the opportunity to gain familiarity with new practices by watching instruction from an observation room.

"The idea of Catalyst is that we bring teachers here to experiment," Shorr said. "It's a great experience for the kids, but it's not really for them. It's for the teacher and for us, the administrators, to learn how blended learning looks different in each grade and what sort of professional development teachers need as we roll this out."

To help assess the feasibility of rolling out blended learning to the entire district, Mentor solicited nominations for a kindergarten teacher to lead his or her class at Catalyst using this new instructional model. "We figured if we could make blended learning work with kindergartners, we could do it at any grade level," Shorr said.

Tracey Dunn, a kindergarten teacher at Hopkins Elementary School, traveled with her students to Ridge Middle School four days a week for an entire quarter last school year. In addition to monitoring how students reacted to day-to-day instruction, the district measured the academic performance of her students before and after the experiment. The results were overwhelming: Even though Dunn's students lost instructional time due to their daily trip to Catalyst, they outperformed their peers at their building in nearly every measure, as well as Dunn's previous year of students.

"We focused on small group learning and active learning,



Mentor EV rolled out a take-home, one-to-one iPad initiative for seventh-graders at Ridge Middle School last school year; the program will expand to every grade over the next three to five years.

giving students a little more choice in what they were being asked to do,” said Dunn. “We found that even five- and six-year-olds were able to handle that task of being responsible and being held accountable for their learning.”

Instead of teaching all of her students at once with a lecture or single activity, as the seventh-year teacher had been accustomed to, Dunn regularly asked her students to work in groups at stations. Students would work in stations for a short time and then rotate to another station. The stations gave students the opportunity to collaborate and work with new technology, like iPads and digital content, and allowed Dunn to focus her attention on small groups of students with similar learning needs.

Students found the instructional format engaging and exciting.

“We’ve been doing cool stations and having a lot of fun doing it,” said kindergartner **Theron Christokis**.

He said he loves all the educational apps he gets to use in class on iPads.

“You have cool games that you can play and they teach you stuff, math, numbers, addition and subtraction,” Theron said. “There also are these books (on the iPad) that read to you and after you finish them, you get pop quizzes.”

Dunn said time spent at Catalyst transformed the way students see learning and she views teaching.

“This experience has 110% changed the way I teach,” said Dunn. “I couldn’t imagine going back to the way I used to teach.”

Navigating changes

Ridge Middle School was the first building in the district to pilot blended learning throughout a grade level. Last school year, Mentor purchased iPads for each seventh-grader and asked classes to use Schoology, a Web-based learning management system that allows students, parents and teachers to access lessons, assignments and resources as well as communicate at any place, any time. Teachers and students also were asked to use Google Drive, a free, Web-based suite

of applications that’s similar to Microsoft Office, but boasts a greater range of collaborative tools. Schoology and Google Drive allow students to take their iPads home and continue learning and collaborating.

To prepare for the instructional shift, the school tapped experts from inside and outside the district to provide nine days of professional development for teachers on blended and project-based learning.

“We made it clear to teachers that implementation does not have to happen immediately; this is a process,” Shorr said. “Blended learning will look different in every classroom and we want to use it to empower teachers to have more control over their classrooms.”

To further support teachers with the transition, Ridge Middle School expanded its instructional coaching program. It also began creating targeted agendas for weekly grade-level meetings, which allow teachers and administrators to discuss what’s working in class and what’s not.

The new approach to instruction led to a new look for classrooms at Ridge Middle School. The seventh-grade classrooms have been designed to use mobile furniture so it’s easy for teachers to split students into groups and use blended instruction.

A typical seventh-grade classroom may look like this: a group of students sprawls out on a carpeted floor and writes on a Plexiglas board mounted low on a wall. Another group has wheeled their lightweight, mobile desks together and is working on iPads. Other students are discussing a project in an alcove in the hallway — a space with colorful chairs and tables that was once an unused storage closet.

“The physical environment has to support the instructional program,” said Ridge Principal **Megan Kinsey**. “Every corner of the room has to have an instructional purpose.”

The middle school also redesigned its library to support the instructional shift.

“We remodeled our media center to meet students’ needs,” Kinsey said. “It’s no longer a place full of books students never checked out and where people say, ‘Shhhhhh,’ when you talk.”

The media center now boasts soft seating, wireless Internet, collaborative tables where students can plug in devices and a handful of flat-screen TVs that can be connected to devices. It’s busier than it used to be, she said, and the school hopes to find a way to extend media center hours so it’s open later after school.

With new technology and resources, the transition to blended learning was not only an adjustment for teachers, but students

as well.

“This instructional shift demands that students actively take part in what they’re learning and not just listen to a teacher talk,” said **Carmen Walker**, a seventh-grade English teacher at Ridge. “That was a little hard for students at first, but I think they found some freedom in that and they embraced it as the year went on.”

Moving forward

Mentor teachers and administrators say blended learning has not only made learners more engaged, but also more independent.

“Students have become more self-directed,” said **Stephanie Dwyer**, another seventh-grade English teacher at Ridge. “Their expectations for themselves have changed. It’s not one size fits all anymore. They understand it is more about their skill level, so they know when to ask for help.”

