


Welcome new board members • Focus on educational service centers

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JOURNAL

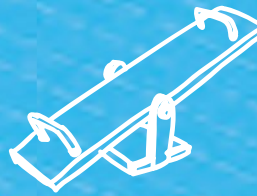
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Germann
takes helm as
OSBA president



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—photo by Gary Motz

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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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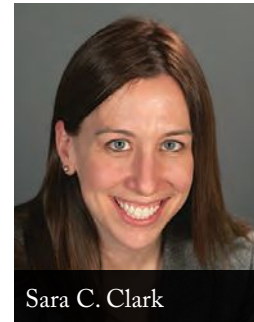
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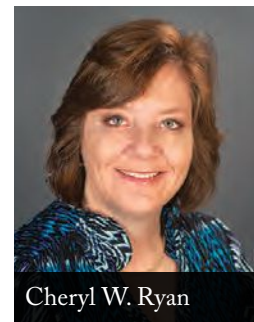
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Re-examining the way we've always done it

Richard Lewis, CAE, executive director

In his 2013 book “Sort Your Life Out: How to Take Control of Your Life Now!” **Stephen Harrington** shares a story that illustrates how clinging to old ways stifles innovation and leaves organizations stuck in a self-defeating rut. But, he writes, challenging outdated practices and procedures and embracing new ways of doing things spurs growth and productive change.

It's a lesson that has relevance to any organization. Here's his story.

A very old traditional brewery decided to install a new canning line to enable its products to be marketed through supermarkets. This decision represented a significant change for the little company, and local dignitaries and past employees were invited to witness the first run of the new canning line, which was followed by a buffet and drinks.

After the new line had been successfully switched on and the formalities completed, the guests relaxed in small groups to chat and enjoy the buffet. In a quiet corner stood three men discussing trucks and transport and distribution. One was the present distribution manager; the other two were past holders of the post, having retired many years ago. The men represented three generations of company distribution management spanning more than 60 years.

The present distribution manager confessed that his job was becoming more stressful because company policy required long deliveries to be made on Monday and Tuesday, short deliveries on Friday and all others midweek.

“It's so difficult to schedule things

efficiently,” he said. “Heaven knows what we'll do with these new cans and the tight demands of the supermarkets.”

The other two men nodded in agreement.

“It was the same in my day,” sympathized the present manager's predecessor. “It always seemed strange to me that trucks returning early on Mondays and Tuesdays couldn't be used for little local runs because the local deliveries had to be left until Friday.”

The third man nodded, and was thinking hard, struggling to recall the policy's roots many years ago when he was a junior employee in the dispatch department. After a pause, he smiled and ventured a recollection.

“I think I remember now,” he said. “It was the horses. During World War II, fuel rationing was introduced. So we mothballed the trucks and went back to using the horses. On Mondays, the horses were well rested after the weekend, hence the long deliveries. By Friday, the horses were so tired they could only handle the short local drops.”

Soon after opening the new canning line the company changed its delivery policy to reflect its current needs. It no longer needed to worry about tired horses at the end of the week.

The company in this story is not unlike many organizations that become stuck in a routine, defined by Webster's as “a regular, unvarying, unimaginative procedure.” Unvarying and unimaginative practices do not move organizations forward; they keep them mired in the past. By changing its

delivery schedule, the brewery moved beyond the horse-and-buggy days to an efficient, modern distribution system.

The valuable lesson in this story also can be applied to boards of education. It is sometimes all too easy to keep a comfortable routine. But what served well in the past does not serve the future. Success in such a dynamic, ever-changing field as public education requires innovation, vision, imagination and growth.

Boards of education across the state are now coming together as new teams and transitioning under new leadership. Newly elected board members, first-time board presidents and veteran members are stepping up to fill the void of experience left behind by departing members. This creates a new dynamic and presents a perfect opportunity to revisit board policies, operations and goals to better your board governance and district.

All highly functional organizations must be nimble enough to adapt to change on short notice. Following a predictable routine greatly inhibits an organization's ability to be proactive and effectively manage evolving demands.

The approaches we employed a decade ago might not apply to the challenges of today. Therefore, it is crucial that school board members of 2016 question what they might do to improve and advance their boards.

Explore ways to determine what practices are anachronistic and need to be changed or replaced. Follow that with discussions on ways to cultivate support

for necessary changes. Then, develop a plan to implement the updated policies and practices that will move your board and district forward.

For boards of education, policies and strategic planning must take center stage. In today's dynamic environment, these documents must be alive, fluid and evolve with the times.

If your policies have not been updated in years, you may find yourself like the brewery distribution manager, dealing

with constraints that were shaped when horses were the quickest means of conveyance. If your strategic plan is a three-ring notebook gathering dust on a shelf, your visionary initiatives for the year 2020 may look hauntingly familiar to your vision for the year 2000.

In these times of change and choice, it is vital that school boards remain competitive and relevant. Creative change can be the spark that fuels that relevance.

The Ohio School Boards Association

is *your* association and stands ready to serve its members in the pursuit of educational excellence. Whether your board serves 500 or 50,000 students, OSBA is prepared to lead the way by serving school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.

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Staff costs can surprise new board members

Van D. Keating, director of management services

As new board members join the public school ranks in 2016, the OSBA management services division tends to get many general calls about district budgets.

Of course, specifics are best left to individual treasurers to explain, but some of the more fundamental questions stem from new board members whose experience is limited to the private sector or, if in the public sector, their background is not in education. For many reasons and in many ways, public education is an entity unto itself and comparisons with any other sector, private or public, is difficult.

One of the favorite questions centers on a district's personnel costs as compared to overall costs. While the term "personnel costs" can have many definitions, most new board members initially equate it to their district's expenses for salaries, health benefits and retirement contributions.

In some private sector industries, anything approaching 50% for these expenses is considered dangerous. For others that are more labor-intensive, the number is around 60%. If the percentage exceeds this number, something drastic needs to be done to right the ship — and quickly. So, is this true for public school districts?

To those familiar with schools, the answer is no. In fact, I'm not sure any district in Ohio has ever been — or will ever be — close to 50%. Despite advances in technology, schools remain a people-centric endeavor, and for students to learn, teachers will have to be employed by schools to teach.

Schools need buildings, buses, cafeterias and all of the accompanying staff. Additionally, being in the public sector also means that employee costs are traditionally higher because benefits, such as health insurance, tend to be greater than what is offered in the private sector.

Public schools are highly unionized, which usually translates into higher costs as well. There are numerous articles available on the Internet debating the real costs and merits of collective bargaining, but most agree that it does have a price compared to nonunionized workplaces.

Comparing public schools to other industries, private or public, is never an easy, apples-to-apples comparison.

The additional job protections union contracts provide have a cost, too, although it can be difficult to quantify. So depending on a board member's background, grasping the concept of a school district's employee costs as a percentage of overall costs can equate to learning a new language.

In 2011, an article in Education Week cited a report that found personnel costs in public schools constitute 80% of a school district's budget. A few years ago, I came across a comparison of Ohio school district employee costs as a percentage of overall costs and the

highest was 92% for one small district. Needless to say, these percentages are shocking to many new board members unfamiliar with public school budgets.

Is there a magic number that boards should use as a guidepost in deciding whether employee costs are out of line? The short answer is no. There is no single number or percentage that all school districts should hold to. The state does not have a specific percentage codified anywhere in law and recommendations vary.

Informal discussions with several district treasurers tend to confirm around 80% as an average, but districts vary in size, staffing and budgets. For example, a district with more experienced staffers will have a higher percentage than a similar district with less experienced employees, all else being equal — and nothing ever is.

New board members should first research their district's numbers before looking at a neighboring district's percentage and understand why they are different before passing any judgment on whether theirs is too high or low. Also, recognize that these percentages can quickly change from year to year for any number of reasons.

I also would offer that comparing public schools to other industries, private or public, is never an easy, apples-to-apples comparison. No other institution serves the number of children, employs the same caliber of people or aspires to the same lofty goals as public education. This comparison is probably why so many people want to become board members in the first place. ■



OSBA Legal Assistance Fund turns 40 this year

Sara C. Clark, director of legal services

The OSBA Legal Assistance Fund (LAF) was established in November 1976 to support school districts defending legal challenges with the potential to affect public schools statewide.

Support may come in the form of legal research, amicus curiae briefs, financial assistance and any other assistance the fund's trustees approve. A three-member board of trustees made up of OSBA's president, president-elect and executive director manages LAF.

In many cases, the fund provides assistance through an amicus curiae, or "friend-of-the-court" brief. An amicus brief explains to the court why the school district should win its case and how the court's decision will affect other Ohio school districts. LAF trustees select highly qualified school attorneys from across the state to write briefs on behalf of the trust.

Financial assistance also may be provided to help districts minimize the financial hardship of costly litigation to individual boards. This assistance is provided to districts as a percentage of the total cost of litigation or other matter of controversy incurred by the board. The trust is prohibited from incurring the total cost of litigation in any case in which assistance is provided.

Requesting assistance

LAF trustees may consider any legal dispute that pertains to the classification, organization, regulation, maintenance, operation, financing and management of school districts in Ohio. However, the trust is prohibited from participating in disputes between school districts,

disputes between individual school board members and disputes in which participating would be contrary to any current legislative position assed by the OSBA Delegate Assembly.

To initiate a request, a school board must adopt a resolution requesting assistance from the fund and complete an application. A sample resolution and the application may be found on OSBA's website at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/44419>. The application requests background information about the case, including details about the factual situation, procedural history and current status of the case, as well as why the case would be proper for LAF to consider. Frequently, the board, in consultation with its attorney, completes the application.

Once OSBA receives the application and resolution, trustees will determine if the issues and litigation involved meet the criteria for assistance under the trust.

Recent trust activity

In 2015, LAF was active in eight matters of statewide significance, including two cases heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. These cases involved issues such as school funding, child abuse reporting, property tax exemptions, Ohio's open meeting laws, construction contract provisions and community school accountability. Following are brief summaries of the cases.

Ohio v. Clark — In November 2014, LAF joined National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers and National School Boards Association (NSBA) and submitted an amicus brief asking the U.S. Supreme

Court to overturn the Ohio Supreme Court's decision in a case involving a preschooler's statements of child abuse. In a victory for Ohio's schools, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously overturned the Ohio Supreme Court in June, finding that the admission of a teacher's testimony regarding the student's answers to her inquiries about suspicious injuries was not a violation of the Sixth Amendment's Confrontation Clause. A copy of the decision is available online at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/79774>.

Schott v. Wenk — In August 2015, LAF joined NSBA and 15 other national organizations to file an amicus brief in the U.S. Supreme Court, urging the court to protect teachers and other school officials from lawsuits arising from reports of suspected child abuse they make under Ohio's mandatory reporter laws. The brief asked the court to hear and overturn a ruling by the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that makes mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse vulnerable to federal claims brought by an alleged abuser. Unfortunately, in January, the U.S. Supreme Court found there was no reason to hear the case after the parties settled it, leaving in place the unfortunate case precedent rendered by the circuit court.

Stewart v. Lockland — In September 2014, LAF filed an amicus brief in this case in which the underlying issue was whether a district could conduct an executive session to consider the termination of an employee when the employee requests that the deliberations remain public. Agreeing with the position set forth in LAF's brief, the

Ohio Supreme Court upheld the lower court's decision in September 2015 and held that a public employee can have a public hearing about his or her employment status only when the employee is otherwise entitled to a public hearing. In this case, the court held that the employee was entitled to a hearing, but not a public one. A copy of the decision is available online at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/70423>.

Hope Academy v. White Hat — The Ohio Supreme Court issued an important opinion in September 2015 in a case stemming from ongoing litigation between 10 Cleveland community schools and their operator, White Hat Management. LAF filed an amicus brief in June 2014 in support of the schools. Among other things, the brief argued that White Hat owed a fiduciary duty to the schools it operated and their boards. The court agreed, finding that because White Hat agreed to act on behalf of the schools to help them carry out their purpose, advance the schools' interests and operate "all functions" of their day-to-day operations, a fiduciary relationship was created. However, the court rejected LAF's argument that the management agreements between the parties were unenforceable, finding that because the schools were represented by their own legal counsel and had agreed to the provisions in the contracts, they were enforceable. A copy of the decision is available online at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/15993>.

Talawanda v. Ohio Dept. of Taxation — In January 2015, LAF filed an amicus brief arguing that the statute that generally provides for an exemption of school-owned property exempted real property broadly and did not place any restrictions on use. In December 2015, the Ohio Supreme Court agreed with this position and overturned a prior Ohio Board of Tax Appeals ruling that denied a tax exemption to a school district that leased a parcel of its property to a farmer and did not use the property exclusively for school purposes. A copy of the decision is available online at: <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/21520>.

School Choice Ohio v. Springfield — In February 2015, LAF filed an amicus brief in this case in which the underlying issue is whether districts may adopt board policies that allow them to distinguish to whom a student's directory information is released. LAF's amicus brief argues that districts retain the discretion to decide what information it considers "directory information," which, in turn, governs the information that may be released in response to a public records request. Oral arguments were held in late January, and we continue to await the court's decision.

Boone Coleman Construction Inc. v. Village of Piketon — In December 2014, LAF joined the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, Ohio Municipal League and Ohio Township Association to file an amicus brief in a case dealing with the enforceability of liquidated damages clauses in construction contracts. Oral arguments were held in June 2015 and we continue to await the court's decision.

Toledo et al. v. Ohio Dept. of Edn. — In

September 2015, LAF filed an amicus brief on behalf of the **Toledo City**, **Dayton City** and **Cleveland Municipal** school districts in a case involving the question of whether Ohio's General Assembly may constitutionally enact a law retroactively shielding the Ohio Department of Education from liability for its unauthorized adjustments that resulted in the districts losing funding. Oral arguments were held in December 2015 and we continue to await the court's decision.

OSBA hopes that through LAF's efforts, courts and the community at large will gain a better understanding of how these fundamental issues affect education in our state. If you have questions about LAF or would like to request assistance, please contact OSBA's division of legal services. ■

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



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Which way will your teeter totter?

Cheryl W. Ryan, director of school board services

The new year is off and running, and veteran board members across Ohio are entering the second half of the school year. They're knee-deep in plans to improve achievement scores, initiatives to trim budgets, community engagement activities or weighing the pluses and minuses of a prospective technology investment.

In other words, returning and veteran board members are up to speed on all the events taking place in their districts. What's more, in all likelihood, they're informed about current education legislation, proposed laws and possible changes to existing legislation.



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New board members, on the other hand, are most likely unfamiliar with *any* of these issues. They may have attended some board meetings and, if so, they're in a good position to catch up.

However, these new board members have not been part of executive session conversations, small group debates in district committees, tutorial sessions with the treasurer or muddy walks across the district's ball fields with an operations director trying to convince them to pay for drainage improvements.

New board members are in an amazing position. They are at a perfect place — the exact middle of the boardmanship teeter-totter. Pushed one way, they can become informed, supported and presented with opportunities to learn to do things the right way. Pushed the other way, they can be shut out, cut off, dismissed and stonewalled. And here is where veteran board members hold all the cards. They can choose to slide that new board member one way or the other.

Nearly all new board members have great potential and were elected following good, clean campaigns. They bring much to the table and are eager to learn and contribute. But let's say the new board member is one who campaigned negatively, told stories with half the facts or made promises other board members would likely never support.

It would be very tempting for the veterans to reward that “newbie” by letting him or her know “just how it is” or by not sharing information. But what good would that do for the long list of real work that needs to be done? How will that help pass the next levy or support

the administration during negotiations?

