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JOURNAL

OHIO SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION



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An innovative Muskingum County program provides a wrap-around system of care to help students overcome nonacademic barriers to learning.
— cover photo credit: Dreamstime.com

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New digital edition available!

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

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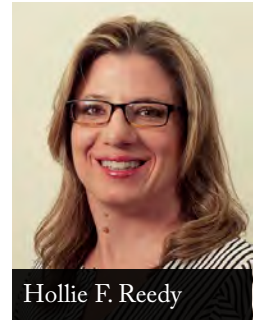
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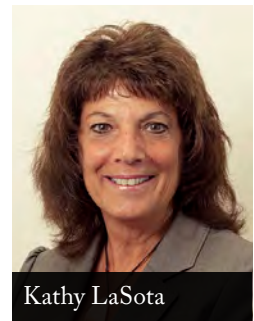
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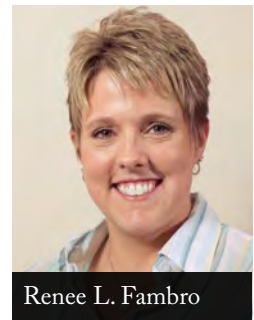
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Learning from Chardon's response to tragedy

Richard Lewis, CAE, executive director



Honoring Chardon

“**R**emain Chardon Strong.” Those words may once have seemed most appropriate painted on a locker room wall as a motivational tool for the football team. Today they mean so much more.

On Feb. 27, Ohio joined a growing fraternity of states with the only prerequisite for membership being a fatal attack of school violence. On that day, a student at Chardon High School fired 10 shots from a .22-caliber semiautomatic handgun. Three of those bullets took the lives of classmates and wounded several others, paralyzing one. The Geauga County village of Chardon is now tragically linked with communities like Edinboro, Pa.; Springfield, Ore.; Littleton, Colo.; and Paducah, Ky.

The OSBA trustees, staff and membership continue to extend their deepest condolences to the victims and their families, as well as to **Chardon Local's** students, parents, staff, school board, administration and community.

Campus shootings are not a recent phenomenon. In 1966, **Charles Whitman** pointed a rifle from the observation deck of a tower at the University of Texas in Austin and began a shooting spree that lasted for 96 minutes. Sixteen students, teachers and others were killed; more than 30 were wounded.

In the 45 years since, more than a dozen fatal shooting sprees have taken place at educational institutions across the country. Small towns, big cities — they can happen anywhere, anytime. Schools must remain alert for any warning sign that violence could erupt in their building.

The challenges are great. Consider the number of people in our schools. In a given year, there are 332 million entries to Ohio school buildings by students alone — not counting staff, parents, voters and sports spectators. That number is comparable to the yearly traffic at international airports in Atlanta, Beijing, Chicago, London and Tokyo *combined*.

Sadly, our schools may someday resemble airports. I hope we don't see a time when kindergartners must remove their shoes and place their lunch boxes on an X-ray conveyor belt to enter places of learning.

To preempt that, we must stay vigilant and constantly prepared. We are grateful for the quick response of Chardon Local Schools' leadership and staff, along with local law enforcement, which secured the safety of other students and enabled the quick arrest of the suspect. Their preparedness should serve as a model to schools across the nation. Previous crisis planning and disaster drills prepared the district to react quickly and prevent further loss of life in this horrific event.

Gauga County Sheriff **Dan McClelland** summarized it well to *The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer*: “I hate to say it, but we trained for exactly this type of thing, a school emergency of this type and got the city involved and the schools involved and practiced, and our training worked that day.”

There were many heroes on Feb. 27. Cafeteria worker **Cherie Reed** sheltered students, offering them a “haven from chaos and evil.” She and **Travis Carver**, a 16-year-old junior studying to be an EMT, gave medical attention to a fallen student and comforted her for an hour.

Chardon High School's **Frank Hall**, offensive coordinator of the football team, faced down the shooter, chasing him from the building. Math teacher **Joseph Ricci** pulled a wounded student into his classroom and administered first aid until paramedics arrived. Planning and preparation are sometimes complemented by courage and certitude.

Chardon now starts the rebuilding process. The outpouring of support from the education community has been immense. Board President **Karen Blankenship** shared this message of thanks to schools across the state.

“Our thoughts and prayers remain with the victims, their families and all families that are struggling.”

“In times like these I am so grateful for the sense of family that characterizes our small community. We have witnessed an outpouring of emotions, and yet, despite the grief, we have seen tremendous support and healing.”

“On behalf of the entire Chardon Schools family, thank you for your kind expressions of sympathy and support in the difficult hours and days following this horrific event. We learned that we had friends not only around the corner, but also across the country and even around the globe. As we move forward, remain Chardon proud and Chardon strong.”

We hope and pray that a tragedy like this never again strikes Ohio's schools — or any school. But if it does, we should also hope and pray that the district can follow the examples set forth by the students, staff, board and community of Chardon, Ohio. ■



Navigating the Internet

Cyberlaw and schools — confusion and clarity

Hollie F. Reedy, chief legal counsel

Issues surrounding access, retention, misuse and abuse of technology are hot legal topics. These developing areas of the law affect schools in many aspects of school management — employee and student discipline, public records and criminal law. Some areas of the law relating to technology are still unclear and confusing, and some are developing more clarity. Following is an overview that highlights two areas that illustrate both concepts.

Confusion — student use of technology

As school board members and administrators, you know that student interaction takes place outside the school building. Increasingly, we are all experiencing how the web of technology and being connected on social media is blurring the boundaries among work, home and school.

At the same time, many state legislatures are developing or enacting bullying legislation that requires schools to protect students from bullying without clarifying the legal limits of a school's ability to regulate conduct occurring

outside of school. The laws sometimes fail to acknowledge that a school's ability to apply school discipline to bullying behavior that occurs out of school and without using school equipment is limited.

Consider the issue of student speech about another student that began at home as a Facebook comment or picture. Such speech might include words, pictures or computer animation, and could include comments by other students. Let's suppose the speech might be considered bullying as defined by your school policy. Further suppose that students are talking about the speech at school and angry parents are in your office asking what you, as a school administrator or board member, intend to do about it.

Where are the lines of authority? How far can a school district reach into the lives of students to regulate their behavior and punish them for violating school discipline and conduct codes?

Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court

declined to hear the combined appeal of two important cases concerning student speech and the ability of schools to discipline students (*J.S. v. Blue Mountain School District*, 132 S.Ct, 1097, 181 L.Ed 2d 978). This case was combined in the petition for certiorari with the *Laysbuck v. Hermitage Sch. Dist.* case, discussed below. (A petition for certiorari asks the high court to review the case.)

Blue Mountain decision

The first case, *J.S. v. Blue Mountain School District*, was a federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals case heard en banc. "En banc" means the entire Third Circuit of 14 federal judges heard the case together. Usually, cases before a federal court of appeals are heard and decided by a three-judge panel.

The court found that a school district could not discipline a student for a fake profile of a principal on MySpace (C.A. 3, 650 F.3d 915). The court held that the district failed to demonstrate the profile would create a substantial disruption at school.

Laysbuck decision

The second case, also issued by the same en banc Third Circuit Court of Appeals, was *Laysbuck v. Hermitage School District* (C.A. 3, 650 F.3d 205). In that case, honor student **Justin Laysbuck** also created a fake MySpace profile of a principal. Created during holiday break on his grandmother's computer, the profile used the principal's picture from the school's website.

He distributed the profile and also accessed it at school. School administrators disciplined him as a result, including suspension from

Cyberbullying — practical suggestions

Make sure the district's acceptable use policy for staff and students is up-to-date and signed annually.

Review policies on harassment and bullying annually.

Consider whether there is a connection between out-of-school conduct and the school in applying the discipline code.

Assess whether conduct causes a substantial disruption at school.

Remain objective in considering the facts of the particular situation.

Act deliberately, not reactively to what is usually offensive material.

Consult with board counsel, when appropriate, to ensure legal compliance.

school, assignment to an alternative school, prohibitions on his attendance at graduation and prom, and a ban on all extracurricular activities.

The court of appeals found that the off-campus conduct did not cause a substantial disruption at school and the nexus between the conduct and the school was *not* sufficient for the school to impose school discipline for it.

The court stated, “We need not now define the precise parameters of when the arm of authority can reach beyond the schoolhouse gate because, as we noted earlier, the district court found that Justin’s conduct did not disrupt the school, and the district does not appeal that finding. Thus, we need only hold that Justin’s use of the district’s website does not constitute entering the school, and that the district is not empowered to punish his out-of-school expressive conduct under the circumstances here” (opinion, at para 37).

Kowalski decision

The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear a third case arising from the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, *Kowalski v. Berkeley County Schools* (C.A. 4, 652 F.3d 565, cert. denied 132 S.Ct. 1095, 181 L.Ed. 2d 1009). The case involves another MySpace page, but in this case the female high school student created a chat group at home. She invited more than 100 members to join the group, which targeted another female student. The Students Against Sluts Herpes (S.A.S.H.) group page also included altered pictures, and false and derogatory comments about a female student.

The targeted student’s parents brought the matter to school officials who investigated, found Kowalski in violation of the district’s bullying policy, suspended her for 10 days, barred her from cheerleading for 90 days and banned her participation in something called “Charm Review.” Kowalski alleged, apparently without irony, that after being disciplined for her conduct she became socially isolated from peers, was treated coldly by district staff and

became depressed.

The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals found that on those facts, the connection — or nexus — between the school and the conduct was sufficient, which meant that the school could regulate the speech and discipline the student for it. The court based its ruling on standards articulated in the seminal case of *Tinker v. Des Moines*, which held that school officials may discipline students whose speech or conduct creates a material and substantial disruption at school and impacts the rights of other students to be secure and to be let alone, but could not prevent students from expressing their First Amendment right to free speech and expression by wearing black armbands protesting the Vietnam War, where their speech was a silent, passive express of opinion without such disruption (1969) 393 U.S. 503, 89 S.Ct. 733).

In reaching this conclusion, the Kowalski court addressed the issue of where speech on the Internet actually takes place. The court said, “This argument ... raises the metaphysical question of where her speech occurred when she used the Internet as the medium. Kowalski indeed pushed her computer’s keys in her home, but she knew that the electronic response would be, as it in fact was, published beyond her home and could reasonably be expected to reach the school or impact the school environment. She also knew that the dialogue would and did take place among Musselman High School students whom she invited to join the S.A.S.H. group, and that the fallout from her conduct and the speech within the group would be felt in the school itself.

“Indeed, the group’s name was *Students Against Sluts Herpes* and a vast majority of its members were Musselman students. As one commentator on the Web page observed, ‘wait til (Shay N.) sees the page lol.’ Moreover, as Kowalski could anticipate, Shay N. and her parents took the attack as having been made in the school context, as they went to the high school to lodge their complaint”

(opinion, at para 19 and 20).

Therefore, even though she was not at school when she created the Web page, the court found it was foreseeable that the speech would reach school and cause a substantial disruption.

Kowalski also alleged that she did not receive due process because the student code of conduct did not notify her that conduct out of school may subject her to discipline and did not give her due process and an opportunity to be heard.

The court found that she had adequate notice of the district’s student handbook, which included the district’s harassment, bullying and intimidation policy and student code of conduct. The court found that the suspension policy regarding notice of her conduct and an opportunity to be heard were satisfied, because she was called to the principal’s office where the issue of the online group was discussed, she admitted her role and was then suspended for 10 days.

Result so far? Confusion continues

But wait — if you compare the facts of each case, you might feel they are similar enough that you are wondering how two different courts came to two different conclusions.

All three cases involved websites created out of school, students accessing them out of school and at school, but with different results in terms of the court’s decisions. You’d be right if you found that confusing and contradictory.