Based on the success of the blended learning pilot program, Mentor plans to expand the initiative to the eighth grade next school year as well as to the district’s other two middle schools. The expansion will continue over the next three to five years until blended learning is integrated in prekindergarten through grade 12. Mentor was awarded a \$13.8 million grant this summer by Ohio’s Straight A Fund Governing Board to bolster blended learning. It will help fund new online and in-person learning opportunities starting next year.

“The grant will allow us to increase our blended learning initiatives at our high school, construct a regional professional development center, partner with **Kirtland Local (Lake) Schools** and provide distance learning opportunities,” said Miller, who is in his second year as Mentor superintendent.

Although the district’s blended learning program is still in its infancy, it’s already earning the district praise and recognition. The district cleaned up at the #BestEdTech Awards at the Ohio Educational Technology Conference this year. Mentor received an award for Best Use of Blended Learning presented by K-12 and the Ohio Trendsetter Award for its Catalyst program. Shorr earned the Ed Leader Innovator Award and Dunn received the Teacher Innovator Award.

Dunn and Shorr have both been named one of the National School Boards Association’s (NSBA) annual “20 to Watch” education technology leaders. Mentor recently learned it has been selected as a location for one of the NSBA Education Technology Site Visits next spring. The site visits give school leaders across the country a chance to learn firsthand about innovative uses of technology.

Last spring, Mentor was admitted into the prestigious League of Innovative Schools, a national professional learning

network and incubator for innovative educational practices.

“There’s a lot of innovative thinking going on in Mentor, from the teachers up,” said Miller. “We’ve seen success. It hasn’t always been perfect — nothing is on this magnitude — but it’s been great to see the reaction of the kids to a different learning environment.”

Miller said the district’s shift toward blended learning has been a methodical, research-driven process. Mentor administrators have visited a variety of school districts to observe blended learning programs and the district has heavily piloted technology and instructional approaches prior to implementation.



Hopkins Elementary School kindergartner Theron Christokis, right, uses an educational app in teacher Tracey Dunn’s class.

Districts that visit Mentor typically have two main questions, according to Shorr: How did you start your blended learning initiative and how did you pay for it? Funding, he said, is just a matter of prioritizing and rethinking your district’s budget. Shorr suggests starting small with laptop or iPad carts and expanding over time.

As far as how to get started, he said that requires buy-in from teachers and district leaders.

“We’re really proud of the work our teachers have done in Mentor, but the reality is that without the support of our superintendent and school board, none of this would have been possible,” Shorr said. ■

Editor’s note: To learn more about Mentor EV’s blended learning initiative, contact Matt Miller, superintendent, at mmiller@mentorschools.org, (440) 974-5220 or via Twitter @MentorSuper; or Jeremy Shorr, director of innovation and educational technology, at shorr@mentorschools.org, (440) 974-5279 or via Twitter @JeremyShorr. To see video from OSBA’s visit to Mentor EV, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/76047>.



Using assessments to improve instruction

Dr. Michael White, education consultant

So which is it: “Tests are evil and the people who defend them are trying to hurt children and schools” or “Tests are the only reliable information we have about student performance, because you can’t trust anything else coming from schools?”

Once the extreme views and character assassinations are left at the door, hopefully there will be a genuine desire to get to the big question: What data do we need to improve teaching, leadership and learning?

This year’s backlash over testing was well deserved. In too many schools there are too many standardized tests. We should not be surprised that test-based accountability and teacher evaluation systems built around standardized tests caused schools to increase testing. This past year, we had Ohio Achievement Tests, Ohio Graduation Tests, the Iowa Assessments, Measures of Academic Performance (MAP), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), end-of-quarter benchmark tests, end-of-course tests and college entrance tests. And let’s not forget all the practice-for-the-test tests.

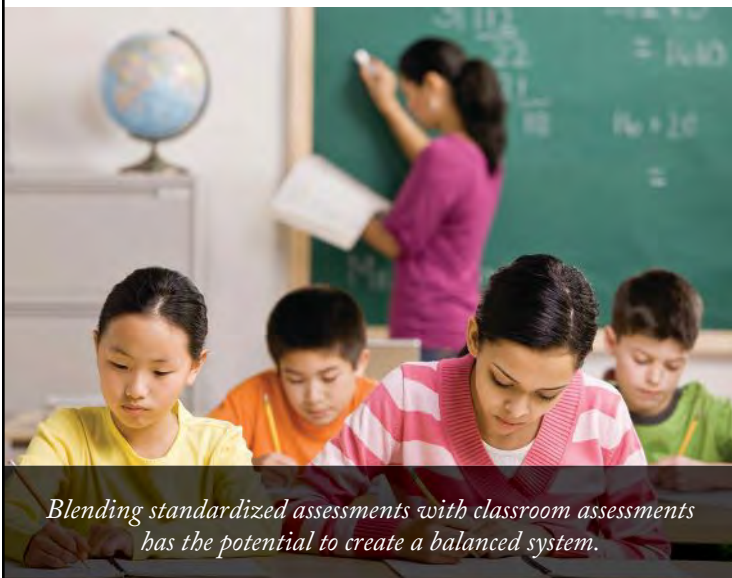
How is all this testing impacting student achievement? Not much. High school seniors’ performance in mathematics and reading has stagnated since 2009, according to a new round of results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The most recent achievement data from NAEP, known as “the nation’s report card,” show that 12th-graders’ average math score remained at 153, on a 300-point scale, in 2013 as in 2009. Just 26% of students scored at or above the proficient level in math — again the same as 2009.