There are few new board members I've met who were greeted at the door with support and kindness, opportunities for professional development and orientation meetings galore and refused it all. Any attempt to tilt these individuals to the correct side of the teeter-totter failed. They stayed negative, remained entrenched in their own ways of thinking and looked upon anyone who was a part of decisions they didn't support as an enemy.

However, I've seen far more of these potentially troublesome board members take advantage of the chance to learn. In doing so, they discover that their initial perceptions were out of line or out of date. They were bright, curious and — in the end — there for the right reasons. They wanted to do what was best for everyone in the district.

They allowed their positions to change as they became more knowledgeable of the facts and trade-offs. They learned to support consensus and that the majority rules. They came to accept that things don't always go their way. They realized that when board members work together, the right decision usually becomes more clear. They learned that trusting experienced educators to make key decisions is usually a good idea. In short, they became valuable board members.

So here we are in 2016, with a big bunch of new board members in the middle of the teeter-totter and another big bunch of veterans poised to send them one way or the other. Here's hoping the veterans get it right, and the newbies take advantage. ■



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Advocating for your schools

Local voices can have an impact at Statehouse

Jay Smith, deputy director of legislative services

As the second half of the 131st Ohio General Assembly gets underway, public education advocates need to continue to keep abreast of issues pending before the legislature. It's also crucial to understand the external factors and legislative calendar that may impact the decision-making process throughout 2016.

Last year, during the first half of the 131st General Assembly, the legislature spent most of its time working on the biennial state budget, House Bill (HB) 64. Legislators began the process in February and finished work in June before the next fiscal year began July 1. The biennial budget set the state spending plan for fiscal years (FY) 2016-2017.

Also, before its summer recess, the legislature fast-tracked legislation that substantially changed the criteria for establishing academic distress commissions in Ohio school districts. This legislation, HB 70, moved through both chambers in less than 24 hours. The impact of that change is first being felt in the **Youngstown City School District**.

Following summer recess, the legislature immediately took up consideration of HB 2, charter school reform legislation that had passed the Senate in June but failed to see any action by the House before lawmakers recessed. The law, which the General Assembly eventually passed in October, calls for increased accountability and transparency for Ohio charter schools, including their sponsors, governing boards and operators.

Also in October, the legislature went

to bat for school districts that were significantly impacted by the governor's budget veto of the tangible personal property tax (TPP) supplement for FY 2017. The General Assembly passed Senate Bill 208 to cushion the impact of the veto and restore some of the lost funding. The bill also modified the continued phaseout of TPP replacement payments to slow the loss of these payments beginning in FY 2018.

School board members should seize this opportunity during the election season to meet with candidates and discuss your education priorities.

The legislature currently is conducting regular sessions in both the House and Senate and expects to meet frequently in the coming months, including possible sessions in June. Once legislators break for summer recess, we expect very little legislative activity while they focus on either getting re-elected or helping their colleagues win election.

Election-year dynamics

This year's election is an important one. Besides the presidential race, all seats in the U.S. House and Ohio House are up for election. The Ohio Senate will see contests in its even-numbered districts. Ohio's primary election is March 15, with many incumbents facing a challenge to represent their party in the general election.

While we don't expect much activity from the legislature between June and the November election, we do expect a lot of discussion on issues that impact public education during this time. Immediately following the elections, the often-frenzied lame-duck session begins as the end of the 131st General Assembly comes into sight.

If the past is any indication of what we can expect during the lame-duck period, anything could happen. School board members should seize this opportunity during the election season to meet with candidates and discuss education priorities. Those meetings also provide an excellent opportunity to share some of the great things happening in your school districts and the importance of a quality public education.

If the candidates you talk to are elected or re-elected, the time you have spent with them will serve your district well in the future. The relationship you have established will provide an opening for ongoing discussions on public education issues and their impact on your district.

Truancy legislation

HB 410, which seeks to address issues surrounding truant students being expelled or suspended, is one piece of legislation Senate and House leaders say they expect to discuss in the spring. The bill shifts the focus from punishment to why a student is truant. When a student reaches a certain level of truancy, the school would be required to notify parents. If the student reaches that level, the school must form a team of administrators, teachers and parents within 10 days to examine the issue.

That team then will have 30 days to develop an intervention plan to address the absences. The school, and possibly a court, will be required to report throughout the intervention process on how students are doing and the reason for their absences.

In addition to truancy, watch for other legislation expected to be discussed in upcoming months, including expulsions/suspensions and zero-tolerance policies.

OSBA offers support for your advocacy efforts

As we proceed through the year, OSBA will provide a variety of tools to help your advocacy efforts. These include the OSBA Legislative Platform, which details OSBA's positions on key education policy issues and guides the association's advocacy strategies. OSBA members serving on the Legislative Platform Committee annually review the platform and recommend amendments. Those amendments must be approved by the OSBA Delegate Assembly at the Capital Conference in November before becoming part of the platform.

OSBA also emails members a weekly legislative update called Facts in a Flash that captures legislative activities that occurred that week. It also takes a look at any hot topics on the horizon. OSBA's biweekly newsletter,

Briefcase, also features legislative news in its Legislative Report column. These reports provide synopses of proposed, pending and passed legislation.

Board members also should watch emails for calls to action when a pressing issue arises and member advocacy is essential to getting our message delivered. Calls to action include talking points as well as information to help members stay on top of issues as they move through the legislature.

Following are a few tips for effective advocacy:

- Keep it simple — most issues and positions can be explained in a few sentences.
- Do what works for you — call, write a letter, email or schedule a meeting.
- Speak up — when working to be heard on key public education issues, be aware that action *and* inaction send a message.
- Set priorities — focus on what is important.
- Be direct — make specific requests for specific positions and actions. Use talking points included in OSBA calls to action.
- Keep it local — highlight the positive and negative impact of legislation on your local school district.
- Be a team player — be sure that

your advocacy efforts conform to your local board's policies and protocols.

- Join forces — remind legislators of any association, coalition or other stakeholder support for your position.
- Be an educator — invite elected officials to visit schools to showcase your successful programs.
- State the positive — be enthusiastic and courteous. In politics, there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies.
- Say thank you — remember to thank each of the elected officials for their time and their position or action on issues where there is agreement.
- Follow up — be sure to provide any information offered or requested.
- Share your experience — your fellow board members, OSBA lobbyists and our allies can benefit from what you've learned.
- Relax — effective advocates do not need to be polished, professional lobbyists.

Above all, don't hesitate to contact OSBA's legislative division. The association's legislative team is here to assist you in your advocacy efforts and help your district meet its goals for providing a quality education to every student. ■

Leo Lucas scholarship deadline is March 16

OSBA is accepting applications for the 2016 OSBA Black Caucus Leo Lucas Scholarship, a program that provides graduating African-American high school seniors funds for college. The program is named for the late **Leo Lucas**, a **Dayton City** school board member and educator who founded the caucus.

Visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/73957> to download an application. The application deadline is March 16.

For more information, contact **Van D. Keating** or **Damon Asbury** at (614) 540-4000 or vkeating@ohioschoolboards.org or dasbury@ohioschoolboards.org.



Germann embraces



Sparks fly as 2016 OSBA President Eric K. Germann, left, and Vantage Career Center students watch welding instructor Brent Wright cut a piece of metal. Germann is a school board member at the career center and Lincolnview Local (Van Wert).

Challenges motivate new OSBA president

O SBA President **Eric K. Germann** is one who believes that life can bring you opportunities, even in the worst of times.

Take, for example, his grandfather, **Wilbur Pollock**, a star baseball player whose big dream was to play for the Chicago Cubs. As the story goes, Pollock was set to join one of the Cubs' minor league affiliates, but a fall from a haymow crushed those aspirations. A shattered elbow would end any hopes of becoming a big league baseball player.

"I believe I'm here today because my grandfather fell out of

that haymow," Germann said. "Had he gone on to play baseball, I probably wouldn't be here. But with those shattered dreams, he took advantage of the other opportunities he had and became a successful farmer and school board member."

Pollock served on the former **Ridge** School Board in Van Wert County from 1952 to 1957. Two years later, voters approved the consolidation of three school districts that included Ridge. That merger created **Lincolnview Local (Van Wert)**, named for the view of the Lincoln Highway that divided the new school district.

opportunities

*Scott Gerfen,
assistant editor*

Like his grandfather, Germann is continuing the family's legacy of board service. He has been a Lincolnview Local board member for six years and served at **Vantage Career Center** for two years.

During that time, the man who was selected by his peers to lead OSBA as its president in 2016 has turned opportunities into triumphs for the rural districts he serves in a time when funding school districts is no easy task. As a leader, Germann is principled in the notion that you should effect change rather than accept the status quo.

An opportunity for new revenue streams for Van Wert County and its schools arrived when the landscape of northwest Ohio began to change drastically. That landscape was transformed when hundreds of wind turbines began spinning in the breeze and producing electricity.

The Blue Creek Wind Farm, a more than \$600 million venture by Iberdrola Renewables, has delivered hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax revenue to area schools. Lincolnview Local alone has received more than \$400,000, which helped purchase Chromebooks for every student from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Germann, who has testified before the Ohio General Assembly on renewable energy legislation, has been a strong advocate of the wind farms. However, despite his efforts, some future projects have been tabled because of new restrictions passed by state lawmakers.

"This was a polarizing issue in the community," Germann said. "There are people who like them and people who hate them. But we were able to work with the community and legislators to say this is a huge revenue opportunity for the district and the farmers in the area. How do we find a win-win situation for everyone?"

That win-win situation brought more than additional revenue to Vantage Career Center, which has become an educational hub for students who want to obtain skills that meet specific business needs. It also brought the opportunity to offer training in a new career track through its wind turbine maintenance program. The program is conducted as part of the career center's Alternative Energy Academy, which came

about with the private-public partnerships created under Ohio Senate Bill 232.

"It helps to have a supportive board when you're trying to bring in a new program like that," Vantage Career Center Superintendent **Staci Kaufman** said. "Eric sees the range of students and understands that while all students might want to go to college, not all students are probably going to graduate with a four-year degree."

Germann's background lends itself to innovation and 21st century learning. He earned a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering and computer science from Ohio Northern University and a Master of Science in information and communication sciences from Ball State University.

He is the lead cloud networking architect at Newscycle Solutions, which delivers software solutions to more than 1,200 companies in the global media industry.



Germann shares a laugh with a student while visiting Lincolnview Junior/Senior High School.



Vantage Career Center welding students listen as Germann asks about projects they are working on.

The 1986 graduate of Lincolnview High School has served four terms as president of the Lincolnview board and represents the district as an OSBA legislative liaison, student achievement liaison and Delegate Assembly representative.

“He brings a presence of intellect and calmness, and he thinks out of the box,” said Lincolnview Local Superintendent **Jeffery T. Snyder**, who attended high school with Germann. “He’s allowed our district to look at the next stage in terms of where we want to go as a district. We could be the status quo, but under his leadership, it’s been about where do we go next.”

Germann service snapshot

Boards of education

Lincolnview Local (Van Wert) (six years) and Vantage Career Center (two years)

Local board offices

OSBA legislative liaison (Lincolnview); four terms as board president; service on numerous board committees

OSBA Northwest Region offices

Region president (one year); Executive Committee (six years)



Germann answers questions in a Lincolnview Elementary School classroom.

The OSBA Journal asked Germann to share his thoughts on the rewards and challenges of school board service, his plans for his year as president and the value of OSBA. Following are his responses.

What do you hope to accomplish as OSBA president?

I hope to continue to foster engagement and collaboration between board members within and across school districts as well as continue to foster engagement with education stakeholders across the state, including the legislature and those representing educators, administrators and staff.

There are many challenges unique to each district. However, through engagement and collaboration, we can find common ground to solve common problems. Doing so will allow us to have more time for the more difficult and unique challenges we all face.

Why is OSBA membership valuable?

Coming in as a freshman board member with a business/technology background, I was naive enough to believe it would be like any other business. You can’t effectively govern

OSBA offices

President (currently serving one-year term); president-elect (one year); Executive Committee (two years); Board of Trustees (four years); Legislative Platform Committee (five years); Nominating Committee (one year); Federal Relations Network (three years); Student Achievement Leadership Team (two years); Arrangements and Hospitality Team (one year); Capital Conference Planning Task Force (three years); Board Member Cabinet (three years); Delegate Assembly (five years); Investment Committee (two years)

National School Boards Association

National Nominating Committee (one year); Delegate Assembly (two years)

Occupation

Lead cloud networking architect at Newscycle Solutions

Education

Ohio Northern University, Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering and computer science; Ball State University, Master of Science in information and communication sciences

Commitment to community

Founding director of the Lima Regional Information Technology Alliance; past president of Middle Point Lions Club; past president of Midwest Electric Community Connection Fund Board of Trustees

Family

Wife Karen, five children and three grandchildren



A Vantage Career Center culinary arts student oversees Germann as he helps prepare a dessert dish in the center's kitchen.

if you don't understand how the system works and how it got to be where it is today.

OSBA membership is extraordinarily valuable to both freshmen and veteran board members in providing continuing education and professional development resources. The ability to leverage OSBA for "what if" or "why do we do that" is very appreciated to gain a deeper understanding to work toward a solution.

Why did you decide to serve on a public school board and why have you continued to serve?

I had served my community for nearly two decades as a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician (EMT). For several reasons, I left that line of service and was looking for another way to give back and serve the community. A spot opened on the ballot, and I ran as a write-in school board candidate.

Interestingly, there are a fair number of parallels to my service as a volunteer EMT and firefighter. There can be a crisis, although sometimes it just seems that way. Many times, people just need someone to talk to and be connected with the right services. Lastly, people rarely call to invite you to dinner or thank you for a good job. They usually call you with a problem, and it's your job to solve it.

I continue to serve because I enjoy the challenge. I find

governance and government to be a fascinating study of people and their interactions. As long as I feel I can add value to the conversation, I will continue to contribute my time.

"My greatest pride ... is seeing a student reach or exceed his or her potential given the circumstances laid before them."

How can school board members make the biggest impact on their districts?

Be willing to let your people take risks. Paradoxically, I talk about failure as a good thing. If an organization never experiences any failures, it isn't taking any risks. If an organization never takes risks, it will never innovate.

Create an environment of reasonable risk taking so your staff and students can innovate. Be willing to learn from them, and if the results aren't quite as expected, review it, learn from it and pivot.

What advice do you have for new school board members?

Listen first, and as author **Stephen Covey** writes, "seek to understand, then be understood." Research the issues, cast

your vote and then support the decision of the board moving forward.

What is the biggest challenge facing school boards?

It is the ever-changing landscape of education. The education system has taken a fair number of hits the past several years, some deservedly, some not. The changes being pushed down from the state and federal levels are not the solution, however. Those introducing changes, while well intentioned, rarely have education backgrounds. We then end up with a rapid cycle of change, like OTEs (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System), state report cards, Ohio's New Learning Standards and other things.

This would seem to contradict my earlier assertion of failing to allow innovation, but making statewide changes uniformly with little professional educator input doesn't mesh with that assertion. The rapid innovation needs to happen at the local level and then shared statewide so others can adopt it in their locality if it has merit.

What achievements are you most proud of in your districts?

At Lincolnview Local, we secured a grant from the state and moved to a one-to-one (computer) initiative in less than a year with a complete technology overhaul. We implemented changes and embraced the model of innovate, evaluate and

pivot, if needed, to work through the overhaul. We've also laid the groundwork for implementing a STEM program and working with outside stakeholders in the alternative energy sector to leverage these stakeholders as a true partner, not just a taxpayer.