The confusion surrounding student discipline and acceptable technology use unfortunately continues. The denial by the U.S. Supreme Court to resolve the conflicts of law based on the cases presented and provide guidance to school districts results in your administrators trying to make day-to-day decisions in an area of the law that has not yet been clearly defined.

Clarity — new digital data case impacts schools

The Ohio Supreme Court’s body of

case law on technology and public records issues expanded on Feb. 27 when the court ruled on public records access issues related to data stored by a county recorder's office on CDs. This case is relevant to all public entities dealing with public records requests for electronic documents.

The case, *State ex rel. Data Trace Information Servs., LLC v. Cuyahoga Cty. Fiscal Officer*, involved the Cuyahoga County Recorder's Office (Slip Op. 2012-Ohio-753). A company that provides a database title service that other companies use to search titles regularly made public records requests of the recorder to provide all recent property transactions on CD. After a change in leadership, the new recorder notified the company that the office no longer would provide electronic records and would respond to the company only with paper documents at the statutory rate of \$2 per page.

The recorder's office had a public records policy stating that the charge to download computer files onto CDs was \$1 per CD. The company filed an action in mandamus to compel the public office to provide the records. The recorder responded that the requested items were not public records. The recorder's office then changed its public records policy, deleting the \$1 fee for CDs and replacing the language with a \$2 cost per page for copies of recorded documents. Then, Cuyahoga County adopted a new form of charter government and adopted a public records policy noting that the charge for CDs would be the actual cost, or \$1.26 per disc.

After that, the companies filed an amended complaint requesting the court to do three things: first, make the requested copies available on CD; second, compel the office to revise its public records policy and practice to allow electronic copying and provide it to the public at cost; and third, limit the cost of electronic copies to \$1 per CD with no per-page fee.

The county fiscal officer continued to

assert the right of the office to charge the \$2 per page fee, even though he agreed the records could be provided electronically. The total number of pages copied onto the CD at \$2 per page would result in a bill of \$208,564 for the requested two months of copies.

Coming into focus — Ohio Supreme Court decision

The Ohio Supreme Court found that the documents were created or received and came under the jurisdiction of the office, but the remaining question was whether they "document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities of the public office."

The fiscal officer argued the documents were not public records because the items "... document the independent acts of third parties who present the instruments to the officer for recording" (Paragraph 34). The court found the argument lacked merit, because the statutory duties of the recorder's office includes recording deeds and conveyances, and includes keeping those records. The court held that the documents reflect the statutory function of the recorder's office and, therefore, meet the definition of a public record.

Regarding the \$2 per page statutory fee, the court analyzed the statute authorizing the charge and found that the charge referred to photocopying, which are paper copies, and that the process of downloading documents electronically has nothing to do with that process. Therefore, the plain meaning of the statute authorizing \$2 per page refers only to paper copies.

The court reaffirmed that a public office's duty to provide records at cost does not include labor costs of copying the electronic documents. The court ordered the office to provide the electronic records at actual cost, rather than the fee for paper copies of \$2 a page.

The court did not order the public office to amend its records policy since the disputed language was in a policy

that was superseded by the new public records policy adopted by the office, and the new policy did not contain disputed charges for electronic copies.

Finally, the companies asked for an order that the public office pay the cost of its attorney's fees and statutory damages. The court denied that request because the companies' brief did not include any support of their claim for



The use and misuse of technology are hot legal topics that can affect schools.

those fees, and because the requests for the records were not transmitted by hand delivery or certified mail as required by Ohio Revised Code Section 149.43(C)(1).

Learn more at OSBA Cyberlaw Seminar

Technology use and abuse is a quickly developing area of the law affecting many aspects of school management and administration. Plan to attend the OSBA Cyberlaw Seminar on May 11, one of the only full-day seminars on this developing area specifically geared toward Ohio schools. We will bring you experienced practitioners with practical information, real-world situations people are encountering and best practices on how to handle them. ■

"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.



What's your brand?

Kathy LaSota, director of school board services

We live in a world of branding, from automobiles to soft drinks to technology. Each major corporation is trying to say, do or show something that will set it apart from others. Each wants to promote itself as the front-runner in its particular race to the top.

School districts are no different. Superintendents are charged with the role of cheerleader. Boards of education are taking more and more responsibility in marketing the district to maintain its status in the competitive educational arena.

Some say all this fuss about branding detracts from the true work of school district leaders. Others feel that without a district brand schools are misaligned, goals are unclear and long-term focus is scattered. The bottom line is that in today's competitive education arena, image cannot be ignored.

What exactly is a brand? Is it simply a visual symbol of what the school district stands for, or community landmark? Is it a logo or a mascot? Is it all about school colors, matching shirts and billboards? Should board members have a role in branding and marketing the district? Is branding something a school board should even be concerned about?

We would all agree that the school board is responsible for helping create, embrace and communicate the district's vision, mission and principles — its internal values. **Hugh Davidson**, author of *The Committed Enterprise*, suggests that branding is an “external expression of those internal values.” Some might say that logos and slogans are brands.

While they might provide an identity, if logos and slogans don't attract people and create a sense of loyalty and commitment to the organization, they fall short.

Branding a school district to align direction, create an identity and market the system's positive aspects requires much more than the picture of a mascot on all district letterhead or certain colors on school signs. Those are great traditions that can elicit pride and recognition. But, creating a highly recognizable culture of high expectations, commitment to continuous improvement, and dedication and

In today's competitive education arena, image cannot be ignored.

loyalty to the district does not happen by pictures and colors alone.

According to **Tony Hsieh**, CEO of the online clothing and shoe retailer Zappos: “Your culture is your brand.”

I agree. Your district's brand lives in the perceptions of your constituents. You may be able to influence perceptions, but it takes more than just the school board to do that. School board members, district leaders, faculty and staff share a responsibility to brand the district in every conversation they have with every person every day. People are watching. People are listening. You can't take off your “board hat” or “school district hat.”

School board members should use

protocol, processes and practices that focus the district's work on big-picture issues that will define the district over time. They should set the expectation for all who work and learn there that they are united by a common bond that requires unity of purpose and accountability for results. They should, by their actions, set the tone for respectful, diligent and professional behaviors. Boards should monitor and assess district efforts to promote high-quality opportunities for all students and make sure everyone knows of those efforts. *That* is branding!

Branding starts with doing the right things and doing them right. Reflecting that approach, Hershey Chocolate Co. founder **Milton Hershey** said, “Give them quality. That is the best type of advertising.”

It's important that you take time to focus a school board discussion about your district's brand. Here are some questions that might help you get started:

- Describe the brand you believe your district has. Does it differ from what you would like it to be? How? Why?
- Have you defined the vision, mission and principles that your brand should reflect?
- Would different segments of your community define your brand in different ways? Why?
- What behaviors, practices and procedures detract from the branding you desire?

If you would like OSBA to facilitate a focused conversation on this or other topics, please contact the author at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or kLasota@ohioschoolboards.org. ■



Wise words

Wisdom from a fortune cookie

Renee L. Fambro, deputy director of labor relations

My favorite part of a meal from a Chinese restaurant is always the main course — the spicy chicken and rice dish, the spring roll, the bowl of hot and sour soup.

I rarely enjoy the fortune cookie as much as I do the meal, although I never let it go to waste. Yet, I recently enjoyed the *content* of one fortune cookie so much that it's taped to my computer monitor. Every morning when I first sit at my desk, I read its one simple line: *"Should have" is a favorite phrase for those looking for excuses.*

These 11 words strike a chord with me as I think of how we are always faced with new challenges and hurdles that seem to make setting personal goals something we "should have" done. Each new year brings work and personal challenges, and often, setting personal goals, along with everything else on our

plates, is overwhelming. Many times, it comes down to two choices — throw our hands up in the air and push aside our personal goals or decide that we refuse to allow this year to become another one full of "should-haves." Here are some steps we can take to avoid being that person who makes those fortune cookie excuses.

Examine where you are

It is important to start your planning by taking time to evaluate where you currently are before you start plotting out where you want to be and how you will get there. Why start in a panic about all of the goals you'd love to complete without first taking time to see what all you have already accomplished? This starts our process of developing new goals on a more positive note, because it reminds us that we make progress in what we do every day.

Learn from the past but don't dwell on it

We all look back with regret on past actions and decisions. Not only is this human nature, but it's also an essential part of learning and growing. It's not bad to look back and decide that you would handle the same situation differently now; it is bad to become so absorbed with how you handled it before that you are frozen in place and cannot move forward. With this in mind, take time to evaluate past decisions you made and their outcomes, both good and bad. With this insight, moving forward and making wiser and more effective choices becomes easier.

Evaluate your goals

Due to professional or personal demands, some of our goals are set for us; we simply don't have a lot of control over things that must be accomplished.



Meadowdale High School

A Very **GOLD** Year

In 2011, Fanning Howey celebrated our **Golden Anniversary**. But we also had the chance to celebrate the LEED® Gold certification of four Ohio schools!

Congratulations to our clients!

Clyde-Green Springs Exempted Village Schools
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Dayton Public Schools
 Meadowdale High School
 Edison PK-8 School



Given this fact, also take the time to create personal goals that are relevant, realistic and rewarding.

Pick goals that are relevant — goals that are directly connected to advancing important aspects of your life, whether it's your students, employees and district, or your family and friends. Assess those goals that will make the greatest impact and focus on them.

At the same time, goals need to be realistic; there has to be a way to achieve them or at least make progress in a reasonable period of time. "Realistic" doesn't mean "easy," because most relevant and rewarding goals are challenging. However, goals should not be so demanding that they defeat our spirit or frustrate our intentions.

Lastly, develop goals that will provide you with the greatest satisfaction. This is a personal decision, but it's one we often get too busy to consider. Achieving any goal is wonderful; reaching a goal that provides us with personal satisfaction is a welcome bonus.

Know when you need help and ask for it

This is, while good and arguably obvious advice, often easier said than done. Many of us don't follow this advice because we feel that asking for help shows an inherent weakness that makes us a less effective person. It's time to look at asking for help in a different way. Sometimes, a task is simply too big for one person to conquer. Sometimes, the ideas and work product of several people far exceed what one person alone can produce. Whatever the reason, know when you need help and don't be afraid to ask for it.

Track your progress

Tracking your progress not only keeps you on task, but it is a great way to gauge that your goals are indeed relevant, realistic and reachable. It's easy to become frustrated when we don't see instant results, so keeping an accurate measure of the steps you've made in furtherance of your goals is important for your own motivation.

Have a support system

Sometimes the help we need is the quiet person who stands behind us and gives us the strength and encouragement we need to keep working toward our goals.

Every morning I read one simple line: "Should have" is a favorite phrase for those looking for excuses.

This is the person who listens to our frustrations, lets us vent, then quietly and steadily nudges us ahead. Whether

this person is a peer, supervisor, friend or family member, his or her quiet and constant support is invaluable to us as we work to reach our goals. They are our safety nets and their presence makes taking risks feel just a bit safer.

Taking the time to develop personal goals that are rewarding and attainable is not only important, but something we owe to ourselves. We always hear that we need to "take time for ourselves" and that's a message often forgotten in the crazy world we live in. Now is the perfect time to approach personal satisfaction in a different way. Rather than make 2012 another year of "should haves," make it a year of "Look what I did!"