In reading, the national average stayed flat at 288, on a 500-point scale, with 37% of students scoring at or above proficient, according to the NAEP report. While scores in math and reading remain unchanged compared with 2009, the national average for reading decreased by four points since the test’s first administration in 1992. In math, scores have increased by three points since 2005.

When viewed by gender and race/ethnicity, both math and reading scores also have remained unchanged since 2009, indicating that achievement gaps have persisted. The black-white gap continues to be the largest one, with black students scoring about 30 points below their white peers on both tests in 2013. Further, the score gap in reading between black and white students has increased by five points since 1992.

These results suggest it is hard to teach reading and math when all your time is spent testing reading and math. But I am not going to demand that standardized tests be expelled from schools. As public institutions under contract with their communities to help students learn, schools should be required to present evidence they are doing their job. Standardized tests can provide part of that evidence, so we should use them. And there are other things these tests do very well. Standardized tests help teachers, administrators and board members answer the questions at the end of the quarter or year: “Did the students master the skills taught? Did our students master as many skills as students across the state or country?”



Blending standardized assessments with classroom assessments has the potential to create a balanced system.

These tests allow students' progress to be tracked over the years. For example, if a student scores in the 75th percentile in sixth grade and 86th percentile in seventh grade, you can see that the child is gaining ground relative to grade-level peers. Big tests, like the Ohio Achievement Test or the Ohio Graduation Test, also are used by administrators to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum, textbooks and teachers.

Data driven or data dizzy?

I like standardized tests. I don't like anyone who buys or tries to sell the notion that these tests provide sufficient information to improve instruction and increase student learning. Standardized tests are important, but they do not represent the full power of assessment and we need to stop our tunnel vision investment in them.

Standardized tests allow us to look backward and help determine whether learning occurred, but the information is typically too much, too late and too vague to inform a teacher's day-to-day instruction. Teachers end up data dizzy rather than data driven. They'll say: "What am I supposed to do? How should I change to make sure my students succeed? This test data tells me my students from last year scored low in math but it doesn't give me anything specific to help me decide what and how to teach this group of students. The test reports showed my students had trouble with fractions, but what specific skills are they missing? That is what I need to know. And, all the work our district does with test binders, action plans and data walls seems to be more public relations than practical application."

Balanced assessment: classroom tests

Think of standardized tests as "the test at the end" and "exit tickets." What if we shifted our assessment attention to "the tests at the beginning" and "entry tickets?" What if, in addition to standardized tests telling us what students don't know, we had tests telling us why they don't know it and what to do about it? What if we had a balanced assessment system, with standardized tests *proving learning* and smaller classroom assessments *improving learning*?

The instructional decisions with the greatest impact on student achievement are made by teachers, not once a year when standardized test results roll in, but every few days. Well-designed classroom assessments could be an integral part of the assessment process. When incorporated into classroom practice, they could provide specific, personalized and timely information about student misconceptions, student interests and teacher misassumptions around specific skills.

The most effective classroom assessments measure students' skills and interests before instruction begins. They help teachers design effective lessons by providing data on:

- what students already know;

- what students don't know;
- what students want to know.

Classroom assessments should not be painful to build, take or score. They only have a handful of items and take about 15 minutes to administer. Their purpose is to gather information about a student's readiness to learn the skills and standards that are scheduled to be taught in next week's lesson. Teachers use the information to group students and determine whether some must be taught prerequisite skills or need additional degrees of challenge.

For example, a student who demonstrates mastery of the geometry skill about to be taught can have the opportunity to engage in an enrichment activity while the other students learn the grade-level geometry skill. Students scoring lower on the assessment would be provided skill-building activities to reach the necessary readiness level.

True collaboration and accountability

One of the most important benefits of small classroom assessments is that they pave the way for true teacher collaboration, as opposed to "collaboration light." The analysis of these tests can give teacher meetings a sense of urgency and data-driven focus. Once-in-a-while standardized tests might provide anxiety and angst, but that quickly fades as the school year progresses. Districts can transform the culture of their collaborative meetings by focusing their efforts on timely, specific classroom tests and plans to address those results.

In this era of questioning the value and effectiveness of schools, it also is critical that we be able to show students are learning in our classrooms. To truly establish what value you have added to your students, classroom assessments could be given to determine the starting point for students. Then, after the lesson, a classroom assessment could be given to determine what students actually learned. The difference between the two scores is the "value" that has been added by teachers.

We have the ability to blend standardized assessments and classroom assessments into a balanced system. Our standardized assessments are already in place. But the state of classroom assessment is weak. If we shift our focus to the design and implementation of effective classroom assessments, we will reclaim the central role of testing — to improve learning. ■

Editor's note: Dr. Michael White is a licensed pediatric psychologist, author and director of Educational Consulting Services in Cincinnati. He also serves as a district review team member for the Ohio Department of Education's Center for Accountability and Continuous Improvement. His latest book is *Tap Dancing to Work: How A Small Group of Teachers Can Conquer the Common Core*.