At Vantage Career Center, it's been amazing to see the accomplishments and placement rates of many of our students. For example, seniors are graduating with welding certifications and moving to high-paying jobs immediately after graduation. That is a great accomplishment with a lot of opportunity for our corner of Ohio. We've also partnered with the alternative energy sector to launch a program to train technicians to service wind turbines, a very growing niche market.

My greatest pride, though, regardless of the district in the state, is seeing a student reach or exceed his or her potential given the circumstances laid before them. For a great many of Ohio students, education may be the least of their worries.

Food and housing insecurity, even in rural northwest Ohio, is a real concern. To see those kids show up, do the work and say, "I'm not going to let this hold me back," humbles me greatly, and I'm glad to contribute whatever I can to facilitate those opportunities. ■



Germann listens as a medical technologies student explains her work at Vantage Career Center.



Want exceptional results? Be an exceptional board.

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Fulfilling your role and responsibilities has become more challenging than ever. Energize your board with OSBA.

We become part of your team and offer guidance to set priorities and goals, review mission and values, conduct board goals and self-evaluation or superintendent evaluation and much more. From transitions in your leadership team to sustaining a positive culture to working to conduct effective deliberations and meetings, OSBA is a valuable resource.

Call the OSBA Division of School Board Services to begin energizing your board today.



Ohio School Boards Association
(614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA
www.ohioschoolboards.org



Recognize local support with OSBA Business Honor Roll

Amanda Finney, senior marketing and trade show manager

OSBA is pleased to announce the launch of the association's sixth annual Business Honor Roll. Since its inception, this successful program has helped hundreds of school districts recognize local businesses for supporting their schools.

Local firms play a significant role in supporting their communities' schools. That support is especially important as Ohio school districts continue to face budget uncertainties, ever-increasing accountability demands and challenging economic conditions.

This popular program provides districts a way to recognize their local businesses and say "thank you" for their contributions. If there are firms in your district that are deserving of this recognition, OSBA strongly urges you to select them for the Business Honor Roll.

School districts have found the program to be very valuable, as do the businesses recognized. Here are several examples.

"In 2015, **Margaretta Local (Erie)** honored five local businesses as part of the OSBA Business Honor Roll program," said **Daniel J. Schroer**, the district's superintendent. "Each business has had a tremendously positive impact on our school district through a major project or through many years of support. Each business was honored at our local board of education meeting and the response from business leaders was very positive."

"The 2015 Business Honor Roll presentation provided a setting for a very positive, upbeat board meeting with all three of our honorees attending to be recognized and thanked for their support," said **Russell Chaboudy, Coventry Local (Summit)** superintendent. "This was a great opportunity for the school board and administration to personally recognize these business owners for their contributions and partnerships with our school district and the community. We will definitely participate again in this program because there are a lot of businesses in the area that give their support for our schools in many different ways."

Scholars in Education Law

A TEAM OF ATTORNEYS DEDICATED TO THE NEEDS OF OHIO'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Upper Valley Career Center honored its local businesses with framed plaques given to business leaders by school personnel as a “thank you” for their support.

“The businesses are proud to display the plaques in their offices and have featured this award in their own social media releases ... it’s a great way to extend our appreciation in this public and positive way,” said Dr. **Nancy D. Luce**, Upper Valley Career Center superintendent.

Businesses help support their schools in many ways, including:

- internships and job shadowing programs;
- volunteering in schools and offering employees time off to volunteer;
- serving as a mentor or tutor;
- supporting extracurricular programs;
- hosting company tours or sponsoring field trips;
- supporting programs with in-kind or financial assistance;
- delivering presentations to individual classes or at assemblies;
- buying ads in event programs;
- donating to scholarship programs.

Businesses also provide many other types of support, so districts shouldn’t limit themselves to this list when selecting firms to honor.

School-business partnerships are good for all involved. Schools receive additional support that they desperately

need. Students get real-world experience and the benefits of learning from professionals in many different fields. And businesses can gain a better understanding of their school systems and let educators know about the critical workforce skills they need.

The program allows districts to make up to five selections: four individual businesses for any support and one category for support of a specific project that can name multiple businesses.

To make your selections online, go to the OSBA Business Honor Roll Web page at www.ohioschoolboards.org/business-honor-roll and click on the nomination form link. The deadline to submit selections is Friday, March 25; OSBA cannot accept nominations after that date.

The Business Honor Roll Web page also features a resource kit with everything districts need to recognize the valuable contributions of their business partners. The kit includes a sample board resolution, sample press release and tips on ways to recognize honorees.

OSBA will mail personalized certificates and Journal magazines for each firm to district superintendents in time for boards to present them at May meetings. A list of winners will be featured on the association’s website.

For questions on this program, contact the article’s author at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or afinney@ohioschoolboards.org. ■



Get on board with OSBA School Transportation CONSULTING

OSBA can help districts assess their transportation needs and offer personal assistance with transportation rules interpretations, policy questions and technical advice. We also provide the following services:

- transportation operation cost analysis and benchmarking studies;
- routing analysis;
- fleet management assistance;
- general operations evaluation;
- regional coordination studies;
- in-service presentations for drivers and administrators;
- evaluation of specific transportation services, including payment in lieu of transportation;
- bus purchasing and specification development;
- driver qualifications compliance review;
- transportation emergency plan development;
- development of local student transportation handbooks.

To learn more, contact **Pete Japikse** at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or schoolbus@ohioschoolboards.org.

OSBA welcomes



Veterans offer tips for first-time board members

Among the more than 1,400 school board members who recently took office, approximately 450 of them are taking a board seat for the first time. They are new to the duties and tasks of serving on a leadership team that provides educational opportunities for its community's children.

OSBA welcomes and congratulates Ohio's new school board members. There is no greater contribution a citizen-servant can make than serving on a public board of education.

Many people will be counting on you as an elected leader, and your service will require plenty of time, patience and drive. Teamwork, cooperation and communication come with the

responsibility of serving on a school board.

Your service will require you to balance concerns, requests and demands from throughout the community. Know that OSBA will be there to help guide you to success by providing countless resources, from training, consultation and publications to legislative advocacy, labor relations and program pooling.

Much of this issue of the Journal focuses on new board members. For this article, OSBA asked veteran members and association staff to offer insight and advice on educational leadership and board governance. Their responses follow.

new members

*Scott Gerfen,
assistant editor*

School board members

What is the most valuable piece of advice you would give to a new member on your school board?

Eric K. Germann, OSBA president; board member, Lincolnview Local (Van Wert) and Vantage Career Center; six years of board service: Listen and seek to understand, then be understood.

Denise Baba, OSBA president-elect; board member, Streetsboro City; nine years of board service: Educate yourself and learn how to become an effective school board member. That means understanding your role and responsibilities. That also includes developing awareness of the boundaries between your role as part of a board that sets policy and the role of the superintendent hired to administer that policy.

Gail Martindale, Cedar Cliff Local (Greene) and Greene County Career Center; 17 years of board service: Be enthusiastic! Stand behind your district's mission and vision. Take advantage of every opportunity to increase your knowledge and become a better board member.

What is a school board's most important responsibility?

Ed Penrod, OSBA immediate past president; board member, Logan-Hocking Local (Hocking) and Tri-County Career Center; 19 years of board service: Always remember to ensure the best interests of our children in all that we do as board members — we are counted on by them to meet their educational needs. Further, hiring and supporting the superintendent and treasurer as well as maintaining open dialogue and guidance are critical to a successful board and district. Always focus on the entire district to improve student achievement. Setting policy and allowing the superintendent to carry out the policy and procedures also is an important responsibility.

Dr. Marguerite Bennett, Mount Vernon City and Knox County Career Center; 27 years of board service: Making wise decisions in hiring a superintendent and treasurer or supporting those already in place is extremely important. Those two positions are critical to any district's success. Our board is blessed with two excellent people, and that makes my job so much easier. ... Board members also can help their districts by carefully directing community members' attention back to what is best for all students when they focus on personal agenda items.

Bob Vasquez, Toledo City; seven years of board service: The most important responsibility is to provide a quality education to the students. The district needs to make sure there are adequate resources — meaning people (our staff) and finances. The staff is a priority because they are delivering the service to our students. They need to be supported in any way they can. We also are responsible for securing and allocating the federal, state and local finances of the district. The trust and support of the local community is absolutely necessary.

What makes for an effective school board?

Germann: One which can work together to resolve differences, then move forward in a unified manner, regardless of its members' personal feelings or agendas.

Baba: Collaboration. Personal agendas should be left outside the doors of the boardroom. Once the board is in session, the primary focus of its members should be to make decisions that yield the greatest benefit to the district's students. The focus should be on student welfare as we seek to prepare students for career and college readiness so that they may someday be fully participating members of society.

Martindale: Collaboration. Strong board members ask questions, exchange ideas and work together as a team for the benefit of all students.

What are your top priorities as a school board member?

Germann: Listening to the community; engaging with the business and political community to develop alternative sources of revenue; and lobbying on behalf of our district and the education community to challenge and change ideas that are disruptive to the learning process.

Baba: In a general sense, I believe all school board members need to be concerned with the financial health of their district, the need to attract and retain quality administrators and policy issues. Beyond that, I think priorities are unique to the individual needs of your district.

Martindale: Student achievement is the No. 1 priority. Focus on what is best for all students and then implement policy to ensure success.

Penrod: Set the vision and goals for the district. Adopt



policies that give the district direction. Hire and evaluate the superintendent and treasurer. Adopt and oversee the annual budget. Take action in the best interests of our children to ensure student achievement.

Bennett: I am committed to doing what is best for kids by conscientiously examining each board decision with that question in mind. I also am committed to honoring the community's trust that I will make responsible decisions and appropriately steward the district's finances and resources.

Vasquez: My top priority is to make sure every student is college- or career-ready upon graduation. Always maintain and increase the quality of education we provide to students and make sure the public school district is at the core of the community and has the respect and resulting support of the community. ... (W)e all have an obligation to support students and ensure their success in making us a prosperous community.

What is the most challenging aspect of being a school board member?

Germann: Keeping up with the avalanche of legislative changes at the state level (and to some extent, federal level) and the consequences thereof.

Penrod: Focusing on districtwide issues and policies, knowing the children of the community are counting on you to look out for their welfare and make decisions that will allow them to have the best education possible.

Martindale: School funding and legislation are the most challenging topics currently facing board members.

Vasquez: Engaging all parents in the school district. Helping the different special interest groups understand that the priority is the student and our collaboration always needs to relate back to supporting that priority. Securing the financial resources at the federal, state and local level. Our revenue is constantly shifting. The need to financially support public education should be a top priority for the country.

Is there something you wish you would have known as a new board member?

Germann: Keeping up with legislative policy can be a daunting task, but OSBA's resources are unparalleled in educating new board members. School finance also is a daunting system to understand but achievable if you seek

advice and continued education.

Penrod: How to distinguish school board policy from procedure in the educational system. Policy is the "what." Procedure is the "how."

Bennett: There are times when an issue requires confidentiality. However, the community wants this issue openly addressed and that places board members in an awkward position. Know that maintaining your personal integrity, being committed to doing the right thing and speaking only the truth, or maintaining respectful silence when necessary, will enable peace, good sleep and positive memories of your work on the board.

Vasquez: I think that new board members believe they know what is involved with being a board member, but find there is much more (to learn) than they thought. Many people are involved with the district in one way or another but only know the district from that viewpoint. A board member must take a high-level view of the district. That view sometimes reveals that there are competing interests that an individual, before becoming a board member, would not have known existed.

How can board members increase student achievement?

Germann: By allowing students, staff and administrators the opportunity to fail fast and move on. It sounds paradoxical, but if no one has an occasional failure, they're not moving out of their comfort zone and taking a risk. Take risks, assess the results, adjust and move on. The trick is to ensure that it's a teachable moment and doesn't spiral out of control.

Baba: Hire a knowledgeable superintendent who is dedicated to and focused on student achievement. Set clear, measurable goals and objectives to which your superintendent is held accountable. Then have the confidence to allow your district's instructional leader to achieve those goals and objectives without being micromanaged by the board.

Penrod: In partnership with the community and staff, school boards set the vision for student learning and share the beliefs and goals that contribute to student learning, including conditions in the learning environment that affect teaching and learning.

Is there any other advice you would offer to a new member of your school board?

Germann: Listen a lot. If you're looking for affirmation, people usually don't call to say you or the board did something right. Treasure those moments when you do hear positive feedback because it was significant enough for someone to take the time to call. Finally, don't take it personally when the public disagrees with you.

Baba: Serving on your local school board has its challenges. However, I have always considered it a privilege. I hope new school board members never forget that they are making a real

impact. The decisions school board members make impact the lives of their district's students, employees and the wider community. That's quite a responsibility and, again, it's a privilege.

Penrod: Listen, listen, listen! Then, be willing to compromise and work together to ensure educational excellence for all district students and Ohio public education. Rise to the challenge.

Martindale: Have fun. Lightness holds a board together as much as shared values and vision.

Bennett: Enjoy yourself. You have answered a worthwhile and fulfilling calling to serve your community through board leadership of your school district. Attend as many student events as you can. Get to know your administrators, teachers, staff and students. Visit your schools and see firsthand how hard teachers and staff are working to make your students succeed and your district function effectively. Acknowledge their efforts and thank them whenever you have the opportunity. ... Take advantage of all the opportunities afforded you through OSBA. Not only will you be better informed and linked to a wealth of resources, but you also will meet incredible people along the way.

Vasquez: Listen to everyone. Gather all the pertinent information before making a decision. Remember your role as a board member. Provide good leadership. There will be tough decisions.

OSBA staff

What is some basic advice you would give to a new school board member?

Rob Delane, deputy executive director and former superintendent at Lucas Local (Richland): Keep an open mind. Become informed and knowledgeable about the issues facing education and in developing leadership within your school district. Set the vision and goals for the school district, trust those who have the responsibility to implement the vision and hold them accountable for results.

Cheryl W. Ryan, director of school board services and former Hilliard City Board of Education member: Listen more than you talk. But don't hesitate to offer your thoughts when asked or when appropriate.

Steve Horton, school board services consultant and former Mount Healthy City Board of Education member: Be patient. There are many layers of understanding and a definite learning curve associated with school board work. No one comes into the position for the first time armed with all of the information needed to hit the ground running. Ask a lot of questions and be willing to do more listening than talking.

What makes a great school board member?

Damon Asbury, director of legislative services; his extensive career in public education administration includes serving as superintendent, associate superintendent of management



services and assistant superintendent at Columbus City and superintendent at Worthington City: There is no sure-fire recipe since the circumstances vary so widely across Ohio's more than 700 school districts. However, dedication and commitment to students through sound policy guidance and fiscal operations and the search for solutions based on the input of the entire team is important. The team includes not only your fellow board colleagues, but also input from the wider educational team — teachers, administrators, parents and community. You are elected to make the final decisions, but those decisions should reflect the contributions of all.

Sara C. Clark, director of legal services: Being a successful board member begins with a genuine commitment to high-quality public education for all children. Great board members form collaborative networks with the school district, the community, the legislature and other key stakeholders. They work cooperatively with these networks, place students at the center of their decision-making process and ensure every deliberation, decision and action reflects the best interests of the students they serve.