And I'll keep looking for words of wisdom in fortune cookies. ■

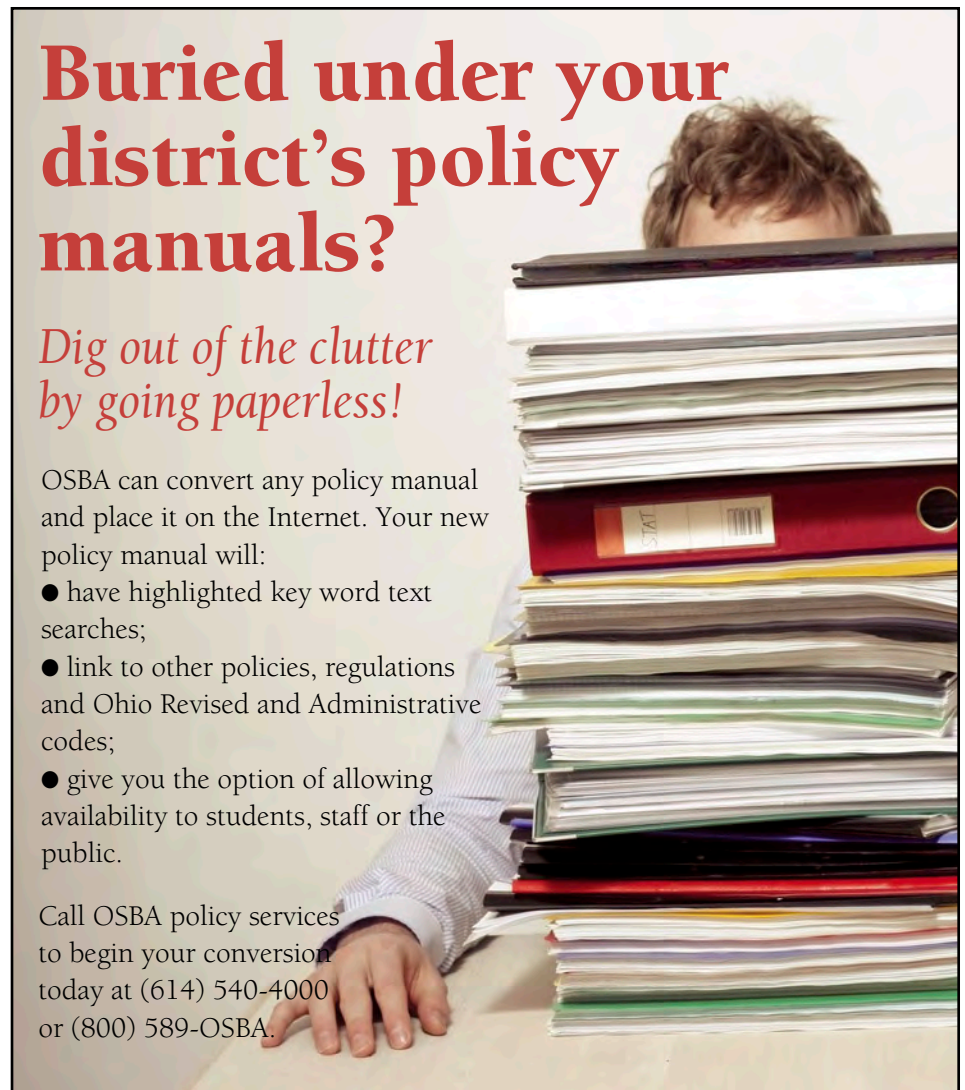
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Will Kasich's tax plan 'frack' the GOP caucus?

Damon Asbury, director of legislative services

Gov. **John Kasich** introduced the long-awaited mid-biennium review in March, following months of behind-the-scenes work by the governor, his staff and cabinet members.

The 2,833-page document, known as House Bill (HB) 487, proposes a wide variety of strategic policy changes and initiatives that Kasich believes are vital “to improve the management of Ohio’s government agencies and health systems, improve Ohio’s education and workforce development and improve Ohioans’ access to low-cost, reliable energy.” The recommendations are grouped within seven broad categories: management efficiency, local government, education and workforce, bank tax reform, capital appropriations, energy and income tax reduction.

The governor seeks speedy action by the

General Assembly in order to further his goal to “re-create a jobs friendly climate in Ohio.” While the goal is widely shared by members on both sides of the aisle, there are differences in the details as to how to best achieve the goal, as well as the appropriate timing for approval.

The sheer volume of recommendations contained in HB 487 requires an unusual approach to completing the work in a timely fashion. Typically, a budget bill is introduced in the House Finance Committee by the committee chair. Work on the bill proceeds through that committee and its various subcommittees prior to full House approval. It then is forwarded to the Senate for action. Due to the volume of the bill’s contents and wide variety of issues included, House leadership broke the bill into various components and assigned sections of the bill to

other House committees for hearings and testimony on specific components. For example, the House State Government Committee is reviewing matters relating to Department of Administrative Services matters; the House Local Government Committee is addressing local government efficiency recommendations; and the House Ways and Means Committee is reviewing tax components of the bill.

As of this writing, the education and workforce development components of the mid-biennial review had been introduced in separate legislation, Senate Bill (SB) 316, which Sen. **Peggy Lehner** (R-Kettering) sponsored at the request of the governor. Hearings are being conducted in the Senate Education Committee, and Lehner, committee chair, has scheduled three days of hearings each week through early May. Prior to HB 487’s introduction, it

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was anticipated that the Cleveland Plan, a proposal by Cleveland Mayor **Frank Jackson** to transform that city's schools, would be included. However, the Cleveland Plan has been introduced



Nearly 3,000 pages, HB 487 has been assigned to various House committees for hearings on specific components.

with bipartisan sponsorship in both the House and Senate. The House legislation, HB 506, is jointly sponsored by Rep. **Ron Amstutz** (R-Wooster) and Rep. **Sandra Williams** (D-Cleveland). In the Senate, SB 325 is jointly sponsored by Lehner and Sen. **Nina Turner** (D-Cleveland). Substitute bills, reflecting an agreement between Jackson and the Cleveland Teachers Union, have been introduced and hearings are expected in early May.

Two components of the governor's proposal — the plan to increase severance taxes on the extraction of oil and gas through a process popularly referred to as “fracking,” as well as proposals to revise the state's bank tax system and reduce income taxes — immediately encountered opposition among House Republicans. About 60 pages of HB 487 that deal with those tax components were stripped out of the bill. House Finance Committee Chairman Rep. **Ron Amstutz** (R-Wooster) announced that those components would be looked at separately and will be addressed on a slower timetable.

According to Amstutz, the reason for removing the severance and income tax matters from HB 487 is to provide ample time to address the many key questions surrounding the issues. He noted that it “may be possible in the future to develop a tax reform package that makes bigger improvements in Ohio's tax equity and competitiveness.”

While there may be several reasons for the delay, the more conservative members of the Republican caucus are not happy with efforts to increase any taxes, even when coupled with a potential personal income tax reduction. Others fear that increasing taxes on the oil and gas industry could chill the growth of that industry's development. Yet others desire a more deliberative and comprehensive approach to tax reform questions.

Despite the reluctance of the House to move quickly, Kasich has shown no signs of backing off the proposal. He believes that a reduction in personal income tax rates is critical to making Ohio more economically competitive, and that the modest proposed increase in severance taxes on mineral extraction would benefit all Ohioans. He further notes that the increase would apply to an industry that is extremely under-taxed in relation to other states. The governor, who has previously signed onto the anti-tax pledge of the national group Americans for Tax Reform, characterizes the combined actions as being “revenue neutral” and not a tax increase.

The Ohio School Boards Association, in a joint press release with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and the Ohio Association of School Business Officials, has endorsed the increased severance tax the governor has proposed, noting that appropriate tax policies would prevent out-of-state businesses from profiting excessively at the expense of Ohio's taxpayers. The associations believe that such a new revenue source could help offset recent cuts to education and encourage greater investment in education. ■

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For more information, contact Marcella Gonzalez, senior administrative assistant of legislative services, at (614) 540-4000, ext. 230; (800) 589-OSBA, ext. 230; or mgonzalez@ohioschoolboards.org.



Elected school board members — guardians of our liberty

William L. Phillis, executive director

Ohio Coalition for Equity & Adequacy of School Funding

The public common school system, managed by locally elected boards of education in each school district, constitutes the fourth branch of government. This branch, through its local political subdivisions, is the most democratic of all the institutions that deliver state services. It is the most transparent and accountable delivery system of state government. It, in its operation, personifies democracy and, in its role, nurtures and enhances democracy.

The state of Ohio ultimately is responsible to provide a thorough and efficient system of common schools. The state's constitutional charge is to ensure high quality educational opportunities in every ZIP code in every school district.

But the state is not equipped to deliver those educational opportunities — the delivery is a time-honored function of school districts managed by elected boards of education. Unfortunately, the state has performed unsatisfactorily in providing sufficient resources and policies to allow local boards to develop high-quality educational

programming in every district. However, irrespective of the resources available, state officials often blame local boards for not accomplishing state-mandated results.

The fourth branch of government — school boards and their respective districts — has worked very well, in spite of the failings of state policy and support. The common school system has historically allowed diverse populations of students to learn together. It is the only public or private institution that has the potential of bringing together all the children of all the people to learn together and to become Americans together.

This historic phenomenon has made possible *e pluribus unum*. Boards of education, in the role of fostering and managing the common schools at the local level, have been, and continue to be, guardians of our liberty. They have nurtured the one institution that serves as the melting pot of our American culture. However, this venerable trust is being undermined by the reckless “choice” movement.

Democracy as we know it would not have survived, nor will it survive, without the public common school system. Why, then, are so many in our society trying to destroy it? Why is the school district/board of education concept being eroded by public policies that farm students out, at school district expense, to private schools and privately operated non-district entities over which the local boards have no jurisdiction?

Possibly, those who attack the public common school are ill-informed about the nexus between the common school system and political democracy. It also may be that some are so intensely driven by the profit motive or private agendas that they are blinded to the virtues of common schools.

Many aspects of the public common school system are being assailed — student outcomes, cost of administration, teacher quality, dropout rates, union contracts and now the performance of local governance. Voices from around the



School districts managed by elected boards of education help Ohio provide a thorough and efficient system of common schools.

nation are suggesting that the board of education concept is outmoded and ineffective. Their whispers of change in the local governance structure are becoming more and more audible.

The Dec. 1, 2011, Rethinking Education Governance in the Twenty-First Century Conference, sponsored by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, seemed to be structured to undermine the board of education concept. Various presenters implied that the current governance structure is inhibiting reform. "Reform," in the mind of some "reformers," is complete, uninhibited choice at public expense.

The constant assault on public education is taking its toll. The trashing of public education over the past three decades has persuaded the public to be sympathetic to choice programs as the alternative to strengthening the public common school system. The current level of choice removes \$800 million from the public school districts of Ohio this school year. The unrestrained expansion of choice programs will undermine the entire system of public schools. Those choice programs transfer school districts' funds to entities over which boards of education have no jurisdiction or influence.

Some of the education choice zealots envision an arrangement whereby the \$800 billion that is spent annually on public education in America is put in the hands of state politicians, with no viable public common school system in place. In that scenario, funds would be distributed to private and parochial education entities via vouchers, and to privately operated, for-profit charter schools. Public school districts would then accommodate the students that the private entities refuse to serve.

A few years of this type of education arrangement would

stratify society, and democracy as we know it would be lost. The public common school districts operated by elected boards of education must be kept in place to perpetuate the American culture and preserve our liberty.

Such legislation as Ohio House Bill 136 (universal voucher bill) and House Bill 242 (tuition tax credit bill) are mere tokens of the horrific movement to totally privatize public education. Boards of education operating traditional public schools must draw a line in the sand and resist with passion and vigor the privatization of the system that is intrinsically linked to political democracy. Survival of an effective, dynamic public common school system is essential to the survival of democracy.