Career center-industry link creates student opportunities



Mid-East Career and Technology Centers student Luke Schultz works in the training lab at Pioneer Pipe Inc. in Marietta. Schultz was taking part in a pre-apprenticeship program that gives students the opportunity to earn various welding certifications.

Partnership gives Mid-East students a head start

Stacey L. Snider, public information coordinator, Mid-East Career and Technology Centers

Today's version of career-technical education is definitely "not your father's vocational school." A recent partnership among **Mid-East Career and Technology Centers**, Pioneer Pipe Inc. and Plumbers & Pipe Fitters Local Union No. 168 validates that statement.

Five seniors enrolled in Mid-East's Welding Technology Program last school year transitioned from learning in the lab on the career center's Zanesville Campus to gaining real-world experience each day at Pioneer Pipe in Marietta. This hand-selected group of students received valuable training and built their skills at Pioneer while they continued their academic coursework at Mid-East's Buffalo Campus in Senecaville.

This unique pre-apprenticeship program affords students the opportunity to complete various welding certifications, which could potentially lead to them becoming second-year journeymen at the end of their senior year of high school. The typical path for the apprenticeship program consists of five years of on-the-job training during the day and school in the evenings.

"This is just an overall great opportunity for young people," said **Dave Irvin**, Mid-East Welding Technology Program instructor.

Dave Archer, Pioneer owner and CEO, said the program initially began because the company had difficulty finding capable employees. That's when he thought to check with

career centers and pilot the program with students from **Washington County Career Center**. Students are selected to participate in the program based on their grades, attendance, welding skills and work ethic.

“We’re just a small part of this equation,” Archer said. “Students and schools are the key parts. This program is a huge part of our growth in the pipeline fabricating business.”

Archer is confident that “with the partnerships developed with career centers, the program will continue to grow and allow these students to have a career and be able to spend their entire life at home and not have to leave the area.”

The Mid-East program began with one instructor, **Justin Betts**. The program has since grown, and **Phil Wells** joined it as an additional instructor. Both are Pioneer Pipe employees.

Mid-East students in the program last school year included **Luke Schultz** from **Cambridge City’s** Cambridge High School, and **Dakota Mooney, Zachery Miller, Kameron Rayner** and **Tyler Wiley** from **Caldwell EV’s** Caldwell High School. These students completed their high school coursework using the A+ online curriculum. They also were able to stay involved in extracurricular activities at their home schools, with three playing football and two wrestling.

Mid-East Superintendent **William A. Bussey** is enthusiastic about the partnership.

“The relationship between Mid-East Career and Technology Centers and Pioneer Pipe is the most beneficial partnership I

have seen in my 38 years of being an educator,” Bussey said. “Welding students learn valuable skills to earn certifications in an environment hosted by Pioneer Pipe. Then, after successful completion of the program, they will be hired by the company and enter as second-year apprentices. Pioneer Pipe benefits by having a pool of skilled welders in the ‘pipeline,’ so to speak.

“Those of us at Mid-East and all involved in career-technical education appreciate the willingness of Pioneer Pipe to provide these experiences for students and hope to duplicate this partnership arrangement with other companies.”

Students who participated share the same excitement and fully understand the benefits.

“It has been a great opportunity to learn the skills that are needed in the workplace, while Mid-East continued to offer me an education,” recent graduate Rayner said. “The partnership between the two has been great.”

Wiley echoed that sentiment: “The partnership between Mid-East Career and Technology Centers and Pioneer Pipe has given me an opportunity that will set the foundation for the rest of my life.”

Mid-East Business Partnerships and Placement Coordinator **Shannon Kenily** summed up the value of the program.

“We are very excited to have this partnership with Pioneer Pipe Inc. and look forward to continuing to provide excellent opportunities for our students for many years to come,” Kenily said. “It’s truly a ‘win-win’ situation for all who are involved.” ■



Students and instructors in the Mid-East Career and Technology Centers welding pre-apprenticeship program are, from left, Pioneer instructors Justin Betts and Phil Wells; students Luke Schultz, Tyler Wiley, Zachery Miller, Kameron Rayner and Dakota Mooney; and Mid-East welding instructor Dave Irvin.



Carrollton EV transforming culture by powering innovation

Shale drilling boom fuels unique collaborations

Dr. David P. Quattrochi, superintendent, and Edward J. Robinson, director of programs, Carrollton EV

Historically, the northeastern Ohio village of Carrollton was known primarily for its agriculture production and its values. However, the region is in the midst of a Utica shale boom that has drastically changed the community, especially the **Carrollton EV** School District.

The district is scheduled to have six shale wells and a power plant within its boundaries that will bring additional revenue to the poor, rural school system. It is important to note, however, that the community has not passed a school levy since 1977. Although community support for the schools exists, the majority of residents do not want their taxes raised. Thus, the school board and administration had

to find alternative ways to fund the district.