Van D. Keating, director of management services: When I look back at the great board members I have known, all share a common trait: the so-called “common touch.” They are the members who are interested in what their district is doing and how it reflects the community's values. Their goal seems to be reflective of what is best for the community and students, not what is best for any individual or select group. A great board member knows everybody — and everybody knows him or her — on a first-name basis. He or she believes it's a civic duty to participate in public education. Great board members don't think they are anything special; they do the best job because they truly represent their community.

What can a new board member do to improve his or her skills?

Delane: Continuous self-improvement is not simply a process itself — it's a way of thinking about everything one does. Improving skills is a matter of habit. Given the

changing landscape of public education today, the only way to keep current with educational issues is through ongoing professional development. Participating in OSBA seminars, conferences and webinars are sure-fire ways to build on individual skills. Networking with one's peers is another important way to expand knowledge and learn from the successes of others.

Ryan: Network with veteran board members in and out of your own district. Attend as many OSBA regional and statewide conferences and workshops as possible.

Horton: There are volumes of reading material and many professional development opportunities available, especially through OSBA. Training is very important. However, equally, if not more important, is taking advantage of colleagues who have gained a strong base of understanding and practical knowledge. As a new board member, I learned that my superintendent and others were more than willing to counsel me on the intricacies of school operation and leadership. I also learned a tremendous amount about the work and what to expect from a network of experienced board members.

Asbury: The “one-size-does-not-fit-all” mantra is particularly suitable for meeting the skill development needs of new board members. I would urge you to begin at home by talking with each of your board colleagues, the superintendent and treasurer to gain their perspective and also to share yours. I also would certainly encourage you to take advantage of the many learning opportunities available through OSBA workshops, conferences, webinars and publications.

What are the biggest challenges facing Ohio public education today?

Asbury: I believe the greatest challenge lies in the erosion of local control. Too many external interests are vying to take over the legitimate responsibility of the elected boards of education. The second greatest challenge lies in the relentless drive by those who wish to privatize public education, often for economic gain. And finally, the need to maintain a strong, relevant and responsive educational program in the face of diverse issues is ongoing.

Clark: At both the federal and state level, public education is undergoing major and rapid changes. Understanding and translating them for your community's schools requires steady, ongoing work.

Keating: I would offer that in many respects, education in Ohio is continually challenged by the never-ending efforts to determine exactly what a high school graduate needs to know to be successful. Success is measured in a wide variety of ways, whether it is getting admitted to college, finding a job or possessing necessary life skills. Public education is the pathway to success, but how it is measured seems to be an evolving and

constantly changing target.

What do new board members need to know about OSBA?

Delane: OSBA is *their* professional organization and is the respected voice of public education in Ohio. Our main reason for existence is to be responsive to their unique needs and we are invested in their success. To that end, it is important to note that OSBA provides access to experienced staff with diverse experiences and backgrounds; an unwavering advocacy effort on their behalf at the local, state and national levels; valuable services and programs that often save districts more than the cost of their dues; and professional development and ongoing training opportunities on critical topics and issues designed to help them be successful in their role as a board member.

Ryan: We provide an amazing amount of help and service, and we have been serving public school board members and their districts for more than 60 years.

Horton: I have come to realize in my time as a board member and as part of the OSBA staff that there is no stronger advocate for our public school districts and their importance as the bedrock of our society than OSBA. As a board member, you are part of a powerful network of school leadership

throughout not only Ohio but also the nation.

Asbury: If you see a need and aren't sure where to turn, call an OSBA staff member and they will try to guide you. Your association is a well-respected voice for public education in Ohio, and we look forward to adding your perspective to amplify that voice.

Clark: We are invested in your success and work hard to offer relevant information to help you and your staff. Use us. Call us. Attend our trainings. Read our publications. We are here for you.

Keating: Board members should remember that OSBA is always there to help them, their districts and their employees in any number of ways. We are not only a tremendous resource for information and advice, but we also provide services that are professional, economical and always responsive to each individual school district. We may have more than 700 member districts, but each district is special and unique. ■

Editor's note: OSBA has developed a Web page specifically for new board members at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/49459>.

OSBA minipoll yields valuable advice for new board members

Amanda Finney, senior marketing and trade show manager

In January, OSBA conducted a minipoll of veteran school board members statewide, asking them to provide tips, insights and advice for newly elected board members. Below is a sampling of responses from nearly 100 seasoned board members.

The association hopes new board members find this information helpful as they embark on their board service journey. And remember, OSBA is always here to help and is just a phone call or email away.

Top five most common responses:

- Listen! Listen to each other, administrators, staff, students and the community. This tip was the most popular response from seasoned veterans.
- Take advantage of learning and professional development. Attendance at OSBA workshops and other events rated high on veterans' lists of suggestions, along with reading OSBA publications.
- Ask questions and a lot of them; this helps you learn quickly. And remember, there is no stupid question, and you aren't expected to know everything right away.
- Keep students first and remember they are the heart of the school district and the purpose for your work.
- Teamwork is imperative, and it's important to respect each other at all times.

Additional responses include:

- Do not micromanage the district and administration team.
- Know your community and take an interest in what's going on.
- One of your main responsibilities is to hire the superintendent and treasurer.
- Don't come to meetings with your own personal agenda.
- Attend school functions, such as graduations, academic events, sporting events, concerts and art shows.
- Work to understand policy and legislation affecting public education; ask questions if anything is confusing.
- Always communicate with your fellow board members.
- Change does not happen quickly.
- Remember, there is a learning curve to board service.
- Go slow and take your time to learn.
- Attend the OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show in November.
- It's crucial for the board to communicate with one voice.
- Create a school board handbook if your district does not have one.
- Read through all of your district's policies and understand them.
- Learn to understand school finance reports.
- Executive session remains private, always.
- Arrive early to all meetings.
- Gather all facts, if possible, prior to making decisions.

Administrators offer insights for new board members



Crystal Davis, assistant editor

To help new school board members start their service on the right foot with district administrators, OSBA solicited advice from superintendents and treasurers. They were selected at random to share their opinions on topics such as audits, finances, superintendent and treasurer evaluations, dealing with the news media, board-administrator relationships and advice for new board members.

Superintendents

What is the most important piece of advice you would give a new board member about working with district administration, especially the superintendent?

Dr. Valerie M. Browning-Thompson, Pickerington Local (Fairfield); 10 years experience as a superintendent: Talk with your superintendent and experienced board members

about how to best communicate in your district. Each district has different norms about how it communicates. ... Do not be afraid to ask questions. We use a lot of jargon in education and often forget that new board members are not familiar with the terms we use.

Donald F. Diglia, Ayersville Local (Defiance); 11 years experience as a superintendent: Even though our roles are different, we must have common goals. The superintendent and board must plan together, and both need to support each other to have a positive and effective impact for the district.

Dr. Vicki A. Wheatley, Tiffin City; two years experience as a superintendent: I feel it is important that all board members

receive the same information, so when I communicate with one, I am going to share with the other board members. I feel it is extremely important that on the day of the board meeting, if I have not heard from the board members, I call to see if they have any questions regarding the agenda items.

David Gaul, Amanda-Clearcreek Local (Fairfield); four years experience as a superintendent: Know the roles of all the players and familiarize yourself with policy. ... Policy is the hallmark in which boards of education can impact the entire student body of the district.

Connie Griffin, Brown Local (Carroll); 17 years experience as a superintendent: Participate in OSBA training and respect the district chain of communication by directing your inquiries through the superintendent.

Sharon McDermott, Franklin Local (Muskingum); five years experience as a superintendent: Talk with the superintendent if you hear something, as rumors can easily get started.

Dr. David Baits, Clinton-Massie Local (Clinton); 22 years experience as a superintendent: You will want to have a good working relationship with the superintendent, as we are all in the boat together. ... We all need to be working in the same direction, although our roles are very different.

What area of district operations or finances would you encourage board members to ask more questions about?

Browning-Thompson: Ask about the assumptions and the effect those assumptions could have on the five-year forecast, especially if they are incorrect. They also should ask about facilities. Will current facilities be adequate into the future? For how long?

Diglia: Know and use the chain of command when dealing with community or parent concerns. If this is followed, most concerns/complaints can be resolved before they ever reach the board. An understanding of state funding for schools is important as well as how the district budget is prepared.

Wheatley: Like it or not, we all have levy cycles. The board members should know the fund, purpose, levy type, number of years (or if it is a continuing measure) and when the tax year begins and ends.

Griffin: Inquire and learn about the varied categories of funding and their respective guidelines. For instance, grants and federal funds have specific purposes, as well as permanent improvement funds. Be prepared to explain expenditures if questioned.

Baits: The five-year forecast comes to mind, along with long-range planning in terms of money. ... School district finances are very different than private sector finances.

In what areas do you feel new board members often fall short in being prepared for board meetings?

Browning-Thompson: If board members have a specific question or concern about an agenda item and wait to ask about it during the meeting, this can slow down the decision-making process for the board because the superintendent or treasurer may need to research that question.

Gaul: I don't feel new board members fall short. I do feel that they need to find a manner (in which) they find comfortable to have an avenue for getting questions answered and clarifications for items (of concern).

Griffin: Knowledge of Robert's Rules of Order and the Sunshine Law.

McDermott: Being prepared for a board meeting includes reading and understanding the board agenda items ahead of the meeting. Members should talk with the superintendent prior to the meeting about items (with) which they have questions or concerns.

What advice about superintendent evaluations might you offer?

Browning-Thompson: I believe the board should use a standards-based evaluation that aligns with the superintendent's job description. The state developed a superintendents' evaluation system that was released in 2008. This is a good model to follow. The district will want to customize this model to meet its individual needs and job description. Additionally, work with the superintendent to develop goals. Limit those goals to two or three.

Diglia: Make the evaluation an ongoing process, not just a once-a-year meeting. Make sure superintendents know what you will be evaluating them on and request a quarterly, or at least, a semiannual update with evidence. This will improve the opportunity of success for everyone.

Wheatley: It is the superintendent's responsibility to make sure the board is updated on goals, whether they are met and, if not, why and what steps are being taken to meet those goals.

Baits: It should be a joint effort together, with goals and parameters set up early in the process ... then look at those goals and really try to be fair and consistent in doing it.

When you first became a superintendent, did you discover anything surprising about the position that might help new board members better understand your role?

Browning-Thompson: One of the biggest surprises was how important a good relationship between the superintendent and board can be. If it is good, it allows the district to run much smoother. When the relationship is bad, there is no trust and making improvements is difficult.

Diglia: The superintendent can't solve all problems ... no matter how good your intentions are and how thought out your responses or decisions, some people will disagree and not forget about it.

Wheatley: Board members should never have surprises, so immediately giving them the heads-up on situations is best. I provide a Friday update, I make immediate contact when emergencies arise and ... communicate regularly.

Gaul: The board is in charge of policy. The superintendent is in charge of making sure policy is followed. Policy needs to be reflected in actions. Actions need to be reflected in policy. If this is not the case, something needs to be adjusted.

Griffin: People test administrators and board members at the start of their service in many ways. Stay focused on what is best for students and don't get sidetracked by manipulative tactics.

Baits: As superintendent ... your job is different than everybody else's, so the importance of networking with other superintendents (and) attending professional meetings so you have those kind of relationships is important. ... I think the board needs to understand that and respect it.

What advice might you offer new board members about media interviews, including your district's best practices and policies in handling them?

Browning-Thompson: For the most part ... in controversial or crisis situations, we want one voice from the district, and that should usually be the superintendent or public relations director. When it is "happy news" we want to allow others, such as building staff or board members, to take the spotlight. When it is about a specific decision of the board, it should come from one voice, usually the board president.

Diglia: Remember, the authority to act rests with the entire board. Try to refrain from making comments as an individual board member.

Wheatley: I take the calls from the media and, if really controversial, I communicate with our legal counsel to have him provide a media release. More important than handling difficult news situations, the district *must* get out all of the positive things that are happening. *Flood* media outlets, as well as social media, and ... include students in every article or communication.

Griffin: Allow the district spokesperson to handle media interviews. I have provided a general statement guide to our board members for their response, which ultimately guides the media to the district spokesperson.

Do you have any other advice for new board members that can help ensure a productive and positive relationship between the superintendent and board?

Diglia: Understand you will receive calls and emails from concerned community members and parents. Don't try and solve the problem or promise a solution. Listen carefully, then refer (it) to the appropriate person (usually the superintendent). Remember, you might only be hearing one side of the story and, more often than not, you do not hear the whole story. Try to keep out of the middle of teacher and personnel problems.

Wheatley: Every decision should be made ... in the best interest of our students. Take a walk through one of your buildings; it will surely put a smile on your face, and it will remind you why we are all here.

Gaul: You are involved in the noblest activity ... to benefit the students of the district. Do this with pride, humility and honor.

McDermott: The superintendent should be providing updates and notifying (board) members of issues or concerns in the





district. Both should return missed calls from the other party to ensure open communication.

Treasurers

What is the most important piece of advice you would give a new board member about learning the ins and outs of district finances?

Alan W. Binger, Vanguard-Sentinel Career and Technology Centers; 26 years experience as a treasurer: Ask questions.

Usually, if one board member has a question about a financial issue, others on the board have the same question.

Emily Dales, Olmsted Falls City; 4.5 years experience as a treasurer or assistant treasurer: Learn how the state-funding formula is calculated and how much the taxpayers contribute to the district's revenue source. Also, take time to review the district's budgeting process and ask the treasurer to help explain this. A new board member should be able to answer general questions if approached within the community.

Bradley T. Hall, Heath City; 21 years experience as a treasurer: Go see the treasurer and ask questions. Do not try to learn at the board meeting.

Craig A. Jones, Dayton City; 11 years experience as a treasurer: Seek first to understand school finance fundamentals and the particular assumptions applicable to your district.

What area of district finances would you encourage board members to ask more questions about?

Binger: Please ask for at least a brief explanation of how the (state-funding) formula works and how much dependence the district has on its state support.

Dales: Develop an understanding of some of the bigger-picture items related to school funding and financing that aren't necessarily related to dollars and cents, like what is predicted for future enrollment, how many students are taking advantage of College Credit Plus opportunities and what is the impact of those state mandates.

Hall: Ask questions about the five-year forecast. The five-year (forecast) will let the members know when to plan to make cuts, slow down spending or ask the voters for new money.

Jones: Ask more questions about the five-year forecast assumptions, estimated revenue and appropriations. Good budgeting processes provide one of the most important monitoring controls a government has.

In what areas do you feel new board members often fall short in being prepared for board meetings?

Binger: If your treasurer is supplying financial information prior to a board meeting, please review it, at least briefly, before the meeting.

Dales: It would be helpful to have all new board members sit through a tutorial on expectations related to school law, district policy, meeting formalities and working as a united board. The district's leadership should start with the board and trickle down; being prepared to take on that leadership role is important.

Hall: They have not read the agenda and want to ask questions at open session. We always have the agenda to the members one week before the meeting ... (they should) do their homework so the meeting runs smoothly, and it appears that all are on the same page.

Jones: In my experience, board members are sometimes so busy with personal and professional lives they do not take time to read board agendas and the supporting documentation prior to the meeting.

As a treasurer, what advice would you provide about using audits?

Binger: Audits are very limited in scope and often do not uncover underlying fraud issues. It really takes the entire school district staff, and even the community, to help identify any potential fraudulent activity.

Dales: Be involved in the exit conference performed by the auditing firm at the end of every audit. This helps give insight on what was performed and the overall position of the district.

Hall: They are an outside eye on how well the treasurer is performing his or her duties for the district. It's a good evaluation tool.