Boards of education, in providing governance for the public education system across America, continue to perpetuate our democratic way of life. Public schools provide for the education of youth. Possibly, they are the incubators of democracy. School board members, in their service to the public common school system, truly are guardians of our liberties. ■

About the author: William L. Phillis has served as executive director of the Ohio Coalition for Equity & Adequacy of School Funding since 1992. The coalition was organized in 1990 to challenge the constitutionality of the Ohio school-funding system, and did so with the *DeRolph* lawsuit, which it filed in 1991. The case made its way to the Ohio Supreme Court, which ruled four times that Ohio's system of school funding is unconstitutional.

Editor's note: The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent OSBA's policies or positions.



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A 'wrap-around'



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Care Teams lift up struggling students

Gary Motz, managing editor

Growing up is hard enough. But for children struggling with poverty, family strife, substance abuse, delinquency and more, the challenge is even greater. Any one of these issues can quickly derail a student. Multiply them and you can end up with a deeply troubled child for whom academic success seems beyond reach.

In the **West Muskingum Local (Muskingum)** community, groups of caring adults are pooling their time and talents to reach out to children who are at risk of losing their way. Made up of school staff and representatives from government and community agencies, these groups comprise the Muskingum County school district's Care Teams. The program was launched at West Muskingum Local in 2003 as part of the Care Team Collaborative, a division of **Muskingum Valley ESC**.

The initiative's goal is to establish a "wrap-around system of care" to help students overcome nonacademic barriers to learning, said **Katie West**, Muskingum Valley ESC attendance officer and Care Team consultant. Surmounting these barriers can improve academic achievement, school climate and attendance, and reduce discipline problems that lead to out-of-school suspensions and encounters with the criminal justice system.

"Students can't learn if other areas of their lives are not healthy and safe," West said. "Ideally, we want to help students avoid negative influences and make positive choices in their lives."

At West Muskingum High School, Care Team members

system of care

include teachers, counselors and administrators, along with representatives from Muskingum Valley ESC, Muskingum County Juvenile Court, Muskingum Behavioral Health Prevention Services and Six County counseling. One administrator is a former sheriff's deputy. The district — which is rated "Excellent" on the state report card — also has Care Teams at its middle school and two elementaries.

"Collectively, these agencies bring expertise, connections, the ability to accelerate the appointment process and the ability to see students at the school, rather than parents bringing them to the (agency's) office," West said. "Everybody working together helps reduce duplication of services."

Intensely focusing on the individual

Students enter the program through a referral process, said **Steve Kish**, assistant principal of both West Muskingum High School and Middle School, and chair of the middle school's Care Team. They can be referred by a parent, school staff member, friend or community member. Students also can refer themselves. Parents or guardians must give permission for a student to enter the program and authorize the release of education records to the participating agencies.

The referral form lists issues with which a student might be struggling, such as bullying, truancy, divorce, pregnancy, grief, lack of friends, domestic violence, thoughts of suicide, substance abuse, delinquent behaviors and others. After analyzing the student's needs, the Care Team creates a "care map" that will help direct the team's work with the student and determine what agencies will be involved.

Next comes an individual meeting with the student, where he or she completes a self-assessment that includes written reflections on strengths, difficulties, emotions and school life, as well as a goal and three steps to help achieve it. This information is shared at the next weekly Care Team meeting and the team sets up steps, strategies and interventions to help the student. The information also is shared with the student's teachers.

"Each member of the Care Team is assigned a particular student to monitor and meet weekly with," Kish said. "At the Care Team meetings, members will update the others on their students. Those members will then share any involvement

they or their agencies have had with the students. We have teachers, a truant officer, a school counselor, a probation officer and someone from a mental health agency on the team.

"By doing this networking, we're better able to provide services and see how that youngster is doing. For instance, maybe they were having difficulties with the courts that we in the school were not aware of, and maybe the courts are not aware of something that the youngster is doing here."

A key component of the program is the 40 Developmental Assets, a widely recognized approach to youth development created by the Search Institute, a Minneapolis-based, nonprofit research group. The checklist identifies 40 factors that make young people more likely to grow up to be healthy, caring and responsible individuals.



West Muskingum High School Care Team Chair Dave Potopsky and member Barb Rose discuss plans to help a student following a team meeting. Potopsky teaches business classes at the high school. Rose is a Muskingum Valley ESC attendance intervention officer.



Care Teams have supported at-risk West Muskingum students for nearly a decade.

Care Teams use the developmental asset form, which students complete annually, to measure growth. They also track attendance, grades, suspensions, in-school discipline and proficiency and achievement test scores. The care map, which indicates specific goals and benchmarks of success targeted to the student's needs, is regularly tracked and reported to the student, parents and Care Team.

In the trenches

Much of the Care Team's work takes place away from the weekly meetings. Members make it a point to have as much contact with their students as possible to see how they are doing. This serves as a frequent reminder that someone is there for them. Members enlist teachers and other staff to check in with the students, too.

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"We get the whole school involved," said business teacher **Dave Potopsky**, who chairs the high school Care Team. "Every teacher knows who these kids are and what a great program this is. ... They all provide input and are extra sets of eyes throughout the school day."

Math teacher **Chad Parker** has served on the high school Care Team for three years. He said he is one of the team members who can provide a view "from the trenches."

"As a teacher I see

the kids daily, so I get a perspective on how they do in the classroom, how they behave," Parker said. "I also see and hear some things that I can bring to the meetings. When I see the kids in the hallway I talk to them and do whatever I can to help."

Ryan Barks teaches high school health and physical education. That means that nearly every student passes through his classes.

"They brought me on because basically, I get to see everybody right out of the gate, especially with PE classes," Barks said. "To say that we collaborate well, I think we *define* collaboration as a school district. Not only with ourselves, but also with the outside agencies.

"... We hit every single aspect of the student; it's not just academic, it's not just discipline, it's just not attendance issues — it's everything. So, I'll talk to students in the hallways. ... No matter if it's grief for a family member who passed away, a divorce in the family, drug issues, whatever it is, we hear about it.

"That never would have happened before, and I think it's because more teachers are jumping on board and really caring about the kids, not just their academic future, but their future as a whole."

"The teachers do a wonderful job," said **Amy Guss**, of Muskingum Behavioral Health Prevention Services. "They are always trying to figure out which kids they need to talk to, in addition to their regular duties. In study halls a lot of them interact with the students, so we all come together as a team and try to help out kids as much as we can."

Putting the 'care' in Care Team

School staff members serving on the Care Teams volunteer their time, while the outside agency members must take time away from their other duties to serve. The weekly meetings start an hour before the school day begins and team members also meet after school. Everyone goes the extra mile for the kids.

"I've been to meetings at three o'clock in the afternoon," said team member **Barb Rose**, Muskingum Valley ESC attendance intervention officer. "The school day is over and the teachers and counselors are supposed to be done. But they're sitting around the table trying to figure out what we can do to help these students."

Credit recovery teacher and team member **Karen Davis** works closely with Care Team students who have fallen behind in school. She also works with other students who are credit-deficient.

"I help the kids get credit recovery and see some success so they

don't feel like they're drowning," Davis said. "They work with me until they get caught up and then go back to the regular classroom. It helps a lot of them graduate, and on time."

Her small room on the second floor of the high school also serves as a sort of haven for kids who want to talk or just find

"Students can't learn if other areas of their lives are not healthy and safe. We want to help students avoid negative influences and make positive choices in their lives."

— *Katie West*

some quiet time. The cozy space has computers, a refrigerator and microwave, and a table and chairs.

"Some of them are anti-social and can't be in the lunchroom because they'll cause trouble," Davis said. "A lot of the time it's caused by family problems, so it's not their fault. So I just eat in my room and invite them up. ... A lot of them don't have their own food, so I always have Ramen noodles that they can nuke up. ... It's a nice middle ground between home and the classroom."

Another team member, art teacher **Kelsey Schrock**, said that a Care Team student who is new to the district this year told her that she never before felt the level of caring from teachers that she feels at West Muskingum.

"She told me, 'I feel safe here, because I know that people really do care about me,'" Schrock said. "I thought that was a pretty profound statement for a girl her age to make. It makes me feel good about what we're doing."

The rewards of making a difference

Besides seeing academic achievement increase and discipline problems decrease, team members and other staff have enjoyed watching once-troubled youngsters blossom and succeed. Some have even returned after graduation to thank those who helped them.

"One who had been off probation for some time stopped in last week," said Muskingum County Juvenile Court Probation Officer **Rose Oliver**. "She said, 'I just wanted to give you a great big hug and tell you thank you, I graduated.' She was the first one of her siblings who had graduated. That was a result of the effort of the whole Care Team."

West recalled another girl who turned her life around.

"One young lady at West Muskingum High School was having a very difficult time and basically was failing in all areas," West said. "With the support and connections from Care Team she was able to graduate early and is now in college to become a vet-tech."

"Another story, which kind of illustrates how things come full circle, is a young man who was also very low in many areas — social, academic, attendance. He was able to graduate and has been very successful in the military. He recently came back to the school and met with a younger student who wants to be in the military, but has many challenges. He was able to share his story and encourage the younger student, and now the younger one is on track and plans to be a Marine."

High school Principal **Ray Peyton**, shared another example of Care Team success.

"We had a young man who was struggling," Peyton said. "He was on probation through juvenile court, he was academically ineligible for athletics and his grades were pretty poor. In one year's time he went from that to become an honor roll student, was All-Ohio in football and ran in two state track meets. This kid was a troubled young man who, with a little bit of help, got himself turned around. ... That's the kind of thing that can happen."



Photo credit: Dreamstime.com

School-funding cuts have reduced the number of school systems participating in Care Team initiatives, West said. At one time there were more than a dozen districts in southeastern and north central Ohio participating. In addition to West Muskingum, other districts currently using the program are **Coshocton City, Fostoria City, Kenton City, Morgan Local (Morgan), Tiffin City** and **Zanesville City**.

But, despite the current economic climate, the ESC remains committed to helping any district interested in participating.

“As always, Muskingum Valley ESC recognizes and supports the work involving the 40 Developmental Assets,” West said. “Our approach is to meet the needs of those who are

interested in continuing or initiating the program, and continue to support the districts in every way we can.”

“Care Team is something that all high schools should have,” said **Amy Huey**, family and consumer sciences teacher. “And, while there are a select few that we pinpoint, *all* students are Care Team kids. It really gives you a connection with your students to know what they’re feeling every day and how to help them succeed, both academically and socially.” ■

Editor’s note: To learn more about starting a Care Team in your district, contact Muskingum Valley ESC’s Katie West at (740) 452-4518 or kwest@mvesc.k12.oh.us.

OSBA initiative supports student achievement

Crystal Davis Hutchins, deputy director of communication services

An effort launched by OSBA back in 1998 is going stronger than ever today – the Student Achievement Initiative. The initiative is led by the OSBA Student Achievement Leadership Team (SALT), which works to make improved student achievement an ongoing and visible part of the work of all Ohio school boards.

Student achievement liaisons are a vital part of this effort, acting as links among individual school boards and SALT. Each OSBA-member school board appoints one member to serve as its district’s student achievement liaison.

Each student achievement liaison is expected to:

- share information about ways to improve student achievement with fellow board members;
- encourage board colleagues to focus on improving student achievement;
- establish and maintain relationships with academic booster groups;
- send information on successful district programs to the Student Achievement Leadership Team;
- nominate programs for the Student Achievement Fair, held each November at the OSBA Capital Conference;
- participate in SALT activities.