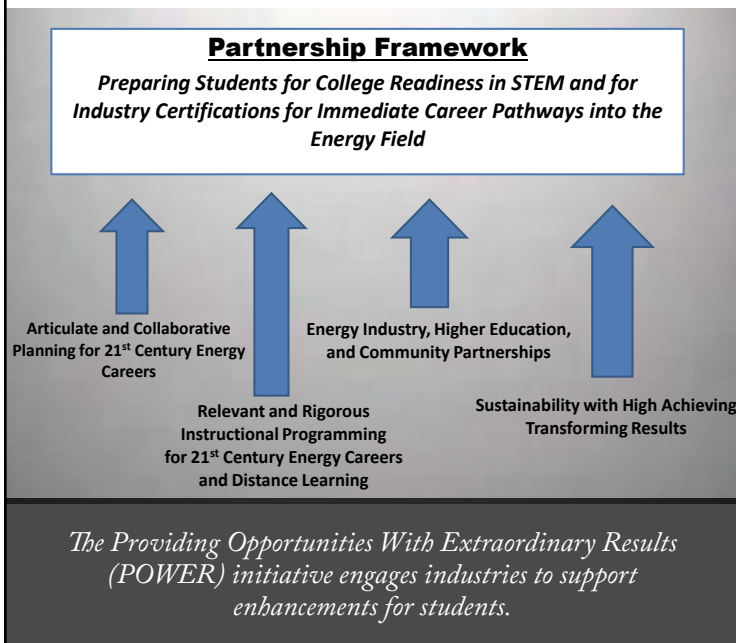
Excellent with distinction, despite sharp budget cuts

Carrollton serves nearly 2,300 prekindergarten through 12th-grade students in communities throughout rural Carroll County, which has a population of 29,000. About 50% of the district's students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. It earned an excellent with distinction ranking on the 2012 state report card.

Despite retaining a stable population, the district has responsibly cut more than \$6.3 million in the last decade — nearly 25% of the overall operating budget — while maintaining excellent academics and programs. These cuts have driven the closing of three elementary schools, a reduction in teachers and administrators, and the elimination of 15 bus routes. Without additional efficiency measures, the district will face a deficit in 2015. These are just a few of the challenges facing Carrollton leaders.

I became superintendent in 2012. After observing the district during the first 100 days on the job, it became evident to me and my co-author that this quaint and quiet community was transforming into something no one ever envisioned — a booming culture filled with migrant workers drilling for oil and gas in the Utica shale formation. Although agriculture remains at the forefront of the economy, the oil and gas industry is having a powerful impact on this small community. This posed a major question for us: How will this new culture impact the schools?

It was time to create a vision for this paradigm shift in the region's economy. How can Carrollton benefit from this transformation? How can it seize the opportunity to



form new partnerships with the upstream, midstream and downstream energy companies? Will teachers, parents, community members and key stakeholders embrace this change? These questions helped fuel the creation of a framework and bold plan to attain buy-in from the community.

This plan began to take shape in December 2013 when the district received a \$4 million grant from Ohio's Straight A Fund. Carrollton was one of 24 districts and education consortiums to receive one of these innovation grants out of nearly 600 applicants. This is when the visionary plan became a reality, which helped transform the district into an innovative place to learn for all students.

Reaching out to create powerful opportunities

The name of the plan — POWER, an acronym for Providing Opportunities With Extraordinary Results — came out of several meetings with partners while working on the grant. The team wanted an expression that stood out and had a potent meaning behind it. The POWER initiative focuses on one major goal — to engage the energy and agriculture industries in new, symbiotic relationships supporting enhancements for students. It was imperative that the district partner with these industries and also retain revenue that can be used to benefit students.

Three strategies drive this initiative.

Strategy 1: Partnering with energy businesses that will help develop new pathways for students

The first strategy focuses on partnering with outside organizations in the community. Currently, many high school juniors and seniors participate in dual enrollment options with Stark State College. However, there was an immediate need to attract more students to take part in additional fields of study. POWER enables students to take more postsecondary classes to accelerate their education, which leads to good-paying, high-demand jobs in the energy sector. Among the long-term outcomes of this strategy is the enrollment of 40 students per year who have the opportunity to earn stackable certificates in the energy field.

Stackable credentials provide new dual enrollment secondary options for students, including the ability to get a job right after graduation. The district is formalizing a venue for businesses to partner with the district to communicate and address workforce challenges. In addition, students who plan on attending a two- or four-year higher education institution will be able to take enriched classes in biology, mathematics and engineering. These efforts are aligned with energy partnerships throughout the region.

Strategy 2: Embracing project-based STEM education to prepare all students for career and college readiness in engineering, agriculture and safety

Although pockets of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education were evident throughout the district, these offerings were not consistent among grade



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levels. To address this, POWER includes three programs: the STEM School of Engineering, STEM School of Agriculture and STEM School of Safety.

The STEM School of Engineering enhances higher education readiness with an emphasis on engineering. This includes project-based, energy-related learning focused on sustainability, environmental responsibility, alternative energy, and oil and gas. Project Lead the Way is the curriculum being used at all grade levels.

Students still have the option to enter into a more effective agriculture program. The STEM School of Agriculture leverages the growing fortunes of farmers resulting from land leases with energy companies and partnerships with Ohio State University Extension and Future Farmers of America Camp Muskingum to create a 21st century farm on district property. Carrollton has 165 acres of unused land, and students will sell crops produced on that property at a local farmers' market as part of the program. The curriculum will incorporate land and resource management, digital agriculture management and bio-sustainability.

The STEM School of Safety addresses the growing local demand for individuals with environmental safety training. The district is partnering with Eastern Gateway Community College to offer environmental groundwater education in partnership with the Operator Training Committee of Ohio, Ohio's only certified water quality training organization. Additionally, curricula will incorporate basic safety certifications such as CPR, first aid, SafeLandUSA and OSHA 10 and OSHA 30 training.