Jones: Use them as a tool to improve rather than to focus on what is wrong. The recommendations should be part of the discussion about long-term financial planning.

What advice might you offer about treasurer evaluations?

Binger: Be sure to do annual evaluations of the treasurer, even when no problems can be identified. Many treasurers crave the feedback, yet report that they do not receive regular evaluations.

Dales: The treasurer's evaluation needs to be thorough and encompass every area of responsibility. The treasurer should be held accountable for his or her actions. In order to accomplish this, the board may need to have interviews with various district staff to fully understand how the treasurer interacts and handles daily operations.

Hall: I think (they are) one step in the evaluation process. Also (ask), how does the treasurer work with the board, administration and community?

Jones: Establish and follow a process that facilitates communication and understanding between the board and the treasurer. A climate of good will and mutual respect must exist. Measurable fiscal objectives should be prioritized as part of the overall district strategic plan.



When you first became a treasurer, did you discover anything surprising about the position that might help new board members better understand the treasurer's role?

Binger: There are many roles the treasurer assumes, which can vary greatly from district to district. Sit down with your treasurer and discuss the different roles so you know the job duties of the treasurer in your district. Some will surprise you.

Dales: The position is ever-changing and much more involved than just being an accountant for the district. ... The role of chief financial officer is functioning more like a chief communications officer with expectations to clearly communicate with the staff and community members in a way they understand. This level of communicating helps when the district has to turn to the taxpayers for new money.

Hall: You need to know that it takes a year to complete the cycle. There are daily, monthly and yearly jobs that need to be completed. It's a huge responsibility, managing the district's finances, balancing to the penny every month and predicting the future.

Jones: It is somewhat surprising to see that the policy adoption role of board members and the policy implementation role of administration, at times, are not recognized. Since the Ohio system of checks and balances establishes (that) both the treasurer and superintendent report

directly to the board, it is essential to clarify management- and policy-level tasks. The treasurer is the financial advisor to the board and the superintendent.

Do you have any other advice for new board members that can help ensure a productive and positive relationship between the treasurer and board?

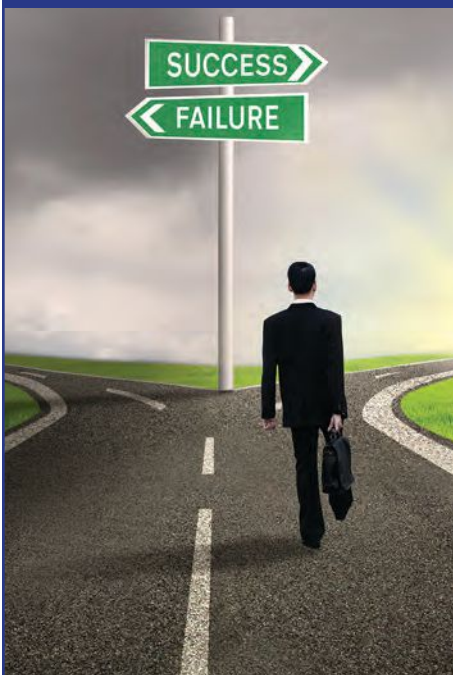
Binger: Remember that the treasurer is your direct employee. He or she does not report to the superintendent of the district. Keep the treasurer in the loop on pertinent board business and decisions.

Dales: Developing a relationship between the board members and treasurer is paramount to the board understanding the district's finances and being comfortable enough to ask questions when they don't understand how or why something was done. I feel it is the responsibility of the treasurer to prepare all board members for those unexpected questions while out in the community.

Hall: Let them do their job and do not micromanage the treasurer or superintendent.

Jones: It is very important to get to know one another on both a personal and professional level. My experience is that frequent, open and honest communication leads to positive relationships that support and improve performance. ■

Start employees on the path to success with an employee handbook



Many districts have employee handbooks, but they may be outdated or incomplete. OSBA can help your district create a concise and accurate handbook that is useful for employers and employees.

A handbook:

- provides clear notice of expectations to employees;
- is a handy reference for employees to answer questions and cover basic conditions of employment;
- supports growth and development;
- supports disciplinary actions when guidelines are not followed;
- is a reference tool for nonunion employees.

OSBA offers three options of tiered services to meet your district's needs, including:

- Standard – electronic template of handbook and sample language;
- Review – electronic template of handbook, consultant guidance and more;
- Premium – most complete service to a district.

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



Ohio Ethics Law and new school board members

Susan Willeke, education and communications administrator, Ohio Ethics Commission

The Ohio Ethics Commission welcomes new school board members to public service. Like all officials in Ohio, school board members have both privileges and responsibilities. Every day, public servants are privileged to help their fellow Ohioans, and this applies especially to those who strive to provide a quality education for Ohio’s children. The work in which you are embarking will better the lives of today’s students and those who will follow in their footsteps.

Public servants, including school board members, also have responsibilities. One responsibility is to comply with the Ohio Ethics Law. The law applies to all public officials and employees in the state, and the commission often is asked for practical advice for those new to public service. The following ethics tips for school board members are intended to help you work ethically and effectively to ensure compliance with the ethics law.

Recognize public service is different from the private sector

Ohio is fortunate to have so many committed public school officials and employees. In your public role, though, you do not represent your interest or that of your private employer, company or family. Your responsibility, of course, is to the district and its students. To promote impartial public actions, the ethics law recognizes that public interest supersedes self-interest. Your restrictions as a public servant may be different than those in the private sector.

Be prepared to recuse yourself

The basic assumption of the ethics law is that citizens deserve public servants who advance the public interest rather than their personal interests or those of closely related parties.

Simply put, a public official has a “conflict of interest” when his or her ability to be an objective decision maker is impaired by his or her interests, or the interests of family members or business associates. A conflict of interest is not, in and of itself, illegal. In fact, conflicts are common because public servants have families and friends and may have businesses, professions, investments, property interests and other connections to their communities. Any of these connections could result in a conflict of interest for the official. The law doesn’t prohibit the conflict; it prevents the official from *acting* on the conflict.

Pay your own way to entertainment events

The ethics law does not prohibit social functions — in fact, the public may benefit from interaction with private or nonprofit actors. The law simply obliges public officials and employees to pay for most entertainment events themselves. For example, school board members generally must pay their own way for a golf outing or fine dining. This protects both the private party and the public servant from concerns about the impartiality of public actions. If a vendor to your district invites you to participate in such an event, feel free to attend — just pick up your own tab. Questions? See the information sheet at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/32939>.



All school board members, rookies and veterans alike, must know their responsibilities under the Ohio Ethics Law.

Assume your school district will never be your client

Naturally, school districts purchase goods and services such as paper products, construction work and uniforms. The list goes on and on. These expenses are understandable and expected. Be aware, however, that *all* public school officials and employees are prohibited from having an interest in those purchases.

These ethics tips for school board members are intended to help you ensure compliance with the Ohio Ethics Law.

In other words, all school officials and employees — including board members — should assume that they will *not* sell goods and services to the district, unless very specific exceptions are met. For more information, see the information sheet at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/35638>.

Just say ‘no’ to nepotism

The practice of hiring family members in the private sector may be routine and legal. In public service, however,

nepotism is a fourth-degree felony. Family members are not prohibited from working for or serving with the same school district. However, directly hiring your relative or using your position to influence others to hire him or her is illegal. If a family member inquires about a job at the district, refer him or her to the district website and encourage the applicant to pursue the normal process. Then, stay out of it! For details, see the information sheet at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/96585>.

Ask before taking action

Perhaps the most valuable advice about the ethics law is to ask before you act. The tips in this article cannot substitute for the application of the law to specific circumstances. The majority of the Ohio Ethics Commission’s work involves informing and advising about the application of the ethics law, so when you have a question or concern, do not hesitate to call the commission at (614) 466-7090 or visit its website at www.ethics.ohio.gov.

The Ohio Ethics Commission is here to help you and the public by encouraging ethical actions and decision making. The commission recognizes that the vast majority of public school board members act ethically. We welcome the opportunity to work with you to support the highest ethical standards for your district. ■

WHAT ENROLLMENT CHALLENGES DOES YOUR DISTRICT FACE?

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 - FEEDER SCHOOL CHANGES
 - SCHOOL OVERCROWDING
 - GRADE CONFIGURATION CHANGES
- DECLINING ENROLLMENT**
 - SPECIAL PROGRAM PLACEMENT
 - SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION
 - CLASS SIZE REDUCTION
- ATTENDANCE BOUNDARY CHANGES**
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CURRENTLY SERVING DISTRICTS THROUGHOUT OHIO



OSBA is your association

New board members: OSBA is here for you

Amanda Finney, senior marketing and trade show manager

As a newly elected school board member, you have just begun your board career and are most likely learning a great deal about your district, community and public education. During your tenure as a citizen-servant, you will be making myriad decisions — some large and some small — that will impact your district’s students, staff and community.

OSBA understands the critical decisions all board members must make for their districts. OSBA is *your* association and wants you to know no matter where you are in your boardmanship journey, OSBA is here for you.

Quick facts about OSBA

Founded: 1955

Headquarters: Columbus

Executive director: **Richard Lewis**

Governance: Elected officers; Delegate Assembly; Board of Trustees; Executive Committee; regional officers and executive committees; and statewide committees

Regions: Five regions – Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest

Composition: 711 school boards and their 3,424 board members representing Ohio’s local, city, exempted village, career center and educational service center districts

Website: www.ohioschoolboards.org

OSBA offers a multitude of programs, services and benefits to help you. Your association is dedicated to board members and the districts they serve. When newly elected board members first learn about OSBA, they might wonder, “What does OSBA do?” and “How can this organization benefit my district?”

This article will touch on OSBA’s services to answer these important questions. However, to get a full scope of how your association can help, visit OSBA’s website at www.ohioschoolboards.org. You will find there truly is something for everyone.

New board member resources

The association website features a section just for newly elected board members at www.ohioschoolboards.org/new-board-members. Here you will find valuable resources and vital information. Please review this page, if you have not already done so, to ensure you are up-to-date with all OSBA has to offer.

Superior services and creative solutions

Many of OSBA’s services are *free* as part of your district’s membership, including legislative representation and consultations with experts in board development, policy, school law, communication and labor relations, just to name a few.

Fee-based services also are available for districts that need additional assistance. By charging for services that not every member district needs or uses, OSBA keeps its membership dues among the lowest of the state school boards associations.

A few examples of fee-based services include arbitration and bargaining consultation; customized workshops; a workers’ compensation program; and publication subscriptions such as the Briefcase, CommunicationPlus, Policy Development Quarterly and School Management News newsletters.

OSBA divisions — each one is working for you

Since 1955, OSBA has been serving school board members and their districts with innovative and outstanding services. The association fulfills its mission by offering members access to a variety of specialized services. Each of the divisions at OSBA offers excellent opportunities for school districts. Examples include:

Division of Business and Finance — Insurance programs for school districts (life, accidental death and dismemberment, and disability); treasurer and position bond programs.

Division of Communication Services — Publications, including the Briefcase and CommunicationPlus newsletters and Journal magazine; Capital Conference and Trade Show; OSBA video updates; and workshop coordination.

Division of Legal Services — Legal Assistance Fund; legal consulting; legal publications; and a legal blog found at www.ohioschoolboards.org/wpmu.

Division of Legislative Services — The legislative e-newsletters Facts in a Flash and The Link; Federal Relations Network; Ohio Education Policy Institute; Kids PAC; legislative publications and articles; and legislative



representation.

Division of Management Services — Arbitration representation; bargaining consultation; labor relations consulting and training; management and policy publications; policy development consulting; school safety and security workshops and training; strike crisis assistance; transportation services; and workers' compensation pooling program.

Division of School Board Services — Administrative and executive searches; Award of Achievement; board evaluation; Board Leadership Institute and other specialized board and administrator training; management team retreats; strategic planning and

community surveys; and Capital Conference and Trade Show.

OSBA endorsed programs

Other outstanding areas of service for districts are offered through OSBA's endorsed programs. OSBA selectively supports outside providers to deliver products and services to members when the program offers a special value or unique benefit. These endorsed programs provide the services necessary to effectively manage schools and save districts money.

OSBA's endorsed programs include a bond program; electricity purchasing pool; insurance programs; management consulting; National School Boards

Association National Connection; online payment program; online purchasing cooperative; online safety compliance program; paperless governance solution; procurement card program; school safety and security software; and risk management program. Descriptions of these programs can be found at www.ohioschoolboards.org/osba-endorsed-programs.

As you can see, there is a wide variety of services and information immediately available for effective school management. If you have any questions about these services, or would like to schedule a visit from one of our consultants, please call (800) 589-OSBA or (614) 540-4000. ■

OSBA Student Achievement Fair

Tuesday, Nov. 15, 2016 • 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. • Greater Columbus Convention Center

The OSBA Capital Conference Student Achievement Fair highlights outstanding student performance groups and fresh, innovative initiatives from school districts across the state. The fair will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 15, 2016, during the OSBA Capital Conference.

Student Achievement Fair performing groups

OSBA will choose one school district performing group from each of the association's five regions to perform during the Student Achievement Fair. Each group will perform for 20 minutes. To nominate a performing group, submit a nomination at <http://conference.ohioschoolboards.org/saf-nominations> and email an electronic video audition or YouTube link to **Cheryl W. Ryan**, director of school board services, at cryan@ohioschoolboards.org. Only electronic recordings will be accepted.



Student Achievement Fair district programs

OSBA is accepting nominations for district programs that improve student achievement. For ideas, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/60021> to view the list of 2015 Student Achievement Fair district programs.

One hundred programs highlighting student achievement will be selected. Nominate a district program at <http://conference.ohioschoolboards.org/saf-nominations>.

The nomination deadline is Friday, June 24. If you have questions, contact **Gwen Samet** (gsamet@ohioschoolboards.org) or **Cheryl W. Ryan** (cryan@ohioschoolboards.org) at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA.



Navigating OSBA

A guide for new board members

Angela Penquite, managing editor

For more than 60 years, the Ohio School Boards Association has served Ohio's public boards of education.

Although it was founded as a statewide group in 1955, the organization traces its roots to southeast Ohio, where area school board members began holding conferences in 1950 to discuss the challenges facing public schools in the first few years of the postwar baby boom. Those conferences led to the creation of the Southeastern Ohio School Boards Association.

In the next few years, four other regional school boards groups were formed in Ohio. On Dec. 3, 1955, the five regions came together at Ohio State University in Columbus to establish a statewide organization and hold OSBA's inaugural meeting. The next day, 300 school

board members from 128 districts adopted the OSBA Constitution and Bylaws, which would govern the association and guide it to where it stands today — serving more than 3,400 board members in more than 700 school districts.

Since its inception, the association has continually evolved to meet the ever-changing challenges of public education. However, one thing has remained unchanged for more than six decades — OSBA's commitment to helping local school board members provide high-quality leadership to their districts.

That commitment is reflected in the association's mission statement: "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."



School board members and district administrators network with colleagues and OSBA staff at the spring and fall region conferences.

Following is a primer on “navigating” OSBA to help you understand how your association works and find the resources and tools you need to succeed as a school board member.

OSBA website and contact information

Based in Columbus, OSBA’s Web address is www.ohioschoolboards.org. Certain pages are for members only and require a username and password for access. If you don’t already have them, you can create a username and password using the “Login” button at the top right on the website, selecting “First time logging in?” and following the prompts.

OSBA’s phone numbers are (614) 540-4000 and (800) 589-OSBA (toll free). If you have a legal question, you can call the legal hotline at (855) OSBA-LAW. The fax number is (614) 540-4100. For staff members’ email addresses and phone extensions, visit www.ohioschoolboards.org/staff-directory. The page also provides brief staff biographies.