SALT is composed of school board members who meet two or three times a year in Columbus and conduct activities at the Capital Conference. Following are the 2012 SALT members:

- **Sharon E. Manson**, Waverly City & Pike County Career Technology Center
- **Charlie Wilson**, Worthington City
- **Cathy Johnson**, South-Western City
- **Walter S. Armes**, Whitehall City
- **Edward Bischoff**, ESC of Central Ohio & Delaware Area Career Center

- **Thomas Brophey**, Wellsville Local (Columbiana)
- **Jackie Brown**, Rossford EV & Penta Career Center
- **Rosemary Gulick**, Parma City
- **Larry E. Holdren**, Ohio Valley ESC & Washington County Career Center
- **Tawana Lynn Keels**, Princeton City & Great Oaks ITCD
- **Terry Kettering**, Field Local (Portage)
- **David Kindell**, Brookville Local (Montgomery)
- **Susie Lawson**, Tri-County ESC & Wayne County Schools Career Center
- **Gail Requardt**, East Muskingum Local (Muskingum) & Mid-East Career and Technology Centers
- **William Spahr**, Xenia Community City & Greene County Career Center
- **Dr. Angela Zimmann**, ESC of Lake Erie West

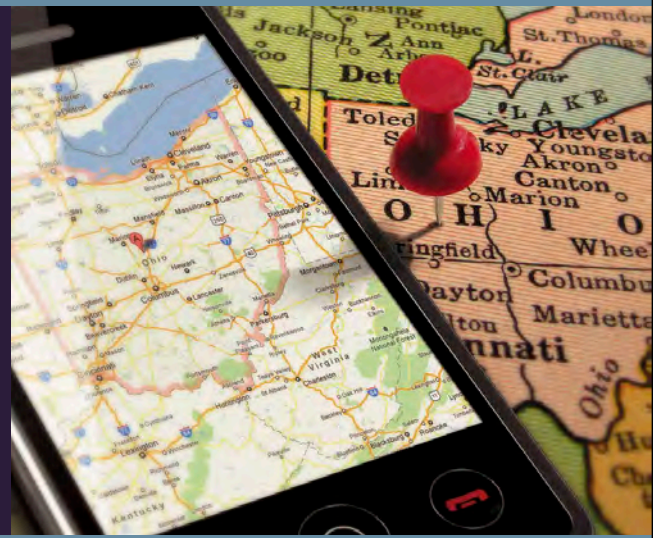
OSBA online tools can be a great help to student achievement liaisons, new board members or any board member looking to boost student achievement in his or her district. By logging onto www.ohioschoolboards.org/improving-student-achievement, you can access tips, Web links and student achievement resource kits, as well as a list of sites that can help you choose and finance a college education. There’s also a free webinar that details the duties of student achievement liaisons and talks about some school districts’ best practices.

In addition, there are two databases to assist your district in networking with other districts. The Program Database provides information on successful student achievement programs across Ohio. The Liaison Database provides the contact information for each district’s student achievement liaison.

OSBA’s monthly e-newsletter – *Success* – also offers timely tips to improve student achievement. ■

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Common Core standards coming to Ohio classrooms

Bryan Bullock, communication coordinator

Sweeping changes are in store for Ohio classrooms when new curriculum standards take effect in school year 2014-15.

Ohio is one of 45 states that adopted Common Core State Standards. The state-driven initiative is designed to improve educational outcomes for students by developing a set of consistent, internationally benchmarked academic standards in mathematics and English language arts for grades K-12.

The State Board of Education adopted the standards in June 2010 for Ohio, as well as revisions to curriculum standards in science and social studies. The changes will roll out in school year 2014-15 when newly aligned assessments also will be implemented in the state. The new Common Core tests are being developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative was developed over the last several years under the guidance of the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), which represents state education commissioners. The curriculum standards are meant to ensure high school graduates are ready for colleges or careers — and that they are able to compete with their peers across the country and around the world. The evidence-based standards were designed with input from teachers, students, parents and education experts. The standards are voluntary and it is up to each state to decide whether to adopt them and, if so, how to implement them.

According to NGA and CCSSO, the standards enable participating states to work together to:

- make expectations for students clear to parents, teachers and the general public;
- encourage the development of textbooks, digital media and other teaching materials aligned to the standards;
- evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the standards;
- develop and implement clear, consistent student

assessments to replace existing tests, which vary widely between states.

The standards, in some cases, are more advanced than existing curriculum benchmarks and require students to learn more specific knowledge as well as demonstrate a deeper applied understanding of content. School districts are advised to begin preparing staff and teachers for the transition. A handful of Ohio school districts are already teaching the Common Core standards, including **Cleveland Municipal** and **Reynoldsburg City**. OSBA has established itself as a leader in helping schools adapt to the new curriculum standards and offers a variety of resources to assist its members with the transition.

The standards were designed with input from teachers, students, parents and education experts.

The Common Core standards set clear benchmarks for student learning but, because they are not a curriculum, teachers are given flexibility to determine how to meet those goals. Third-grade math students, for example, are supposed to be able to understand fractions, represent and interpret data, and solve problems involving measurement and geometric shapes, among other skills and abilities. Each subject and grade level has a detailed list of categories and subcategories of academic standards to guide instruction.

During the summer and fall of 2010, teachers across Ohio worked collaboratively in teams to suggest instructional strategies and resources that align with the Common Core standards, according to the Ohio Department of Education. The State Board of Education adopted a Model Curriculum, which is available online, in March 2011 for the Common Core standards.

For more information on new curriculum standards, visit www.corestandards.org and links.ohioschoolboards.org/42605. ■

Preparing for the Common Core

Douglas B. Reeves, The Leadership and Learning Center

Many school districts will find that their present curriculum already includes a good deal of the Common Core State Standards. However, most schools will find at least a few areas in which teachers and administrators need to make substantial changes to be ready for the standards' implementation and the assessments that will support them.

Following are five essential actions for every school district implementing the Common Core.

Find common ground

The best way to reduce some of the anxiety is to learn the similarities between your present curriculum and the Common Core. One useful learning activity is for teachers to download the standards at www.corestandards.org and simply highlight the ones they already are teaching. Rather than feeling overwhelmed by massive change, teachers can build on the foundation of the most successful instructional strategies they will continue to use.

More informational writing

One of the most significant – and in my view one of the best – Common Core innovations is the explicit inclusion of informational writing in many subjects. This includes not just English, but science and social studies.

More than a decade of research supports the strong relationship between nonfiction writing and improved student achievement. The consistent use of nonfiction writing across the curriculum remains the exception, rather than the rule, however. As a cost-saving move, many states have reduced writing requirements on their state assessments, and the unfortunate result has been a diminished emphasis on writing in the classroom.

Schools getting ready for the Common Core must make a substantial commitment to increasing informational writing at every level, starting in kindergarten. My experience is that nonfiction writing can be fun and engaging for students of all ages.

Common Core research dispenses with two common arguments in schools. The first is, "I'm not a writing teacher." However, in fact, every teacher in every subject is responsible for helping students think critically, and writing is one of the best ways to master that skill. The second is that writing is not "developmentally appropriate" for kindergarten students. But when these students already are engaged in successful writing curricula around the world, then it's clear that the extent to which kindergartners write is a matter of adult expectations, not children's developmental capacity.

Prioritize

Successfully implementing the Common Core requires more than delivering binders of curriculum materials to the schoolhouse door. Teachers must get time to understand the standards and, most importantly, to identify the evidence that students have successfully mastered the learning expectations for each. Unfortunately, the time available for this sort of detailed analysis is far less than the task requires. Therefore, teachers and administrators should collaborate to identify the most important standards – sometimes called "power standards" – that have the greatest impact on student learning.

Embrace common formative assessments at the district level

One important lesson learned from the past two decades of the standards movement is that standards are an illusion when they are supported only by a single end-of-grade exam that assesses nine months of inconsistent curriculum and testing based on each teacher's idiosyncratic choices. Formative assessment – assessments that are administered periodically during the school year and are designed to inform teaching and learning – can profoundly impact student achievement. However, assessments are not "formative" based on the label on the test, but on how they are used by teachers and administrators.

Use the standards as a floor, not a ceiling

Implementing standards does not have to result in the standardization of teaching and learning. One of the most empowering and important activities for schools preparing for the Common Core is to create a continuum of learning activities that include the standards requirements and create opportunities to exceed them. This is a way to embrace teacher creativity and defeat the notion that the use of educational standards must lead to stultifying classrooms.

Most importantly, school leaders and policymakers should resist the temptation to "wait for Washington" or other educational authorities before making important preparations for the Common Core. Although some states may not change assessments until 2014, schools that start preparing now will have the greatest success – and the least anxiety – when it is fully implemented. ■

About the author: Douglas B. Reeves (dreeves@leadandlearn.com) is an author and founder of The Leadership and Learning Center, which provides professional development services, research and solutions for educators and school leaders who serve students from prekindergarten through college. He is the author of *Finding Your Leadership Focus* (Teachers College Press, 2010).

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The dream season

Mark Hartman, senior director, and Mark Black, director, Battelle for Kids

In most high schools, spring is the season of hope and dreams. For seniors, it's their last season in high school, and for many, the last match, meet or performance. For parents, it's the final season of nurturing a promising and hopeful high school career before they watch their child begin the next life journey. As our seniors leave Ohio high schools we must ask — are they prepared to fulfill their dreams?

In many cases, the answer is no, we have not prepared them well enough. Forty percent of the students bound for public colleges and universities in Ohio must take remedial or non-credit courses at their own expense. In addition, those entering the workforce are even less prepared because they don't have the skills to be trainable without remediation.

This has been a stagnating trend for decades. But, how did we get here?

When we think about the high school experience in Ohio, for so long it has been primarily about students earning enough credits and passing the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) to graduate from high school. Curriculum and learning expectations were redesigned to meet state and local community requirements. School report cards became the driving force for measuring schools' effectiveness on student success and meeting community expectations.

State ratings of our districts and schools became headlines for the local media. Public perception was shaped by these ratings, which in turn caused educators to focus on important, but marginal "low-bar" standards. Our methods of instructing students and measuring learning

became dependent upon students being proficient on the OGT, rather than growing toward their full potential as learners. This has become evident as some high-achieving high school students have struggled to obtain college readiness scores on the ACT college entrance exam. As the demand for college degrees and advanced certificates expands, we have more students needing remediation.

In education, our school days are structured around issues such as busing, extracurricular activities or contracts. At times, we lose sight of using the school day to support learning and collaboration around student work. This leaves educators feeling overwhelmed.

Now, what can we do to change? Battelle for Kids started a comprehensive high school



Forty percent of the students bound for public colleges and universities in Ohio must take remedial or non-credit courses at their own expense.

reform effort predicated on the power of value-added analysis, based on ACT end-of-course exams, to improve college and career readiness by changing instructional practice and expectations for all students. Our vision for this reform effort, called Ohio Value-Added High Schools (OVAHS), was straightforward. Forty-five pilot schools were provided with intensive training on understanding value-added analysis, how to use formative instructional practices and how to work collaboratively in teams to impact learning and change the mindset of how they assess students for learning. Throughout this journey we consistently focused on five tenets:

- effective teams and leaders,
- curriculum alignment to more rigorous standards,
- formative instructional practices,
- ACT end-of-course exams,
- value-added analysis.

To improve student learning we had to make sure that the school day allowed for time to focus on student work and instruction. Instead of working in silos, OVAHS focused on effective teams. Each school made the commitment to provide time for teachers to meet so that they could have conversations in real time around learning targets, student work and curriculum issues. Having these conversations only at the end of the quarter, semester or year does not allow enough time to adjust instruction to meet students' needs.

Decisions were made collaboratively, with a focus on curriculum alignment and whether the curriculum supported students' achievement and progress. Teachers found that working as a team, especially around curriculum alignment to rigorous standards, was more beneficial than working in isolation.