Grant money will be used to build a 5,000-square-foot learning lab, where students in grades six through 12 will have the opportunity to learn a variety of skills through hands-on learning. Local businesses also will take

advantage of the learning center in the evening for training.

Strategy 3: Converting the bus fleet to compressed natural gas (CNG) to enable the district to reallocate more funds to the classroom

The last strategy focuses on putting more dollars into the classroom by saving on bus fuel costs. The CNG conversion project is expected to save the district \$150,000 annually, which will be used to support classroom instruction. The district currently runs 18 buses, with 12 being converted to CNG this year. In addition, the introduction of distance learning technologies into the classroom is projected to create further savings since the district will not need to hire additional teachers to instruct new programs.

In summary, the POWER initiative would not be possible without the numerous partners supporting the district and its vision. There are more than 20 partners, and each has a significant role in making this dream become a reality. This initiative is an example of how one school district can thrive in a community that does not financially support it. This does not mean the stakeholders do not support the schools, it means that the administration must find alternative ways to keep the school system thriving.

An evaluation of the program will continue for five years. The New Growth Group and Battelle for Kids will conduct both formative and summative assessments to determine the success of the POWER initiative. ■

Editor's note: For more information, contact Carrollton EV Superintendent Dr. David Quattrochi at (330) 312-5652 or david.quattrochi@carrolltonschools.org. Carrollton EV will present a workshop on its POWER initiative at the OSBA Capital Conference on Tuesday, Nov. 11, at 9 a.m.

Nominate local media for the 2014 OSBA Media Honor Roll

Reporters who are fair and balanced in their coverage of public education deserve a pat on the back. Say "thanks" to these individuals by selecting them for the 2014 Media Honor Roll.

OSBA's 13th annual Media Honor Roll program is under way. For more information and to make your selections, visit www.ohioschoolboards.org/media-honorroll. The nomination deadline is Sept. 12.



STAND UP
FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Show your support

Help OSBA stand up for public schools

Amanda Finney, senior marketing coordinator

OSBA needs your help to expand its Stand Up for Public Schools campaign to spotlight the importance of public education and local boards of education. The association launched the campaign in April in conjunction with the National School Boards Association (NSBA).

Nearly 2 million Ohio schoolchildren benefit from public education each year. That could not happen without the dedication and hard work of school boards and district staff. However, many segments of society are not aware of just how crucial public schools are to Ohio and the nation.

Public schools face many tough challenges such as fiscal shortfalls, unfunded mandates and child poverty, just to name a few. However, even with these enormous challenges, academic performance is increasing, achievement gaps are narrowing and graduation rates have risen to an all-time high. All of this proves that public schools are succeeding.

Goals of the campaign

The campaign's mission is to raise awareness about the success of public education and local school boards. Key messages include:

- 21st century public schools keep Ohio strong and prepare students for college and career readiness;
- public schools are a critical component of an informed, democratic society and the American way of life;
- OSBA wants the campaign to inspire local, state and national advocacy for public education.

To further these goals, OSBA is asking

everyone to Stand Up for Public Schools.

It's important to promote the rewards and value of public education, because increasing that awareness will increase support for schools and, in turn, further benefit students. Public education is the solid foundation that sets students up for future success. Supporting local schools and school boards in your community helps safeguard public education while providing accountability and transparency for all.

Call to action — how you can help

OSBA has created a website for the campaign, www.standupforOHpublicschools.org, with a variety of information and resources to help you stand up for public education. Your first step is to get informed about the current state of public education in your community, state and nation. The website offers a number of resources to learn about the awards and accomplishments of Ohio public schools.

Help OSBA get the word out about all the good things taking place in Ohio public schools by using these resources located under the "Stand Up" section on the campaign website:

- talking points to help you discuss the importance of public schools and their success in Ohio and the nation;
- a sample speech you can use as a guide to discuss the importance of public schools with civic, community and parent groups;
- a sample letter that you can use as a guide in writing a letter to the editor or blog post about the value of public education;

- a campaign logo you can use as your profile photo on social media to highlight your commitment to public education.

For additional resources and to learn about NSBA's national campaign to advocate for public schools, visit www.standup4publicschools.org.

Share your success

As a board member or school administrator, you already know the great things happening daily in your district. Your schools have many outstanding programs and services benefiting your students and enhancing student achievement, and OSBA would like to help you showcase these.

As part of the campaign, OSBA offers opportunities to submit your district's success stories. These can include articles, photos and videos highlighting innovative student programs; efforts to increase student achievement; or extraordinary acts of citizenship, community service or compassion by your students. You can share your district's successes online on the Stand Up for Public Schools website under the "Success Stories" section.

For additional information about the campaign, contact **Crystal Davis**, OSBA deputy director of communication services, at (800) 589-OSBA or cdavis@ohioschoolboards.org.

OSBA hopes you will take advantage of the opportunity to "stand up" for your schools, students and public education. We look forward to working with you to spread the good news about Ohio's public schools. ■



Can board leadership really impact student achievement?

Boards can play a big role in improving instruction

Dr. Paul Johnson, board member, Bucyrus City, and associate professor, Bowling Green State University

According to Harvard University researcher Dr. **Richard Elmore**, “The purpose of leadership, regardless of role, is the improvement of instruction.”