OSBA staff members are experts in school district operations and state education policy. To learn who can answer your questions, visit the Staff Resources page at www.ohioschoolboards.org/osba-staff-resources. For information on OSBA’s divisions, visit www.ohioschoolboards.org/organizational-structure.

Governance structure

OSBA’s policies are determined by its members, making it a truly member-driven organization. The Board of Trustees and Executive Committee govern the association. These two groups comprise the governance team.

The Board of Trustees is made up of the association’s officers (president, president-elect and immediate past president); the presidents, presidents-elect and immediate past presidents of the five regional associations; one representative from each of the six Ohio districts with the largest student enrollment; and no fewer than six or more than eight other individuals. Each region is entitled to a minimum of four seats on the Board of Trustees, inclusive of the region officers and one at-large appointment and exclusive of the six districts with the largest student enrollment. OSBA’s executive director and regional managers serve on the board in an ex officio capacity.

The Executive Committee consists of the OSBA officers and a member appointed by and from each of the regional executive committees to serve for one year.

Each member school board is entitled to appoint one of its members to the Delegate Assembly. The assembly conducts an annual business meeting in November during the OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show. Its responsibilities, carried out through the democratic process, include: determining association policies; amending the OSBA

Meet the regional managers

OSBA is divided into five regions; each has an OSBA staff member who serves as the regional manager. The managers and their contact information are listed below.



Central Region
Kim Miller-Smith
Phone: (614) 635-1926
Email: kmillersmith@ohioschoolboards.org



Northeast Region
Reno Contipelli
Phone: (330) 485-3731
Email: rcontipelli@ohioschoolboards.org



Northwest Region
Dr. Judy Jackson May
Phone: (419) 581-9782
Email: jjacksonmay@ohioschoolboards.org



Southeast Region
Paul D. Mock
Phone: (740) 469-2724
Email: pmock@ohioschoolboards.org



Southwest Region
Ronald J. Diver
Phone: (937) 634-9025
Email: rdiver@ohioschoolboards.org

To find your region, see the map posted at www.ohioschoolboards.org/regions. The page also offers links to each region that provide information on officers, events, awards and activities.

Constitution and Bylaws; adopting resolutions to amend OSBA’s Legislative Platform; and electing the OSBA president-elect.

The OSBA Constitution and Bylaws guide the association, while the Legislative Platform publicly states OSBA’s positions on public education issues and advocacy efforts. These governance documents are posted at www.ohioschoolboards.org/osba-governance.

OSBA regions

To enhance and customize member services, OSBA is divided into five regions: Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest. The regions host spring and fall conferences, annual Treasurers’ Clinics, open houses and other activities. Regional officers and managers also staff the Region Resource Center at the annual Capital Conference. OSBA’s statewide leadership is drawn from those who serve on regional governance bodies.

Regional governance is aligned with OSBA’s statewide structure. Each region is represented by a president,



president-elect, immediate past president and executive committee. The executive committees determine policies for their regions; recruit regional and statewide leaders; represent regional interests; help assess needs; conduct regional legislative platform meetings; and increase awareness of OSBA among school districts and the public.

Each region is served by a regional manager, who is an OSBA staff member assigned to coordinate activities. Managers also serve as liaisons to the association's Columbus staff and the region's school district leaders. See page 37 for the managers' photos, phone numbers and email addresses.

To learn more about the regions, visit www.ohioschoolboards.org/regions. The page features links to region Web pages, contact information for regional managers and a map showing what counties are in each region.

Special organizations

Several specialized groups provide board members opportunities to work with peers from other districts with similar challenges and interests: the OSBA Black Caucus; Small School District Advisory Network; and Urban School District Advisory Network.



Running a district is hard
Lighten your load with an updated policy manual

You need an up-to-date policy manual to run your district effectively. OSBA can help. Our policy consultants will assist in updating your manual, ensuring your district's policies are current and up-to-date with the Ohio Revised and Administrative codes.

Call Jeannette Radcliff, OSBA senior administrative assistant of management services, at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA, to begin updating your manual today.

The OSBA Black Caucus promotes and provides education on challenges African-American board members face. The caucus offers a statewide forum on the practical issues facing black school board members; builds public awareness of racial diversity in schools; promotes equity in education; and supports initiatives to increase African-American student achievement.

The Small School District Advisory Network consists of about a dozen small school districts that are representative of all small district interests. Network members exchange information on the challenges of small districts; develop programs and policies to meet the educational needs of those districts; and make recommendations to the OSBA executive director about small districts' educational needs.

The Urban School District Advisory Network represents large and small urban districts as designated by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). The network supports urban school boards through advocacy; collaboration; communication; sharing and publishing information and current promising practices; training geared toward relevant educational opportunities and common issues; and using collective assets to benefit urban school districts.

Another group, the OSBA Board Member Cabinet, was created in 2008 to increase OSBA's collaboration with state officials and ODE. The cabinet, composed of about 20 veteran school board members, meets several times a year with the state superintendent of public instruction, other ODE leaders and state officials.

Web links to these specific OSBA organizations can be found at www.ohioschoolboards.org/osba-groups.

How to become more involved in your association

OSBA is *your* association. Its strength lies in its diverse membership and the multitude of talents and perspectives of those members.

For board members seeking to increase their involvement with OSBA, a Call for Committee Nominations is issued each May. The nomination packet describes the various committees on which you can participate and the time commitments for each. Applications are due June 30 and must be sent to your regional manager. If you have questions about the nomination packet or a committee, contact your regional manager.

This article offers just a brief outline of how OSBA is structured to serve Ohio public education and the many different resources available to OSBA members. To learn more about OSBA programs, services and benefits, see "New board members: OSBA is here for you" on page 34, visit the OSBA website or contact any staff member. ■

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Regional awards recognize superior achievement

Gary Motz, editor

To better serve its members around the state, OSBA is divided into five regions: Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest. Each region has its own governance structure that parallels OSBA's statewide governing system. Regional managers, who are OSBA staff members based in each region, lead and coordinate their activities.

The regions' purpose is to unite public boards of education in their area and provide members the information, services and representation they need to be effective school district

leaders. They also contribute to OSBA's statewide efforts through regional programs and activities designed to guide and support school boards and their members.

Among the many activities the regions host are spring and fall conferences. Highlights of these events are a variety of awards and recognitions presented to individuals and groups for extraordinary contributions to their local school districts and Ohio public education.

To familiarize new school board members with these



Margaretta Local's (Erie) Future Farmers of America chapter receives the OSBA Northwest Region Excellence in Community Service Award. The chapter was recognized for developing a care package program for military members serving in Afghanistan.

awards, OSBA's regional managers compiled the recognitions their regions offer. Following are each region's awards and the criteria for earning them. For more on the regions and their managers, see "Navigating OSBA" on page 36. Further information, including a regional map and regional manager contact information, is available at www.ohioschoolboards.org/regions.

Central Region, Kim Miller-Smith, manager

Outstanding Schools — This award recognizes schools earning an Ohio Department of Education (ODE) Schools of Promise designation and those honored in the U.S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon Schools Program. These awards recognize schools for high student achievement and closing achievement gaps. For more on the ODE program, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/79900>. Information on the federal program is posted at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/10684>.

Outstanding Programs — This recognition honors exemplary school district programs selected to exhibit at the OSBA Capital Conference Student Achievement Fair.

Outstanding Board Members — Nominees must be board members who are dedicated to the education and welfare of children; invest in their own ongoing in-service training; practice good decision making; work with their fellow board members as a team; and follow OSBA's code of ethics. It is from this pool of honorees in each region that the five OSBA All-Ohio School Board members are chosen for recognition at the Capital Conference in November. Being named to the All-Ohio School Boards is OSBA's most prestigious honor.

Board member milestones — The region recognizes veteran board members celebrating service milestones.

Friend of Public Education — This award recognizes community members who have a strong record of supporting public education. School boards nominate candidates, who cannot be a member of that board or employed by the nominating district.

Exemplary School Employees — Each school district in the region is entitled to nominate a staff member for this award, which recognizes employees deemed critical to the district's success. Teachers are excluded from this award because there is a separate recognition category for them.

Outstanding Teachers — Honorees are teachers nominated by a local school district for the Ohio Teacher of the Year award and then selected by a State Board of Education representative to enter the state competition.

Northeast Region, Reno Contipelli, manager

Outstanding Teachers — Ohio Teacher of the Year nominees.

Board member milestones — Recognition of veteran board members.

President's Award — Honors the lifetime achievement of an individual who has devoted his or her life and career to public education. The region president selects the winner.

Outstanding Student Programs — Recognizes school districts chosen to participate in the OSBA Capital Conference Student Achievement Fair.

Programs of the Year — This award goes to districts that have received state or national recognition.

Outstanding Board Members — Those selected become candidates for OSBA's All-Ohio School Board honors presented at the Capital Conference.

School Boards of the Year — Boards are selected for working well together and being active on the state and federal levels.

Friend of Public Education — Awarded to an individual who has had a significant impact on public education and children.

Volunteer of the Year — Presented to school volunteers whose work has had a positive impact on children and schools.

Administrator of the Year — Honors a building or district administrator who has made significant contributions to their district and public education.

Lester Marrison Teacher Education Book Grant — The grant is presented to a high school senior who plans to pursue a career in teaching. It is named in memory of **Lester C. Marrison**, who served as a board member at **Pymatuning Valley Local (Ashtabula), Ashtabula County ESC and Ashtabula County Technical and Career Center**. Marrison also was a longtime member of the Northeast Region Executive Committee and OSBA Board of Trustees.

Northwest Region, Dr. Judy Jackson May, manager

Neil Pohlmann Award of Excellence in Education — This new award is presented to a Northwest Region board member with at least 20 years of service who has a proven record of leadership and has demonstrated strong support for public education at the local, state and national levels. The award is named in memory of Dr. **Neil Pohlmann**, who served as the region's manager for more than 20 years. For a profile of Pohlmann, see "Northwest Region's Dr. Neil Pohlmann — a mighty oak" on page 43.



Excellence in Community Service Award — Honors school district members and organizations engaged in activities to support and enhance their school and community.

Humanitarian Award — Recognizes individuals and groups who put forth exceptional efforts to improve the welfare of others through their altruistic activities in the schools and community.

The Who's Who in the Northwest Region Excellence Award for Outstanding Leadership — Honoring exceptional leaders, this award is special because it recognizes leadership occurring at all levels of a school district, from the playground to the central office.

Educational Book Grants — Four \$500 grants are presented annually to high school seniors planning a teaching career.

Outstanding Student Programs — Recognizes school districts selected to participate in the OSBA Capital Conference Student Achievement Fair.

Outstanding Teachers — Ohio Teacher of the Year nominees.

Board member milestones — Recognition of veteran board members.

Southeast Region, Paul D. Mock, manager

Region recognition program — This program highlights outstanding individuals and programs in these categories: student program, male student, female student, faculty member, classified staff member, treasurer, volunteer, administrator and new program or innovation.

President's Award — Chosen by the region president, this honoree is recognized for dedicated leadership and unwavering commitment to children.

Advocate of Education Hall of Fame Award — The region's highest honor, this award is presented to individuals and businesses demonstrating outstanding leadership and commitment, and whose contributions to public education have had a major impact on the region and across the state.

Outstanding School Board Members — Those selected become candidates for OSBA's All-Ohio School Board recognition presented at the Capital Conference.

Board member milestones — Recognition of veteran board members.

Southwest Region, Ronald J. Diver, manager

Region recognition awards — These awards recognize

outstanding individual accomplishments by school district staff members. Two of the awards are presented to nonstaff members for their leadership and contributions. The categories are: administrator, classified staff member, faculty member, treasurer, superintendent, community/public relations professional, board member from a neighboring school district and community business leader.

Effective School Board Award (A – Z Checklist) — The purpose of this award is to provide a method for board self-evaluation and a planning tool that can be used throughout the year. This is not a competition, but an instrument defining specific steps boards can take to meet district goals. Boards can earn a gold, silver or bronze award, depending on the number of goals accomplished.

President's Award — Selected by the region president, this honoree is one who has made a significant contribution to public education and has a special connection to the president and/or the president's school district or community.

Veteran Board Members — Recognition of board members for reaching service milestones.

Outstanding Student Programs — These awards are presented in the following categories: new programs, ongoing programs, volunteer programs, multidistrict impact programs and special recognition programs.

All Kettlewell Award — Presented to All-Ohio School Board nominees for outstanding board leadership. The award is named in memory of **All Kettlewell**, who served as the region's manager for more than 25 years.

Teacher of the Year — Recognizes those nominated for Ohio Teacher of the Year.

Friend of Education Hall of Fame Award — Presented to an individual who has a strong connection to the region and a broad influence on public education.

Student Achievement Fair participants — Recognizes districts chosen to showcase their programs at the OSBA Capital Conference Student Achievement Fair.

Student Achievement Fair entertainers — Honors the student entertainment group selected to represent the region at the Student Achievement Fair. The group also is invited to perform the following year at one of the Southwest Region conferences. ■

Editor's note: For further information on regional awards, contact your regional manager.



Northwest Region's Dr. Neil Pohlmann — a mighty oak

Dr. Paul R. Lockwood II, board member, North Point ESC, EHOVE Career Center; treasurer, Gibsonburg EV

One of my most cherished memories as a youth was a mighty oak tree that dominated the corner of our woods. I loved that tree; it was that special place where I could let my imagination run wild.

Climbing the branches would take me to a vantage point where I could scour the skies for the masts of pirate ships. A massive limb reached out from the trunk to form the back of a faithful steed that I could ride into the sunset chasing my imaginary foes. I could lie under the tree as the sun filtered through the leaves and watch the changing images of the clouds, each new shape challenging my mind to put a title to the puzzle.

For those of us in OSBA's Northwest Region, Dr. **Neil Pohlmann** was our magnificent oak. Neil, as he preferred to be called, served as the region's manager for a record 22 years. In all, he dedicated 45 years to Ohio public education. He passed away on April 12.

Pohlmann led a life full of accomplishments. Following a stint in the Korean War, where he served as a reconnaissance pilot, Pohlmann taught math and science and served as a school counselor and football and basketball coach at **Mayfield Heights City's** Mayfield Middle School. The coaching part came easy to Pohlmann. He was a three-star athlete at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) — the starting quarterback of the Falcons and a member of the basketball and track teams.

Pohlmann became superintendent of **Northeastern Local (Defiance)** in 1961. Two years later he, his wife, **Mary**, and their eight girls moved to Flint, Mich., where he earned a doctorate in education administration at Wayne State University's Flint campus.

Pohlmann returned to BGSU to serve in the Department of Education Administration and Supervision (EDAS). He rose to become EDAS department chair, retiring in 1986.

The call to teach was too great, however, and as a professor emeritus he continued to teach and provide wisdom for an additional 10 years before finally leaving his book-cluttered office in 1996.

I doubt that Pohlmann ever realized that he was the mighty oak in the forest of professors at BGSU. He challenged his students to use their imagination, wisdom and knowledge to strengthen and improve public education.

Those who ventured through the doors of his classroom left with the understanding that "it is all about the kids." Included in his list of former students are some of Ohio's leading educators: Dr. **Richard A. Ross**, former Ohio superintendent of public instruction; Dr. **Eugene T.W. Sanders**, **Sandusky City** superintendent and former **Cleveland Municipal** and **Toledo City** superintendent; and Dr. **Adena Williams Loston**, president of St. Phillip's College in San Antonio and a former top NASA education administrator.