Working as a unit created vertical and horizontal alignment throughout the high school, instead of pockets of alignment by department. The synergy created from using time to work collaboratively caused each team member to take ownership for setting an expectation of teaching college readiness skills within a rigorous curriculum, instructing intentionally and reflecting on every student's achievement and progress along the way.

Using formative instructional practices allowed teachers to administer quick, short and immediate checks on students' progress to determine if they were acquiring each lesson's knowledge. It helped teachers create learning targets in student-friendly language so students could articulate what they were learning. The formative instructional practices methodology changed the mindset of teachers by having them focus on providing effective feedback instead of evaluative feedback. When providing evaluative feedback, or "just a grade," the student does not know how to improve or self-assess the progress needed to

OVAHS districts average percentage of students scoring college-ready on ACT college entrance exam

Math		All four subjects	
2009	2011	2009	2011
49%	53%	28%	31%

Average percentage of students scoring college-ready on ACT college entrance exam

	Math		All four subjects	
	2009	2011	2009	2011
OVAHS	49%	53%	28%	31%
Ohio average	46%	49%	26%	28%
U.S. average	42%	45%	23%	25%

meet the learning target.

ACT end-of-course exams are aligned to a "high-bar" college/career ready rigorous curriculum that far exceeds the expectations of the current OGT. The test previously has served as the measure of success in Ohio.

Value-added analysis data was used as an important source to determine the impact teachers were having on students' growth and to use that data to make informed decisions about increasing career and college readiness for all students.

The OVAHS reform was hard at the beginning, but over the project's three years, schools have implemented sustainable change that has led to instruction supporting achievement and progress of all students toward college and career readiness.

The results from the OVAHS pilot schools are impressive and support the success of the vision of increasing career and college readiness for all students.

In addition to improving college and career readiness, OVAHS schools also increased the number of students taking the ACT college entrance exam by more than 15%. According to ACT, typically when schools increase the percentage of students taking the exam, scores initially either stay the same or go down.

Change is hard, but this is the season and time to do it. Are your students ready to go anywhere and be anything they desire to be? ■

Helping students get ready for college



Bexley City High School students take practice college admissions exams in November. The district offers free ACT and SAT practice exams that are administered under actual test conditions. The project serves Bexley's goal of ensuring that all students are college-ready.

Amy Thompson, public information coordinator, Bexley City Schools

Stephanie Krosnosky, Bexley High School college counselor, is always on the lookout for more and better ways to prepare her students for college.

Krosnosky would grant that her Columbus-area school and community already have a college-going culture. The **Bexley City** School District consistently sends more than 90% of its graduates on to college. Of Bexley's 2011 graduates, 89% entered college and 3.2% moved into a gap year learning experience with the intention of attending college.

In fact, one school goal focuses on making sure that all students are college-ready, even if they are not headed in that direction after graduation. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the school's 19 Advanced Placement (AP) courses and nearly half experience at least one of the rigorous classes known to increase students' college success. The

school district pays for the end-of-course AP tests that often yield college credit, saving students and their families tuition dollars in the long run. The school has been expanding local partnerships to reach a goal of students graduating with at least 12 hours of college credit under their belts.

Task force — help from the community

Krosnosky recently looked to some veteran experts — parents and community members familiar with the college admissions process who agreed to serve on a College Readiness Task Force. The group reviewed the high school's college counseling program and made a number of "very helpful suggestions," Krosnosky said. They have put muscle behind the task force as well, helping implement their proposals.

First generation college students

One of the first steps was developing an initiative to benefit

students who are the first in their families to attend college. To identify first-generation students, the school revised and added questions to its standard forms. Ten Bexley High School teachers who were first-generation college students themselves were recruited to advise the high schoolers. The teachers held the first of a series of informal lunches with the students where they talked about some of the hurdles they faced, including financial obstacles to attending college, as well as opportunities they uncovered.

Free practice tests

Bexley began giving free practice college admission exams on two district in-service days when students were out of school. Some 120 out of 663 high school students took the ACT practice exam on Oct. 21, with 115 taking the SAT a month later. The exams were administered under actual test conditions in the school gymnasium by College Readiness Task Force volunteers and mailed to the Princeton Review for scoring. Students and their families received score reports, without any obligation to the Princeton Review.

“Students really wanted this,” Krosnosky said. “They get their scores and can begin planning a strategy for taking the test for real, whether that entails signing up for a test-prep course or allowing enough time during the college admissions process to take a test twice.”

Typically students who are comfortable with the testing environment earn higher scores; this often means more financial aid from colleges.

Bexley High School has been expanding local partnerships to reach a goal of students graduating with at least 12 hours of college credit.

Next steps

Krosnosky and her task force plan to increase awareness about financial aid for families, starting as early as when students are in elementary school.

“Our goal is to help parents learn as much as they can about the process and the different kinds of options while they still have time to plan,” she said. ■

Editor’s note: For more information, contact Stephanie Krosnosky at (614) 231-4591 or Stephanie.Krosnosky@bexleyschools.org.

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OSBA offers workshops on using data to gauge student achievement

A new series of workshops for board members is taking shape at OSBA. The workshops examine the importance of how data is viewed.

The sessions will focus on how data can be presented and analyzed in ways that are easier for school boards to understand. Having new tools to interpret data will enable board members to provide a clear and accurate picture of student achievement within their districts.

The series — Data First for Governance — was originally developed by a team of association experts from across the country, in partnership with the National School Boards Association and the Center for Public Education. **Kathy LaSota**, OSBA director of school board services, and **Cheryl W. Ryan**, deputy director of school board services, attended a workshop in 2011 to learn more about the content and delivery of the series.

“We hope that boards who are interested in one or more

of the three workshops in the series will attend them with their full leadership teams, including central office administrators and building principals,” LaSota said. “It’s important for all leaders within the school district to develop a common understanding of what stories the data can tell and how to share those stories with community members.”

“With the Common Core and new evaluation standards becoming reality very soon, it’s more important than ever that board members are able to feel confident about data resulting from assessments and other measures within the district,” Ryan said. “Teachers, administrators and board members are all going to be working within a new ‘score card’ format. We are excited to be able to make that transition a bit smoother with these workshops.”

The series opens with a foundational workshop, followed by a second on evaluating data linked to teacher quality. The third session is titled High School and Beyond.

“I am particularly excited about the third workshop, because the issues associated with understanding college readiness and the challenges that many Ohio students are having with stepping right into a rigorous college or university curriculum are real ones,” Ryan said. “The third workshop helps board members understand those issues more clearly so they can begin to erase the gaps within their districts.”

LaSota said the materials involved in delivering the workshops have been “a little intimidating,” but that she and Ryan are becoming more and more at ease with them. More important, she said that “the more we get into this, the more value we believe there is in it for board members.”

For more information on the Data First for Governance series, please contact LaSota or Ryan at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA. LaSota’s email address is kLasota@ohioschoolboards.org. Ryan’s is cryan@ohioschoolboards.org. ■



OSBA Director of School Board Services Kathy LaSota explains how boards can more effectively interpret their district’s data at the 2012 Board Leadership Institute.

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Involving parents in student achievement

Gloria Cazan, president, and Lisa Mack, president-elect, Ohio PTA

Encouraging and supporting parent involvement in children's education has been a priority for the PTA for more than 100 years. PTA has created programs to help engage parents, advocated for children's issues and been a powerful voice for all children. PTA encourages the partnership among schools, parents and community to support student learning.

Research shows that families have a major influence on their children's achievement, regardless of race,

socioeconomic status or parents' level of education. A study by Vanderbilt University's **Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey** showed that there are three key factors that inspire parents to become involved. They are that parents:

- believe they are supposed to be involved,
- believe their involvement will make a difference,
- are actively invited by teachers and their children to be involved.

Research also shows that students with involved parents are more likely to:

- achieve higher grades and test scores;
- be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits;
- attend school regularly and want to go to school;
- have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school;
- graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

Parents' expectation levels also play a key factor. If they work with, encourage and expect the best, their children are more likely to succeed. When parents stay connected with their children's teachers, similar results are found.

It is important to recognize certain truths about involvement. First, involvement differs based on parents' abilities and/or resources. This affects how comfortable a parent is with being involved. Also, many barriers are found within school practices, attitudes and assumptions. In addition, since parents come from diverse backgrounds, they have their own sets of norms and experiences that often influence their relationship with schools.

Despite the years of research that support the connection between family involvement and student success, obstacles to parent involvement remain. Parents have different definitions of involvement. For some, just getting a child to school is parental involvement. For others, it's being in the school every day. Many parents lack time or resources. If a parent needs to work three jobs to support the family, his or her first priority is providing basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing before getting involved in a child's education.



Research shows that families have a major influence on their children's achievement, regardless of race, socioeconomic status or parents' level of education.

Language barriers also are a factor. There is a growing immigrant population in many communities that is not mirrored in the population of teachers and staff, which makes communication an issue. A significant barrier is different cultural expectations and beliefs. In some Latino cultures, education is the responsibility of the government and parents are not asked or expected to be involved. Their children's education is not thought to be parents' business. They are taught not to question authority, so involvement is viewed as being inappropriate and as interference.

In 1997, building on the six types of parent involvement identified by Dr. **Joyce L. Epstein** of the Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University, the National PTA — in partnership with education, health and family-serving organizations — developed the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs. These standards were intended to serve as an organizing framework for creating programs that promoted and strengthened parent and family involvement in schools.

The standards' impact has been phenomenal. In 2006, PTA determined that the standards should be strengthened to more deliberately reflect the ongoing research that supports the importance of connecting family and community engagement to student learning. PTA, working with leading experts on parent involvement and community engagement in schools, updated the standards to expand the focus from not only what schools should do to involve parents, but also what parents, schools and communities can do *together* to support student success. To reflect this change, the standards have been renamed the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

There are six National Standards for Family-School Partnerships:

- **Standard 1 — Welcoming all families into the school community:** Families are active participants in the life of the school and feel welcomed, valued and connected to each other, to school staff and to what students are learning and doing in class.
- **Standard 2 — Communicating effectively:** Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.
- **Standard 3 — Supporting student success:** Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development, both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.
- **Standard 4 — Speaking up for every child:** Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support

their success.

- **Standard 5 — Sharing power:** Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families, and together inform, influence and create policies, practices and programs.
- **Standard 6 — Collaborating with community:** Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services and civic participation.

Parents can help their children succeed by, first of all, sending them to school ready to learn every day and expecting the best from and for their children. Secondly, they can help their children succeed by learning how to communicate and connect with them, by truly listening and making children feel like they are safe when they talk to them. Helping with homework is key, because it instills the purpose and skills for lifelong learning. Encouraging a love for reading also is a great tool for success.

Parents' expectation levels also play a key factor. If they work with, encourage and expect the best, their children are more likely to succeed.

Schools can involve parents in their children's success by welcoming them, as well as community members, as equal partners and valuing their involvement. They must reach out to parents where they are and make them feel comfortable and invited into the schools.

Educating parents about academic standards, assessments and student achievement requirements is essential. Schools should use layman's terms to make the information easier to understand. In sharing the Common Core State Standards, they can take advantage of PTA's Parent Guides for Success to help parents understand the new initiatives. Inviting parents to special sessions that explain the standards, assessments and requirements is an additional way to educate them.

PTA has several awards, grants and programs that can be useful in engaging parents. Please go to the National PTA website at pta.org to find out more. The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships can also be viewed in more detail on the website. ■

Sources: National Standards for Family-School Partnerships: What We Can Do Together to Support Student Success; pta.org.

Learning by the numbers



Moreland Hills Elementary School students express their love of M-A-T-H by spelling the word with their hands. The Orange City school recently hosted a Math Night, which brought together students, families and teachers to enjoy a number of math games.