As a board of education member and former superintendent, Elmore’s statement has always intrigued me. Now, as a researcher, it prompts me to pose the following questions: Do school board members, as elected leaders, have a role in improving instruction? And if they do, what is it?

The effectiveness of — and even the need for — school boards has been an open question for some time. **Mark Twain** once said, “(In the first place,) God made idiots. That was for practice. Then he made school boards.” When I was a superintendent, I found some humor in Twain’s observation. Now, as a school board member, it only causes concern because that sentiment toward school boards lives on today.

For example, educational policy analyst and Thomas B. Fordham Institute President Dr. **Chester E. Finn Jr.** described school boards as “a dinosaur left over from the agrarian past,” while **John Gehring**, a staff writer for *Education Week*, labeled them “an educational sinkhole that supports the status quo.” In an article in *The Atlantic* titled “First, Kill All the School Boards,” **Matt Miller**, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, argued that local control and local school boards are the basic cause of poor student performance.

“What of school boards?” Miller wrote. “In an ideal world, we would scrap them. Of course, the chances of eliminating school boards anytime soon are nil. But at least we can limit

their role.”

Fortunately, not everyone shares this opinion. According to former U.S Secretary of Education **Rod Paige**, “The effectiveness of school board governance is the single most important determinant of school district success or failure.” Similarly, author and former Houston Independent School District board member **Don McAdams** said, “If school systems improve, it will be because boards make them improve. No one else can.”

As divergent as these opinions are, they are, after all, just opinions. As a researcher, I’m much more interested in what the research actually says about the board’s impact on student achievement. We know, for example, that some teachers generate higher student achievement than others. The same holds true for principals and superintendents.

So what of school boards? A key question left unanswered in the research is whether some school boards and their leadership practices create district conditions that generate higher student achievement than others.

I discovered there is, in fact, a growing body of research suggesting that how school boards lead can set the conditions for effective classroom instruction and higher levels of student achievement. The research demonstrates that it begins with how the board interacts with its superintendent. In districts that increased student achievement, regardless of demographics, complementary leadership roles defined the relationship between the board and superintendent.

According to educational researcher Dr. **Richard Goodman**, “Strong, collaborative leadership by local school

boards and school superintendents is a key cornerstone of the foundation for high student achievement ... Effective districts support a high degree of collaboration between each school board and superintendent, who together view themselves as the school district governance team for higher student achievement.”

While a governance culture characterized by a high degree of collaboration between the superintendent and board was characteristic of effective boards, research also suggests that these boards engage in the following specific leadership practices within that governance context. Each practice is followed by questions to ask about your own board.

Creating a vision — Effective school boards are actively involved with other district leaders and the community in creating a clear, long-term and shared vision for the district based in the belief that students are capable learners and district staff has the capacity to impact student achievement.

- What kind of future do you want for students?
- What do you want your district to look like in five years?

Using data — Effective boards use data to set goals, establish accountability for themselves and others, monitor progress, apply pressure, provide support and inform decision making about the conditions affecting student learning.

- How does your board use data to establish accountability, track progress and make decisions about student learning?

Setting goals — Effective boards set a few reasonable, specific, collaboratively developed and nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and instruction, and then allow district staff to be responsible for those goals, within certain established parameters. Successful districts tend to adopt a few broad goals and work at them over a long period of time.

- How many goals does your board have?
- How were they developed?
- To what degree does your board allow staff to be responsible for the methods to accomplish those goals?

Monitoring progress and taking corrective action — Effective boards monitor, in collaboration with district leadership, progress toward achieving district goals and take corrective action when progress is not evident.

- How does your board track progress, take corrective action and celebrate success?

Creating awareness and urgency — Effective boards create a sense of urgency about the gap between student achievement data and the district’s vision by actively advocating for change that will affect how the district

confronts barriers to student achievement and improved instruction.

- How does your board create a sense of urgency about the gap between the data and vision?
- How does your board actively advocate for change that will result in improved student achievement and improved instruction?

Engaging the community — Effective boards actively engage the community in pursuing the district’s shared vision and goals. The superintendent and board team establishes partnerships throughout the community to ensure effective communication with students, teachers, employees, the media and the community to solicit feedback on the district’s progress toward its vision.

- How does your school board engage the community in pursuit of the district’s shared vision and goals?

Connecting with district leadership — Effective boards actively connect with district leaders in pursuit of the district’s vision and goals in ways that complement the superintendent’s implementation efforts.

- How does your board connect with school building and central office leaders in ways that support the superintendent?

Creating climate — Effective boards provide leadership in creating a district climate characterized by participatory decision making, shared leadership, a focus on the needs of people and a commitment to high-quality teaching and learning.

- How does your board’s leadership promote a district climate reflecting a commitment to high-quality teaching and learning?

Providing staff development — Effective boards understand, support and allocate resources for quality professional development that is focused on improving classroom instruction.

- How does your board support quality training focusing on instructional improvement?
- What strategies does your district use to attract, employ, develop and retain effective teachers?

Developing deliberative policy — Effective boards focus on policy issues that impact student achievement and improve classroom instruction. They promote policies in ways that complement the superintendent’s implementation efforts, without intruding into the administrative domain.