As regional manager, Pohlmann touched the lives of thousands of local school board members. He showed how to get inspiration from watching the ever-changing shapes of clouds pass over the mighty oak and how to use this inspiration to better the lives of the children we serve.

On March 10, the OSBA Northwest Region will present the first Neil Pohlmann Award of Excellence in Education at its spring conference at BGSU. Mary Pohlmann will make the presentation of what will become an annual award. In addition to this honor, a scholarship foundation has been established at BGSU in Pohlmann's name.

Pohlmann's influence on Ohio public education has been far-reaching and long-lasting. The Award of Excellence in Education and the Neil Pohlmann Scholarship serve as fitting memories of who he was, what he did and whom he touched. It is a true legacy. ■

ESCs play a vital



Summit County ESC teacher Judy Ryan uses a stocking to teach children fine motor skills at the ESC's TALK (Teaching Auditory and Listening skills to Kids) classroom.

Ohio's 52 educational service centers play a vital role in the state's public education system. Once known as county boards of education, ESCs have been providing services to Ohio school districts for more than 100 years.

The Ohio General Assembly passed legislation establishing county boards in 1914. According to a history compiled by the Ohio Educational Service Center Association (OESCA), the law created county school districts in all of Ohio's 88 counties, except Adams. Their role was "elevating the state's system of education to a proper standard."

What followed was the reorganization of Ohio's 2,674 school districts — many of them one-room schoolhouses — through consolidation and centralization. The county offices designed curriculum for school systems, provided teacher in-service training and ensured that all teachers and administrators were properly supervised and adequately overseeing their classrooms.

The role of the county boards grew over the next few decades.

In the 1930s, they started helping districts with financial and purchasing services. In the 1960s, they began operating special education programs.

Legislation enacted in 1989 allowed county boards of education to contract with city school districts to provide services and receive state funding to support those efforts. A 1995 law changed the name of the county offices to educational service centers, and county boards began consolidating into regional agencies. The bill also redefined their role from one of imposing standardization on small rural districts to providing substantial support and special programs to local, city and exempted village school districts.

In 2003, the state legislature granted local school districts greater choice in selecting an ESC to work with. The law initially enabled districts to sever ties with their local ESC and annex to the territory of an adjacent ESC. Later, legislation expanded this to allow districts to contract with any ESC in the state. This created a market-based accountability element and

role in Ohio

Gary Motz,
editor

an added incentive for ESCs to maintain top-quality services.

A bill enacted in 2006 created a system of 16 regions to better coordinate and support state and regional efforts to improve school effectiveness and increase student achievement. Led by State Support Teams, these regions are charged with identifying regional needs and priorities and developing policies to coordinate and streamline the delivery of services to school districts. The goal is to limit unnecessary duplication of programs and services without reducing the availability of services school districts need.

Today, ESCs provide an expansive array of services. They include alternative school options; gifted education programs; transportation training and certification; purchasing pools; and special education, including speech, language and hearing services and occupational and physical therapy. They also offer professional development; technology support; school improvement initiatives; curriculum design and development; administrative services; early childhood education; background checks; attendance officers; adult literacy courses; and Head Start programs.

Many of these services are ones that school systems are required to provide according to state or federal law. Hiring staff to operate each of these programs or contracting with individual vendors would be prohibitively expensive for districts. However, being able to access them through a centralized resource like an ESC provides an economy of scale and saves districts a great deal of money and time.

Many ESCs also are involved in their communities. According to OESCA, the centers partner with family and children first councils, workforce development boards, business advisory councils and community foundations.

OSBA, which counts nearly every ESC in the state as a member, collaborates closely with the centers. It provides ESCs with legislative advocacy at the federal, state and grassroots levels; board member development; staff training; communication planning; and distance learning.

Numerous ESCs present workshops at OSBA's annual Capital Conference and Board Leadership Institute as well as at other training events. An entire Capital Conference

learning session category is devoted to ESCs.

In 2010, OSBA launched the ESC Leadership Academy in conjunction with the centers. Endorsed by OESCA, the professional and leadership development program is targeted to board members and central office staff, providing customized training to districts through their local ESCs. Each hosting ESC, in partnership with its member districts' superintendents, selects the topics for its academy. For information on the 2016 ESC Leadership Academy, contact OSBA Deputy Director of School Board Services **Teri Morgan** at (614) 540-4000 or tmorgan@ohioschoolboards.org.



A John K. Lazares Alternative School student describes how the school's wellness program has helped him do better, both in and out of school. The school is based at Warren County ESC.

ESC governing board members are extremely involved in OSBA governance. They have served as OSBA president and in other leadership positions at both the state and regional levels. They also are well represented on a number of the association's state and regional committees.

On the following pages you'll find two examples of the types of innovative programs ESCs have launched. One is an alternative school wellness program operated by **Warren County ESC** in partnership with Miami University. The other profiles a **Summit County ESC** program that serves preschoolers with hearing loss. ■

Editor's note: For more information on ESCs, visit the OESCA website at www.oesca.org or contact OSBA.

ESC-university partnership promotes student wellness



Students at Warren County ESC's John K. Lazares Alternative School demonstrate one of the exercises they do during fitness breaks. The breaks are just one component the Fit 4 Success program the ESC conducts in conjunction with Miami University.

Program benefits alternative school's at-risk kids

Gary Motz, editor

Research has long shown a powerful correlation between student wellness and academic achievement. Simply put, physical activity, nutritious food and good sleep habits bolster mind, body and soul.

Active, well-fed students have stronger cognitive abilities, better grades, higher attendance rates and fewer behavioral problems. They feel better, are healthier and have a more positive outlook on life.

Sedentary youth with poor nutrition, especially low-income

and at-risk students, can face greater wellness challenges than their better-off peers. Those challenges often are compounded by poverty, family stress, violence and run-ins with the law.

At Warren County ESC, an innovative program — Fit 4 Success — is helping at-risk students enhance their wellness, both in and out of school. A partnership between the southwestern Ohio ESC and Miami University, the program is in its second year at John K. Lazares Alternative School.

The ESC's school serves about 75 at-risk students in grades

seven through 12 from Butler, Hamilton and Warren counties. Its mission is to address at-risk students' educational and social needs by creating a safe and productive classroom environment. Students are recommended by their home schools because of problems with poor behavior, truancy and low grades.

"As the principal of an alternative school designed for students who were not successful in a traditional school, I know that we have to be creative to overcome the roadblocks to success our students face," said Supervisor **Mike Bidwell**. "One of the most significant roadblocks that I see daily is young people who are malnourished, sleep deprived or not physically active ... many of them with poor beliefs about what it means to be healthy."

The partnership with Miami University resulted from a conversation between the ESC's Dr. **George Sehi**, executive director of university relations, and Dr. **Kevin Bush**, an associate dean in the Miami University College of Education, Health and Society. Among the topics they explored was how to help the alternative school students succeed.

"I asked Kevin, 'What can we do for our alternative students?'" Sehi said. "The first thing you think about is academics. But we started talking about health and hygiene and fitness. That's how the whole thing came about."

Following that initial conversation, Bidwell, Bush, Sehi, Warren County ESC Superintendent **Tom Isaacs** and Miami university faculty member Dr. **Randy Claytor** met to design a program that was reasonable for an alternative school setting and sustainable. They, along with ESC staff and students, developed some ideas that could be implemented quickly as well as some long-term plans for later.

The Fit 4 Success program has four components: wellness, fitness, nutrition and mindfulness. Both students and staff participate.

About 15 Miami students visit the ESC for an hour three days a week to lead exercise breaks and talk about good eating habits. They also make breakfast for the alternative school students on those days. Staff and student leaders conduct exercise breaks and nutrition discussions at other times. The mindfulness sessions are led by Miami's Dr. **Suzanne Klatt**, director of the Mindfulness and Contemplative Inquiry Center.

"Our students come out first thing in the morning to get the kids up and exercising, either with resistance bands or some type of aerobic activity, like a treadmill," said Miami's Dr. **Justin Guilkey**, who oversees the program. "We want to get their heart rate up, get their blood moving and energize them for the day. We lead another session about 45 minutes later, and they already seem more energized. The goal is to increase

physical activity with five-minute physical activity breaks throughout the day without interrupting class time."

Students and staff participate in four to six physical activity breaks a day. Bidwell said when the program started, just 58% of the students took part in the breaks. Now the average participation rate is 98%.

"I can't believe how much I look forward to the fitness breaks now," said student **Keith Frye**, whose home district is **Middletown City**. "I didn't want to do it at first, but now I look forward to it. I'm feeling better, my grades are better and I actually want to come to school."



Alternative school Supervisor Mike Bidwell speaks about the school's wellness program during a meeting with Warren County ESC and Miami University officials.

The nutrition component also is paying dividends, although changing longtime poor eating habits remains a challenge. For example, Bidwell asked one struggling student what he had eaten the night before.

"He told me, 'Mr. Bidwell, I'm not hungry, I'm fine. I had a Red Bull and a bowl of cereal at 3 a.m. Everything's OK.'"

"Those stories, unfortunately, are not rare. But now, with the wellness program, we are asking the right questions and working harder than ever to make sure our students' many nutritional needs are being met. We have students asking for even more meals prepared by Miami students and some are talking about cooking food for their families at home."

Klatt conducts mindfulness sessions once a week for students and staff. She describes mindfulness as being fully present in the moment and nonjudgmental.

"Mindfulness is cultivating the ability to be emotionally healthy inside," Klatt said. "Throughout the day, we don't really get a break in our unconscious minds to do that."

“One activity we do is focusing on the breath. When students do that, they allow themselves to give their minds a break. We cultivate mindfulness as the ability, when we get hit hard during the day by something we weren’t expecting, to help us get back to that balanced center quicker.”

One of the goals of staff members’ participation is preparing them to teach mindfulness exercises. In addition, they are learning to notice the interpersonal dynamics in their classrooms and pay attention to their own reactions.

“For example, if something is really challenging for a student, we might just automatically react to the situation,” Klatt said. “Mindfulness gives us the space to respond and make a choice instead of the choice pulling us in.”

Bidwell said the mindfulness lessons have had a powerful impact on both students and staff. Students are pausing to focus on their breathing instead of acting out. Staff members also have learned to take that pause and have been undergoing more intensive training after school.

“I can say personally that mindfulness and stress management have been a major benefit to my staff,” Bidwell said. “Many of them have shared with me that they are using the breathing exercises before responding to students and situations in a negative manner.”



A student discusses the many ways the alternative school’s wellness program has benefitted her and her classmates.

Students, too, have come to recognize the value of mindfulness.

“I’m starting to learn how important it is to stop and breathe before I react because of the mindfulness breaks we are taking,” said **Seth Freeman** of **Little Miami Local (Warren)**. “I have saved myself some trouble in school, because I’m stopping and thinking instead of just acting.”

The program is still too young to have provided much solid data on the impact of Fit 4 Success. But, anecdotal evidence points to improved academics, attendance, behavior and attitudes.

“This kind of a partnership between K-12 and a university is an example of how K-12 can work with universities to make it a win-win for all students.”

— Dr. George Sehi

“I have seen an overall decrease in behavior write-ups, suspensions and in-school suspensions,” Bidwell said. “We have also seen a dramatic increase in positive student behavior. The infraction of students sleeping during classroom time has virtually disappeared. We just recently started tracking test results, and I am looking forward to seeing how this program has impacted academics.”

Bidwell said future plans include having more alternative school students lead wellness breaks for their classmates, growing healthy food on-site and installing treadmills in all the classrooms.

“One of the most exciting plans for the future is incorporating our Student Leadership Program into the Fit 4 Success program even more,” Bidwell said. “We want our students to be not only confident in participating in the wellness breaks, but also be involved in teaching the other students in the school. We also are looking to add a greenhouse to our facility so students cannot only learn how to prepare nutritious food but also grow that food.”

Sehi cited another benefit of the program — introducing at-risk kids to college professors and students.

“This kind of a partnership between K-12 and a university is an example of how K-12 can work with universities to make it a win-win for all students,” Sehi said. “Many of these kids have never dreamed of being in a classroom where a college professor or a graduate student is teaching. It really can have a long-term effect and, who knows, some of our students may be enticed to go to college.”

“This collaboration is impacting so many — the community, the students, the universities and K-12. It’s a wonderful partnership that can be modeled across the state, and it’s helping the at-risk students significantly. These are vulnerable students, these are kids who can easily be broken and this program entices them to stay in school and do better.” ■

Summit ESC focuses on pre-K kids with hearing loss



Student Austin Chapman reads to Dr. Carrie Spangler. Austin participates in the Summit County ESC's TALK (Teaching Auditory and Listening skills to Kids) program, which serves preschool students with hearing loss.

New program prepares preschoolers to succeed

Jacque Mazziotta, Summit County ESC communications consultant

On a typical winter Monday morning, preschool students in the TALK (Teaching Auditory and Listening skills to Kids) classroom learn the alphabet as well as how to use needle and yarn to thread a cardboard stocking for the holidays.

They even play a game of Simon Says as they make their way to a restroom break. The difference in this classroom is that six of the 12 students have significant hearing loss and use cochlear implants and/or hearing aids to listen and talk.

Thanks to a new **Summit County ESC** program, these young people are not only learning the foundation for spoken language communication, but they also are acquiring the building blocks of speech, language, auditory and social skills that many children their age already possess.

As **Austin Chapman** enters the classroom, she points to a picture on the door and speaks her emotion to her teacher: "I'm excited!" she said, about having classroom visitors who observe and take photographs.

As Summit County's only auditory/oral preschool classroom, TALK serves students with hearing loss throughout Summit and surrounding counties. Located in Cuyahoga Falls, this unique setting provides traditional preschool education as well as audiology, speech therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy.

Under the guidance of Dr. **Carrie Spangler**, an educational audiologist and member of the Ohio Board of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, the TALK program is designed for children with hearing loss whose families have chosen spoken language for communication. Class sizes are limited to 12 students, which allows a teacher-student ratio of one to six. In addition to the classroom teacher and assistant, audiology and speech pathology are built into the program. Other related services, such as occupational therapy and physical therapy, are available based on a child's individual needs.

Spangler brings her personal perspective to the field. She was born with hearing loss, which allows her to relate firsthand to the children and their everyday challenges. Spangler's personal experience adds to her passion for the field.

"My mission is to positively support students with hearing loss and auditory needs in the school and the community," she said. "Through the services offered at the Summit County ESC, we strive to provide the continuum of support to ensure that students with hearing loss are successful and live well."

Student and family perspective

Amy Larker is a 6-year-old student who was diagnosed with mild to moderate hearing loss at birth. Through the Ohio regional infant hearing programs, her parents learned about TALK last year. After researching options available in their

home school district, Amy's parents got in touch with TALK's educational team and determined enrollment in this setting was a good option for their daughter.

"We wanted to focus on the social piece and self-advocacy," **Nancy Larker**, Amy's mother, said. "Our biggest concern is when Amy heads to kindergarten. We want her to be able to speak up if she can't hear her teacher or friends. She tends to be shy and withdrawn."

Shyness and withdrawal are common issues facing children with hearing loss. But one thing that makes TALK unique is the individual attention each child receives.

Classroom teacher **Judy Ryan** focuses on the home and school connection. This allows families a level of comfort to talk about issues children may be facing outside the classroom. Ryan gains individual understanding and incorporates strategies into daily instruction while providing family support and suggestions.