Staci Vincent, communications assistant, Orange City Schools

At Moreland Hills Elementary School it's a numbers game — actually a bunch of numbers games. The Orange City school hosted Math Night earlier this year, bringing together more than 250 students and their parents for dozens of math games. The school serves kindergartners through fifth-graders.

“We recognize that math instruction today is much different than when our students’ parents were in school,” Principal **Marc Haag** said. “We wanted to host this special event in order to respond to frequent parent inquiries about how they can support math instruction at home. We also see this as a way to help parents understand the Every Day Math program, give them some fun ways to reinforce their child’s learning and promote the school-home partnership to support students.”

Each student and parent team participated in three different sessions of their choosing.

Among the games: Name That Number, Treasure Hunt, Top It, Dice Games and Speed. One of the most popular sessions was Math Apps with iPod touch.

“Kids love the technology and enjoy the ‘games’ that make learning skills or concepts so much fun,” teacher **Chris Zuccaro** said.

The creation of this year’s Math Night was the brainchild of Math Intervention Specialist **Dana Schultz**, who has been planning for it since the beginning of the school year. She had heard that Moreland Hills had done a math night years before

and wanted to bring back the event.

“This is something fun for the students to do with their parents,” Schultz said. “A lot of games focused on number sense, and it is so important for the students to have a strong understanding of number sense for them to be successful in math. Parents were able to see different activities that they can do with their child at home and understand new ways of helping them if they went to the method sessions.”

The 20 teachers and two student teachers began their individual sessions by teaching participants how to play the respective games. Echoes of “Oh, I love this game!” resounded throughout each classroom, as students recognized concepts they were familiar with as part of the school’s Every Day Math program. After a brief lesson, parents and students had the opportunity to play games with each other and other families.

“I really liked it a lot!” exclaimed second-grader **Marlie Leska**. “We played ‘Speed’ and it was a really, really fun game!”

Third-grader **Chayton Mines** agreed.

“It was nice and fun because we got to play games and all of my friends were there,” he said.

Administrators hope that Math Night becomes an annual tradition, with longer sessions and even more opportunities. Students and teachers alike look forward to seeing the program grow.

“We are definitely going to do this again in the future,”



Moreland Hills students join mom Abbie Leska to try out some new education apps during an iPod touch session at the school’s Math Night.


Schultz said. “The feedback from the teachers, students and parents has been wonderful. ... I am already thinking about what the next Math Night might look like!” ■

Additional resources


- Math Night apps with iPod touch presentation: <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/77102>
- Links to the apps discussed in the iPod touch presentation: <http://ow.ly/2mV4b>
- More useful apps: <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/89189>

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OSBA's FRN delegates travel to Washington



◀ U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) speaks to attendees during the National School Boards Association's (NSBA) Federal Relations Network Conference in Washington. Thirty-two OSBA Federal Relations Network members, along with three members of the association's legislative division, attended the February conference to hear federal updates and meet with legislators. A recap of the conference was published in the March 12 OSBA Briefcase.



◀ OSBA members pose with U.S. Rep. Bill Johnson, second from left, following a meeting in Johnson's office. Johnson is a Republican who represents Ohio's 6th Congressional District. The OSBA members are, from left, Don E. Carpenter, Barnesville EV and Belmont-Harrison JVSD; David H. White, Fort Frye Local (Washington); and Ruth M. Nau, Noble Local (Noble).



◀ Brenda Hill, Toledo City, makes a point on Capitol Hill. She was there on behalf of NSBA's Council of Urban Boards of Education.

▶ OSBA President-elect Charlie Wilson, Worthington City, left, and OSBA Immediate Past President Cathy Johnson, South-Western City, stand for a photo with U.S. Rep. Steve Stivers following a meeting. Republican Stivers represents Ohio's 15th Congressional District.

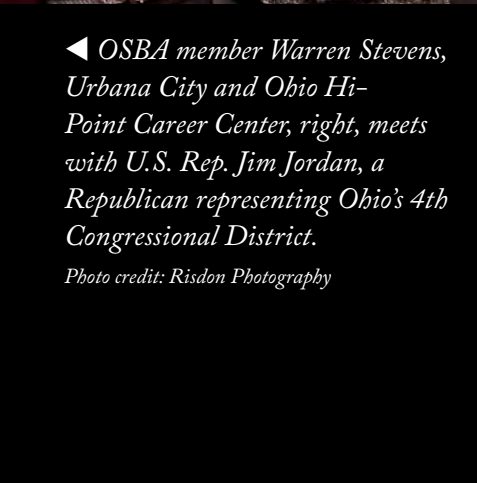




◀ *Ruth M. Nau, Noble Local (Noble), takes part in a discussion in the office of U.S. Rep. Bill Johnson of Ohio.*

Photo credit: Risdon Photography

▶ *Aja Mary Rose Brooks, legislative assistant for U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), meets with FRN members on Capitol Hill.*



◀ *OSBA member Warren Stevens, Urbana City and Ohio Hi-Point Career Center, right, meets with U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan, a Republican representing Ohio's 4th Congressional District.*

Photo credit: Risdon Photography



◀ *U.S. Rep. Steve Austria, left, greets OSBA member Donna J. Meyers in his office. Meyers is a school board member at Northwestern Local (Clark) and Springfield-Clark Career Technology Center. Austria, a Republican, represents Ohio's 7th Congressional District. Looking on is OSBA Lobbyist Jay Smith.*

Photo credit: Risdon Photography



▶ *U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur, left, and OSBA member Lisa Sobecki, Toledo City, meet in Kaptur's office. Democrat Kaptur represents Ohio's 9th Congressional district.*



▲ *OSBA members Roger L. Samuelson, left, and Robert L. Faulkner Sr., attend a Federal Relations Network general session. Samuelson is a school board member at Champion Local (Trumbull) and Trumbull Career & Technical Center. Faulkner is a board member at Warren City and Trumbull Career & Technical Center.*



◀ *U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and OSBA member JoAnn W. Feltner, Franklin City, share ideas at the FRN senators' breakfast.*

Honoring Ohio's hard-working school boards



East Muskingum Local (Muskingum) board members, from left, Kenneth McGee, Brian Bennett, Gail Requardt, Matt Abbott and Ken J. Blood, were recognized with a meal, a staff photo, OSBA certificates and personalized coffee mugs at a board meeting.

Bryan Bullock, communication coordinator, and Gary Motz, managing editor

School board members are many things to the districts they represent. They're advocates. They're leaders. They're visionaries.

The decisions they make have the power to shape public education and local communities for generations to come. Being a board member is rewarding, but it's also very demanding. The hours are long, the responsibilities great and the "thanks" few and far between.

One month every year, communities take time to make sure board members know they're appreciated.

January was School Board Recognition Month, and districts

and communities across the state honored their board of education members in many ways. Ohio's annual celebration coincided with a nationwide campaign to highlight the important role board members play in public education.

OSBA supported Ohio's recognition activities by providing its members a Web-based resource kit that included tips on ways to recognize board members; sample news releases, editorials, newsletter articles, public service announcements and resolutions; and a poster carrying the 2012 theme. That theme — "School Boards Make a Difference" — is a testament to the positive impact board members have on student achievement and the future of Ohio's 1.9 million schoolchildren.

Nearly 3,500 board members lead the state's more than 700 school districts. Their dedication goes far beyond attending one or two board meetings a month. They volunteer countless hours studying issues, reading reports and advocating for their schools. Board members are always "on call" when constituent concerns arise, whether it be in the grocery store, at an athletic event or after a meeting. They also participate in a plethora of school and community events. Most of them perform this juggling act while also making time for family and holding down a full-time job.

OSBA is pleased to support School Board Recognition Month and shine a spotlight on the many celebrations districts conducted to show their appreciation. In addition to the resource kit, the association provides personalized certificates — signed by the OSBA president and executive director — for every board member in the state.

The association also features school districts' celebrations in this magazine and on its website at www.ohioschoolboards.org/school-board-recognition-month. Information and photos are submitted by school districts and collected from local news media.

While most districts honored their members with a proclamation, OSBA certificates and small gifts, others expanded on ways to show their appreciation.

The entire district got involved in recognition celebrations at **Bucyrus City**. Board members and their spouses were treated to the annual Bucyrus Education Foundation chicken dinner fundraiser. The dining area was decorated with huge banners signed by all of the students in the district. Following the dinner, board members were introduced and recognized prior to the start of the varsity basketball game.

The banners from the dinner were displayed during a Bucyrus board meeting, where OSBA certificates were presented. Bucyrus Mayor **Roger Moore** was in attendance to read a proclamation declaring it School Board Member Day. The district used Facebook and Twitter to promote its recognition celebrations and thank everyone for making them a success. The *Bucyrus Telegraph-Forum* recognized board members and their years of service.

Board members at **Cambridge City** were surprised with a performance by the Bobcat cheerleaders at a board meeting. Student board representative **Michelle Bennett** presented

board members with OSBA certificates and proclamations for their dedication. Board member **Rusty Roberts** awarded each cheerleader an outstanding student achiever pin.

The Daily Jeffersonian ran an article on the meeting and an editorial recognizing the importance of school boards. Cambridge student board representatives also wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper about the role the board of education plays.

"Too often we neglect to recognize the dedication and hard work of these men and women who represent us," the students



Hamilton Local (Franklin) preschool teacher Breanna Moore, left, and her students present a personalized poster to newly elected board vice president Pam Hallum. The students created a smile because Hallum works as an office manager at The Ohio State University School of Dentistry.

wrote. "The staff and students of our school district are asking all local citizens to take a moment to tell a school board member "Thanks for caring about our children's education."

A community page article in the newspaper paid tribute to boards at Cambridge, **Caldwell EV**, **East Guernsey Local (Guernsey)**, **East Muskingum Local (Muskingum)**, **Noble Local (Noble)** and **Rolling Hills Local (Guernsey)**.

Northmont City board members received the gift of song as part of recognition celebrations at a board meeting. Englewood Hills Elementary School Principal **Noelle Leingang** worked with some of her students to create a song titled "Hats Off to the Board" set to the tune of the Village People's "YMCA." The students wore green and white hard hats — the school colors — and sang praises to the board and an upcoming building project. Voters passed a bond issue in November allowing Northmont to build a new high school

and a pre-K through first-grade building.

Students presented each board member with a Northmont hard hat, a bowl of candy and an OSBA certificate.

Students presented board members original artwork as part of recognition celebrations at **Hamilton Local (Franklin)**. Students created art based on the occupation, hobby or interest of each board member to personalize the gift. An art teacher at each Hamilton school was given a specific board member and asked to lead students in the project.

“This may be the nicest gift I have received during my 14-year stint on the Hamilton board,” said former board president **David L. Schutte**, after receiving a hand-painted panoramic image of a golf course.

was paid further compliments in February, when Auditor of State **Dave Yost** visited Harrison Junior/Senior High School. Yost applauded the district for a \$22-million turnaround that brought Harrison Hills out of fiscal caution, according to the *Times Leader*.

“This is really your celebration,” Yost said during his visit. “I’m here to affirm what you did and tell you how proud we are in Columbus that you’re leading the way.”

Board members at **Ottawa Hills Local (Lucas)** were honored by students, staff and residents at a board meeting. Student council presidents from the elementary, junior high and high schools shared words of appreciation for the board. Students **Matt Geisler, Michael Cypher-Tierney** and **Julie Walter** presented board members with OSBA certificates. The

Ottawa Hills Choraliers entertained the board with songs, and board members and guests were treated to a dessert reception.

Cleveland Municipal’s recognition celebrations included the reading of a mayoral proclamation honoring board members and the presentation of OSBA certificates. The district put up customized posters throughout its central office thanking board members.