- What policy issues has your board dealt with recently that impacted student achievement and instruction?

Demonstrating commitment — Effective boards create time to learn together as a team and engage in extensive dialogue with each other to establish consensus about what is most important to accomplish and what resources are necessary



to pursue it.

- How does your board allocate district resources (staff, time, money and programs) in support of district goals?
- How do school board members spend time together learning about district programs, initiatives and issues?

Focusing on unified governance — Effective boards practice unified governance in which the board and superintendent have complementary leadership roles in policy development and implementation that lead toward achieving the district’s vision and goals.

- How does your board work with the superintendent to support unified governance?

To further research the connection between board leadership practices and student achievement, I created the Effective Board Leadership Practices Survey based on the practices described above. I surveyed 42 board of education members (each one an OSBA student achievement liaison) from 42 low-wealth/high-poverty districts. The results indicated that school board members who rated themselves higher on the survey tended to be from higher achieving districts, despite their low-wealth and high-poverty status.

If school boards are to be viable leaders in this era of

educational reform, they must forge a new role for themselves that focuses on student achievement. Given that emerging research demonstrates school boards can make a difference in student achievement, they can no longer assume a passive leadership role.

Because boards *can* make a difference in student achievement, they *must* make a difference in student achievement. They should aspire to forge an active leadership role based on the essential leadership practices I’ve described. In doing so, school boards and superintendents can begin to recast their relationship toward one of shared leadership in which student achievement is the primary goal.

Time and research have proven Twain wrong; school boards can make a difference. ■

Editor’s note: Dr. Paul Johnson is an associate professor of educational administration and supervision in the College of Education and Human Development at Bowling Green State University, where he teaches school/community relations, school finance and public policy. He is a former school district superintendent and current member of the **Bucyrus City** Board of Education. He can be contacted at pjohnso@bgsu.edu.



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Recognizing achievement a high priority at Franklin City

Gary Motz, managing editor, and Jo Ann W. Feltner, former board member, Franklin City

OSBA hosts the Student Achievement Fair each November during the Capital Conference and Trade Show. The fair features 100 booths of students and staff from around Ohio displaying their innovative student programs.

Taking a cue from that popular event, **Franklin City** launched its own Student Achievement Fair in 2012. Sponsored by the district's Student Achievement Committee, the fair features exemplary student programs developed in the district's schools. The top two programs, selected by a vote of the committee, are invited to participate in the OSBA Capital Conference Student Achievement Fair in Columbus.

The Franklin fair is held during the district's Student Achievement Week, during which students are recognized for outstanding academic achievement, attendance, fine arts, continuous improvement and community service. Students are nominated for recognition by teachers, administrators, parents and other students.

The Student Achievement Committee reviews the nominations, and the selected students and their parents are invited to a board of education meeting to be recognized with a certificate and student achievement pin. Every school in the district displays a plaque naming that building's students who have been recognized. A large plaque at the high school lists the names of all honorees in the district.

The capstone event of Student Achievement Week is the district's Student Achievement Fair.

This year, the committee created an innovative way to draw more community attention to its achievement fair by involving local officials. City Manager **Sonny Lewis**, Mayor **Denny Centers** and city council members issued a proclamation declaring the week of April 27 Achievement Week in the city of Franklin. Officials presented the proclamation to Franklin City Superintendent Dr. **Michael D. Sander** at a city council meeting. In addition, Rep. **Ron Maag** (R-Lebanon) delivered a commendation recognizing Student Achievement Week

during an April board of education meeting.

On May 3, the Student Achievement Fair was held in conjunction with the Franklin City Schools Fine Arts Festival. Several hundred community members, students and staff turned out at Franklin High School to learn more about the district's top programs and enjoy displays of outstanding student art projects.

The Student Achievement Committee was formed in 2000 to recognize exceptional student accomplishments. While student athletes received much recognition at that time, little was being given to students who achieved scholastically or excelled in music and the fine arts. The committee developed its recognition program to highlight the achievements of students who work hard every day to make a real difference in the school system and in their own lives. ■



A Franklin City student greets visitors during the district's Student Achievement Fair. The event was held in conjunction with the Franklin City Schools Fine Arts Festival. Both events are highlights of the district's Student Achievement Week.

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Tuesday, Sept. 30	Hilton Garden Inn, Perrysburg
Thursday, Oct. 2	Hilton Garden Inn Dayton South, Miamisburg
Friday, Oct. 3	Kent State University at Tuscarawas, New Philadelphia
Tuesday, Oct. 7	Ohio University Inn and Conference Center, Athens

Plan now to attend the 2014 OSBA Treasurers' Clinics to be held in six locations around the state. These clinics provide the most current information on school district fiscal issues. Treasurers, business managers, board members, administrators and treasurer's office personnel are all encouraged to attend.

The Treasurers' Clinics offer timely information on a multitude of topics relevant to all members of a district's management team. Attendees also can fulfill their local and state professional development needs, including in-service, LPDC and continuing professional education credits.

Registration and continental breakfast begin at 8 a.m.; the clinic runs from 8:25 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The fee is \$150, which includes registration, continental breakfast, lunch and materials. You can register by contacting OSBA Senior Events Manager **Laurie Miller** at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or Lmiller@ohioschoolboards.org.