"This year with this particular group, Amy is showing more confidence," Nancy Larker said. "We're still working on it outside of the classroom — she's pretty shy until you get to know her. We're trying to implement some of the same strategies learned in the classroom ... when she is at home."

Amy now notices that other children have "ears," which is what she calls hearing aids. A new student recently joined the class, and Amy was eager to share with her mother that the new girl also has "ears," and hers are purple.

The communication between families and the TALK educational team can address individual challenges that



Leadership for Learning

Learning session nominations due **March 11:**
<http://conference.ohioschoolboards.org/nominate>.

Student Achievement Fair program and performing group nominations due **June 24.**

Registration opens **July 11.**

OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show —
Nov. 13-16.



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Save the dates



Amy Larker looks on as Mariama Koroma identifies an object for their teacher, Judy Ryan.

children may encounter both in the home and school setting.

“I feel like Amy could easily get lost in the mix,” Nancy Larker said. “Her hearing loss is manageable, but I think unless given the tools early on to be able to say, ‘Hey, I need something,’ she needs to know how to ask the questions or advocate for herself or even reposition herself in a classroom in order to hear better.

“I don’t think you get this in other environments — it’s very specific to this class. If a child doesn’t know it’s OK to ask for help, they could get into challenges later. I’m grateful they are teaching those types of skills in addition to preschool curriculum here.

“I feel like because she can communicate as well as she does, she can balance friendships between her typical peers and kids with hearing loss. I want my daughter to go to kindergarten and not miss out on anything. I want her to have her ‘bestie’ and be able to say to that friend, ‘I couldn’t hear what was happening.’ I want that person to help keep her engaged and feel comfortable.”

The next steps

The ultimate goal of the program is to prepare children to return to their home school district so they can be educated and ready for kindergarten with their peers. In addition, the

program works to promote a strong auditory, speech and language foundation.

“The classroom setting is designed for each student to learn at his or her personal educational level and provide supports for acquiring language,” Student Services Director **N’ecole Ast** said. “Early and intensive intervention is proven to develop skill sets in children that have a lasting effect on educational performance, achievement and positive transitions. We are providing a unique situation for young children to develop a strong foundation in order to be successful in their K-12 educational career.”

In addition to her work with TALK, Spangler will be presenting “Fostering Wellness for Pediatric Patients with Hearing Loss” later this year at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, one of the nation’s leading hospitals for pediatric hearing loss. She will share practices with health care professionals and providers in pediatric audiology. She also will be working with educational professionals in Florida to develop a support group for teens with hearing loss modeled after the Hit It! (Hearing Impaired Teens Interacting Together) group she spearheaded locally.

For more information about the TALK program, contact **Kristen Nowak**, program coordinator, at (330) 945-5600, ext. 551282. ■

BLI offers the very best in board member training



OSBA Director of School Board Services Cheryl W. Ryan answers questions after her Board Leadership Institute session in 2015. The institute, set for late April, offers comprehensive, cutting-edge professional development for new board members and veterans alike.

Scott Gerfen, assistant editor

School board members have a thought-provoking task of regularly making decisions that can equate to running a multimillion-dollar company. That duty carries with it an enormous responsibility — educating children.

Board service requires a full range of skills and expertise. Along with those necessities, the public education landscape is constantly changing with new mandates, curriculum standards and advancements in technology.

It can take at least two years of board service to absorb what it takes to be a successful school board member. However, the challenge is to remain successful.

The OSBA Board Leadership Institute (BLI) is designed to provide board members — first-timers and veterans alike

— the professional development needed to not only govern districts with success, but also increase student achievement. Over two days, this intensive professional development event offers weeks worth of timely, valuable and high-quality training and networking.

The 2016 BLI, which is planned by board members for board members, will be held April 29 and 30 at the Hilton Columbus/Polaris in north Columbus. This Friday-Saturday event is sure to target your needs and connect you with peers from across Ohio.

“This is a premier training and networking opportunity that attracts new and veteran board members to BLI every year,” said **Rob Delane**, OSBA deputy executive director and BLI coordinator. “What’s unique is that this event is only open to board members, so it’s a chance for them to share success

stories, learn from expert presenters and network with peers to address common challenges.”

More than 2,700 school board members have attended BLI since its inception in 2000. Many graduates return every year to learn about the latest trends and updates in Ohio public education.

BLI is designed to provide board members the professional development needed to not only govern districts with success, but also increase student achievement.

Participants will have the opportunity to attend the Opening General Session, Closing Luncheon and 18 innovative breakout sessions as well as network with other board members throughout the event.

“The workshops focused on pertinent subjects,” said a 2015 BLI attendee. “The presenters were very informative and answered questions adequately.”

Another attendee said, “This is the very best workshop that OSBA provides for board members.”

Tuition for BLI is \$245, which includes breakfast and lunch on Friday and Saturday, and workshop materials, including a digital copy of handouts from all the workshops.

OSBA has locked in a reduced hotel rate for BLI attendees: just \$129 for a single or double room if a reservation is made by April 8.

More details about BLI, including keynote speakers and breakout session topics and titles, will be shared once they are confirmed. A complete BLI program will be mailed to all board members in late March.

Attendance at BLI entitles board members to 20 points toward the OSBA Award of Achievement and Master Board Member awards. It also will send you home with many new ideas and practices to help boost student achievement and enhance district operations.

Register for BLI online at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/85712> or contact OSBA Senior Events Manager **Laurie Miller** at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or Lmiller@ohioschoolboards.org. ■

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NSBA annual conference features many Ohioans

Ohio school leaders, OSBA staff will share and network with colleagues from across U.S.

Crystal Davis, assistant editor

As we've grown to expect every year, Ohioans will have an active role in the National School Boards Association (NSBA) Annual Conference and Exposition. The event will take place April 9-11 in Boston.

"NSBA's annual conference provides an excellent opportunity for Ohioans to learn from their peers around the nation as well as share challenges and success stories from our state," OSBA Executive Director **Richard Lewis** said.

Two current OSBA staff members and one retired director and five Ohio school districts are scheduled to present educational sessions at the conference. OSBA state and regional leaders will participate in the NSBA Delegate Assembly and Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) sessions. Following are the sessions in which Ohioans will be participating, according to NSBA's schedule as of late January.

NSBA Delegate Assembly Business Meeting

Approximately 150 representatives from state school boards associations around the nation make up the NSBA Delegate Assembly. OSBA delegates are President **Eric K. Germann**, **Lincolnview Local (Van Wert)** and **Vantage Career Center**; President-elect Denise Baba, **Streetsboro City**; Immediate Past President **Ed Penrod**, **Logan-Hocking Local (Hocking)** and **Tri-County Career Center**; **Susie Lawson**, **Tri-County ESC** and **Wayne County Schools Career Center**; and alternate member **Warren Stevens**, **Urbana City** and **Ohio Hi-Point Career Center**.

The Delegate Assembly sets NSBA policy. The association's 25-member Board of Directors translates policy into action, including programs and services administered by NSBA's executive director and staff.

Lewis will attend the NSBA Delegate Assembly Business Meeting and the Organization of State Association Executive Directors Meeting.

Council of Urban Boards of Education

CUBE is an NSBA group that helps urban school board leaders find solutions to challenges at the local level by sharing innovative practices through conferences, legislative advocacy, research projects, networking, publications and more. OSBA members participating in council activities include CUBE Treasurer **Bruce Alexander**, **Akron City**, and Cube Steering Committee member **Willetta A. Milam**, **Cleveland Municipal**.

National Affiliation of Superintendent Searchers (NASS)

NASS is the most experienced network of executive search professionals in the country. NSBA supports this national network for state school boards associations as the best resource for finding and recruiting qualified school superintendents. Superintendents and those interested in becoming a superintendent are invited to meet with NASS representatives while attending the conference.

OSBA Director of School Board Services **Cheryl W. Ryan** will help staff the NASS station during the conference, attend the group's annual business meeting and present a pre-conference session. **Kathy LaSota**, who retired from OSBA last year and is a NASS past chair, will present two sessions that are detailed in the following section.

Educational sessions

Each year, you can expect to find a plethora of professional development opportunities at the NSBA conference, including educational sessions that will motivate and inspire you. OSBA leads several of these sessions this year.



Ed Penrod, 2015 OSBA president, chats with 2014 president Susie Lawson before the National School Boards Association Delegate Assembly meeting in Nashville, Tenn., last year. Penrod is a board member at Logan-Hocking Local (Hocking) and Tri-County Career Center. Lawson serves on the boards of Tri-County ESC and Wayne County Schools Career Center.

Ryan's pre-conference session focuses on the benefits of the superintendent search from a board development perspective. You won't want to miss her session April 8 at 9 a.m. She also will present the regular conference session, "A Baker's Dozen: 13 Ingredients to Positively Influence Board and School Culture in Your District," April 9 at 10:30 a.m.

LaSota's April 8 pre-conference session at 9 a.m., "What's Good for the Goose," will help boards assess their strengths and weaknesses. She also will lead "It's Not WHAT We Do, It's HOW We Do It!" That session, April 9 at 10:30 a.m., focuses on board governance and leadership.

OSBA Deputy Executive Director **Rob Delane** will present "I Should Have Seen That Coming — Avoiding Communication Mishaps" April 10 at 8:30 a.m. Attendees will review communication styles, critique video scenarios, discuss conflict management strategies, share personal experiences and learn how to head off common pitfalls facing boards.

Many other school leaders from across Ohio also have been asked to share their success stories at the NSBA conference.

Leaders from Cleveland Municipal will talk about board-superintendent roles and relationships April 9 at 10:30 a.m. They will discuss how they work as a team and understand each other's roles to move the district forward for the benefit of students. Slated to present are Superintendent **Eric S. Gordon** and board members **Stephanie Morales**, **Robert M. Heard Sr.** and **Denise W. Link**.

Presenters from **Chardon Local (Geauga)** will discuss school shootings and security, the 2012 Chardon High School tragedy and the need for school resource officers. Chardon High School Principal **Andrew R. Fetchik** and teachers **Tim Armelli** and **Frank Hall** will speak April 10 at 8:30 a.m.

Mentor EV Superintendent **Matthew J. Miller** and Mentor High School student **Jordyn Zimmerman** will be part of a panel discussion on Zimmerman's autism and her ability to overcome communication obstacles throughout her life. She once was viewed by educators as noncommunicative and challenging, but assistive-voice technology showed adults and peers her real capabilities and potential. Zimmerman plans to pursue a career in education. The session will take place April 9 at 3:45 p.m.

Toledo City Treasurer **Ryan Stechschulte** and board member **Bob Vasquez** will join **Daniel Romano** of Edventures in Learning Inc. to lead "Critical Conversations for Strategic Community Engagement" April 11 at 8:30 a.m.

Hilliard City Superintendent Dr. **John Marschhausen** and Chief Technology Officer **Rich Boettner** will offer "Personalizing Learning through Blended Learning, District-created Textbooks and 1:1" April 11 at 8:30 a.m.

Region reception

OSBA invites Ohio's conference attendees to the NSBA Central Region Joint Reception April 9 at the Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel. Organizers are finalizing a time. Ohioans registered for the conference will receive invitations in March.



The reception offers an informal atmosphere for education leaders to network with peers and discuss hot topics.

The conference provides an excellent opportunity for OSBA staff and Ohio school district leaders to share their expertise and bring home ideas that better serve public schools and students. Learning at a national level

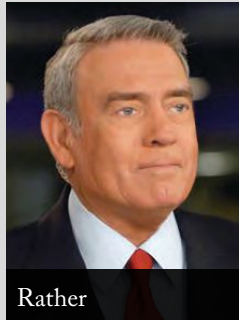
also brings new concepts that OSBA staff will share with association members. These are the superior services and creative solutions needed to lead districts successfully in the ever-changing environment of public education.

For complete conference details and to register, visit <http://annualconference.nsba.org>. ■

TV news veterans, student achievement expert headline NSBA conference

Saturday General Session, April 9 – Dan Rather

For more than 50 years, former “CBS Evening News” anchor and “60 Minutes” correspondent Dan Rather has been the embodiment of the intrepid broadcast journalist. From the Kennedy assassination to the Indian Ocean tsunami, he has covered every major story of our time with distinction and a fierce dedication to hard news. For unparalleled devotion to his craft, he was named the 2012 recipient of the Edward R. Murrow Award for Lifetime Achievement.



Rather

Despite a lifetime of accolades, Rather never lost his drive for front-line journalism. After leaving CBS News, he pioneered a cable news magazine program that features in-depth international and investigative reporting – traits that have virtually disappeared from television news.

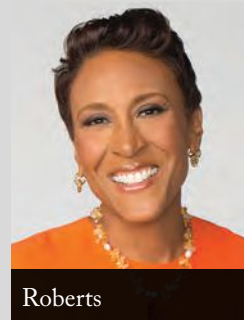
Rather recently launched the production company News and Guts. His projects also include an acclaimed interview program on AXS TV, documentaries and digital video content. His relentless pursuit of excellence would be evident to anyone who read his entertaining 2012 memoir, “Rather Outspoken: My Life in the News.” Rather also is well known for his humor, colorful speaking style and the homespun “Ratherisms” he used with exuberance in his election coverage.

Sunday General Session, April 10 – Robin Roberts

Robin Roberts is co-anchor of ABC’s “Good Morning America.” Under her leadership, the broadcast has won three consecutive Emmy Awards for Outstanding Morning Program.

When not traveling around the world covering breaking news events, Roberts is at “Good Morning America” studio in New York City’s Times Square conducting interviews with a diverse group of newsmakers. Her headline-making interviews include President **Barack Obama**, Facebook founder **Mark Zuckerberg**, first lady **Michelle Obama** and NBA superstar **LeBron James**.

In her latest memoir, “Everybody’s Got Something,” Roberts tells the incredible story of her battle against a life-threatening illness, the life lessons she continues to learn and her inspiring return to the “Good Morning America” anchor desk. For the strength and courage displayed throughout her life and career,



Roberts

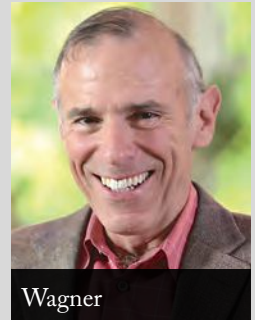
organizations around the country have recognized her with awards and honors, including the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at the 2013 ESPYS.

Monday General Session, April 11 – Dr. Tony Wagner

Dr. Tony Wagner currently serves as an expert in residence at Harvard University’s new Innovation Lab. Before this appointment, Wagner was the first innovation education fellow at Harvard’s Technology and Entrepreneurship Center and founder and co-director of the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s Change Leadership Group for more than a decade. His previous experience includes 12 years as a high school teacher, K-eight principal, university professor in teacher education and founding executive director of Educators for Social Responsibility.

Wagner is a frequent speaker at national and international conferences and a widely published author. His work includes numerous articles and six books. Wagner’s latest book, “Most Likely To Succeed: Preparing Our Kids for The Innovation Era,” is co-authored by Dr. Ted Dintersmith. “Creating Innovators: The Making of Young People Who Will Change The World,” published in 2012, received rave reviews and has been translated into 12 languages. His 2008 book, “The Global Achievement Gap,” continues to be an international best-seller.

Wagner recently served as the strategic education adviser for a major new education documentary, “Most Likely to Succeed,” which had its world premiere at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. He also collaborated with noted filmmaker **Robert Compton** in 2010 to create the 60-minute documentary, “The Finland Phenomenon: Inside The World’s Most Surprising School System.”



Wagner

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