Cleveland’s communication team wrote and produced a board recognition video. The video features Cleveland students talking about their dreams for their future, and thanking school board members by name for their commitment to education. The video is available online at the Web address at the end of this article.

Meigs Local (Meigs) board members and their spouses were treated to a catered appreciation dinner. Following the dinner, outgoing board president **Barbara Musser** was recognized for her years of service, and all board members received OSBA certificates from Superintendent **Rusty D. Bookman**. Current and newly elected board members were given an ink pen with the inscription “Together we can.”

All district administrators and supervisors attended the event. The board also was presented an “appreciation cartoon” created and produced by a first-grade classroom on iPads recently purchased by a literacy and technology grant. *The Daily Sentinel* wrote an article about the board member celebration event with the headline, “A time for recognition.”

Dublin City Superintendent Dr. **David Axner** wrote a



Cincinnati City Board President Eve Bolton, left, and Vice President A. Chris Nelms show off artwork made for them by students at Dater Montessori School (K-6).

School district officials said they would continue the art project in the future because it provides an opportunity for students to learn more about board of education members while using the skills they learn in class.

Canton Local (Stark) recognized its board members with a “Student Thank You” video on the district’s website. The video included interviews with students answering such questions as, “What do you know about the board of education?” and “What exactly does the board of education do?” The piece ended with students thanking board members for their service. View the video at the Web address at the end of this article.

Harrison Hills City Superintendent Dr. **George Ash** presented board members with gavels in late December as a part of an early kickoff to recognition celebrations. The board



Jackson Local (Stark) board members received copies of a special recognition video, shown above. The movie included footage of students and staff expressing thanks to the board for all their hard work. "You make a difference for every student, every day," read words in the six-minute video.

column in the *Dublin News* recognizing board members. He thanked each board member for the countless hours spent in meetings, at school events and communicating with legislators. "The Dublin City Schools Board of Education is an active participant in the legislative process," Axner wrote. "Their efforts helped return nearly \$3 million in general fund dollars to our district."

East Muskingum Local (Muskingum) board members were recognized with a meal, staff photo, OSBA certificates and personalized coffee mugs. They were presented a wide-ranging list of students' answers to the question, "Why are school board members important?"

One elementary school student answered, "They buy us pizza." A high school student answered, "They recognize student and staff accomplishments."

Jackson Local (Stark) board members were shown a special recognition video. The movie included footage of students and staff expressing thanks to the board for all its hard work. "You make a difference for every student, every day," read words in the six-minute video. Board members have a total of 10 children in Jackson schools and the video featured a personal message from each of them. The video is available at the Web address at the end of this article.

Middletown City Superintendent Greg Rasmussen recognized board members and issued them OSBA certificates. About a half dozen former board members attended the meeting and witnessed the unveiling of a plaque featuring the names of board members from the past 50 years, according to the *Middletown Journal*. The newspaper and TV station WXIX-19 provided coverage of the unveiling.

Mogadore Local (Summit) board members were given decorations made by Somers Elementary School children. Each decoration listed something the students said they were thankful for, including their books, playground, and caring and talented staff. Board members took a photo with the children and their decorations.

"We closed the evening with each board member holding up a bouquet of good wishes and appreciation from the children and much applause from a standing-room-only group of parents and citizens," said Superintendent Dr. **Christina Dinklocker**.

Olmsted Falls City Superintendent Dr. Todd F. Hoadley wrote a letter to the editor of the *Sun Post-Herald* praising board members. He thanked each board member individually and recognized them for their years of service. Hoadley praised board members for volunteering countless hours of their time and donating their salaries back into a scholarship fund each year for graduating seniors.

"On behalf of the students and staff of Olmsted Falls, I again commend all five members of our school board for the immeasurable amount of energy they spend to assure that our schools are providing the best education possible for the children of our community," he wrote.

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



Elementary school Student Council President Matt Geisler shares words of appreciation with Ottawa Hills Local (Lucas) board members.



Saving on workers' comp

SchoolComp eases workers' comp costs, concerns

Amanda Finney, senior marketing coordinator

The Ohio School Boards Association and Ohio Association of School Business Officials jointly endorse the workers' compensation program known as SchoolComp. This program offers Ohio school districts full-service risk management services. Managed in partnership with CompManagement Inc., SchoolComp is an extremely viable risk management solution for districts.

Currently, 370 school districts participate in SchoolComp, making it one of the largest public workers' compensation pools in Ohio.

Since 1991, districts have realized nearly \$200 million in savings for workers' compensation premiums. Such programs are highly important for districts, especially in uncertain economic times.

Districts that join SchoolComp receive many benefits, including the ability to join a retrospective group rating program. This program provides an alternative solution for districts to join together through sponsoring organizations (such as OSBA and OASBO) to earn refunds based on the performance of the group. Districts participating in this type of program pay an individually merit-rated

premium to the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC).

The program is designed to reward participating districts that keep their claims costs below a predetermined amount. Districts must be committed to improving workplace safety and accident prevention to avoid being assessed an additional premium. For most groups, savings of up to 70% could be realized. However, with claim costs included, most groups can expect to save between 5% and 20%. This program, while not for every district, offers many benefits to those who are eligible for the program and provides an alternative for those districts that do not qualify for group rating.

SchoolComp provides districts the following benefits:

- the ability to earn refunds based on performance;
- superior claims management and cost-control services performed by CompManagement Inc.;
- access to eTEAM, a Web-based interactive resource providing real-time access to claim information on a 24/7 basis;
- safety and loss control consulting services, including an onsite safety

gap analysis and report within 90 days of program implementation.

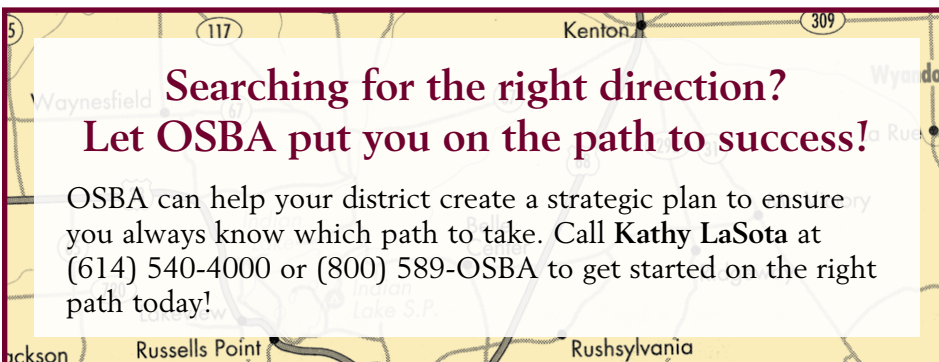
There are several eligibility requirements for the group retrospective rating program. Districts must:

- be a state-funded or public employer taxing school district (self-insured and state agency public employers are not eligible);
- be current on any and all premium payments, administrative costs, assessments, fines or other amounts owed to BWC;
- have active coverage by the application deadline;
- have no cumulative lapses in coverage in excess of 40 days within the 12 months preceding the application deadline;
- not be a member of more than one retrospective group or non-retrospective group program.

Your district will probably receive many invitations from groups to join their workers' compensation and managed care organization (MCO) programs.

Among the myriad other crucial duties your board takes on, you also must evaluate risk management programs for your district. When making these important decisions, it is imperative to have a working knowledge of risk management programs and what they do for your district.

Whether you are a new or veteran board member, this task is not easy. For those board members not familiar with the workers' compensation system, you might wonder, "What is an MCO and what does it offer my district?"



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Simply stated, MCO programs are certified by BWC to participate in the Health Partnership Program by providing workers' compensation medical management and return-to-work services.

MCO programs are responsible for:

- reporting claims;
- helping injured workers secure appropriate medical treatment from an approved BWC-certified provider;
- medical case management, including reviewing treatment requests and making treatment decisions;
- managing the alternative dispute resolution process;
- providing bill review and payment;

- ensuring injured workers receive the treatment needed to return to work as soon as medically possible;
- educating and assisting employers regarding safety and return-to-work initiatives.

SchoolComp endorses CompManagement Health Systems Inc. as the preferred MCO. Following are some of the features districts receive:

- high-quality medical care;
- early intervention of medical care;
- easy and efficient access to claim information;
- medical information at the time of injury;

- access to 24-hour claim filing services;
- ongoing communication between injured workers and case managers;
- personalized team service assigned to each school district;
- medical-only, lost-time and return-to-work strategies.

For further information and questions about SchoolComp, please contact **Van D. Keating**, OSBA director of management services, at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or vkeating@ohioschoolboards.org. Or, you may contact CompManagement Inc. at (800) 825-6755, option 3. ■

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Region conferences honor, inform members



◀ *An ice sculpture in the shape of a shamrock greets attendees at the Northwest Region Spring Conference at EHOVE Career Center. Since the conference was on March 15 — just two days before St. Patrick's Day — the shamrock provided a perfect seasonal touch. A roundup article covering all the spring conferences was published in the April 23 OSBA Briefcase.*



◀ *OSBA President Sharon E. Manson, Waverly City & Pike County Career Technology Center, left, presents the Master Board Member award to Carolayne Nibiser, Muskingum Valley ESC, with Southeast Region President Terry Halley, Gallia County Local (Gallia). The conference was March 8 at Crooksville EV's Crooksville High School.*



◀ *Students from Columbus City's Eastmoor Academy perform for attendees at the Central Region Spring Conference on March 21.*

▶ *William Spahr, Xenia Community City & Greene County Career Center, left, and Dr. Robert P. Dillaplain, Xenia Community City, receive the Award of Achievement at the March 13 Southwest Region Spring Conference at the Great Oaks ITCD Scarlet Oaks Campus.*

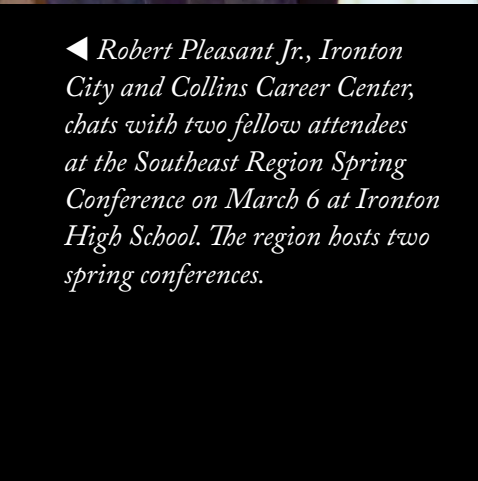




◀ Preschoolers from the Rittman United Methodist Church lead the Pledge of Allegiance at the March 7 Northeast Region Spring Conference at Rittman EV's Rittman High School.



▲ Nearly 100 board members received the OSBA Award of Achievement this spring. Manson, left, congratulates Nancy S. Gillespie, Groveport Madison Local (Franklin), on her achievement at the Central Region Spring Conference in Columbus. See the full list of Award of Achievement winners at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/34553>.



◀ Robert Pleasant Jr., Ironton City and Collins Career Center, chats with two fellow attendees at the Southeast Region Spring Conference on March 6 at Ironton High School. The region hosts two spring conferences.



▲ The Reading Community City Board of Education received the Southwest Region Effective School Board award. Accepting the Gold Level award for their board are, from left, Board Member Jim Perdue, Superintendent Scott Inskip and board Vice President Lisa Bemmes.



▶ Manson welcomes attendees at the Northwest Region Spring Conference.



▲ Damon Asbury, OSBA director of legislative services, updates attendees on current legislative issues at the March 8 Southeast Region Spring Conference at Crooksville. The region conference programs feature keynote speakers and information from OSBA staff.



◀ Manson recognizes Larry J. Dorch for his 15 years of service on the Champion Local (Trumbull) Board of Education. The regions honored veteran board members during the March conferences.

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