

Ohio School Boards Association

8050 North High Street • Suite 100 • Columbus OH 43235-6481
(614) 540-4000 • fax (614) 540-4100 • www.ohioschoolboards.org

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Contact: Angela Penquite
deputy director of
communication services
(614) 540-4000

apenquite@ohioschoolboards.org

Five school board members receive the association's highest honor

COLUMBUS — Five school board members have been honored with the Ohio School Boards Association's (OSBA) most esteemed award — the All-Ohio School Board.

Ray A. Freeman, Warrensville Heights City Schools; Bobbie A. Grice, Little Miami Local Schools in Warren County and Warren County Career Center; Craig Hazelbaker, Washington-Nile Local Schools in Scioto County; Deanna Reynolds-Griffin, Lima City Schools; and Dick Smith, Marysville Exempted Village Schools were recognized at the OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show, which runs Nov. 10-12 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

Each year, OSBA names one board of education member from each of its five regions — Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest — to the All-Ohio School Board. The award recognizes outstanding service to public education and represents the dedication of thousands of board members across the state.

Dick Smith, Central Region

Following a 39-year career in teaching and coaching, Dick Smith embraced a new role on the Marysville Exempted Village school board, where he continues to impact students' lives.

Smith's leadership has supported innovative programs in Marysville, including the creation of the Early College STEM High School, the expansion of full-day kindergarten and a groundbreaking personalized learning model.

"Our students are thriving academically and prepared for a future filled with success," Smith said.

A photo of Smith is available at <https://osba.link/DickSmith>.

Ray A. Freeman, Northeast Region

When Ray Freeman returned to his hometown of Warrensville Heights, he discovered the school district was ranked at the bottom of the state. That moment, he said, sparked his commitment to make a difference.

Freeman joined the school board to be a catalyst for change. Under his leadership, Warrensville Heights City Schools saw a dramatic improvement in rankings, built three new schools and transformed a church into an early childhood center.

“My passion for children has been the driving force behind my decision to take an active role in improving the school district,” Freeman said.

A photo of Freeman is available at <https://osba.link/RayFreeman>.

Deanna Reynolds-Griffin, Northwest Region

Deanna Reynolds-Griffin grew up in a family that deeply valued public education. Her mother was a teacher, and her father served on the school board. Now, the Lima City school board member is giving back to the same school district that helped shape her.

“I am a product of the opportunities and experiences that public education provides, and I wanted to give back to the district that laid the foundation for me,” Reynolds-Griffin said.

She is proud to be one of five strong leaders dedicated to student success—guiding the district through challenges like the pandemic, securing needed support and expanding community impact.

A photo of Reynolds-Griffin is available at <https://osba.link/DeannaReynoldsGriffin>.

Craig Hazelbaker, Southeast Region

For 17 years, Craig Hazelbaker has dedicated himself to ensuring every student and staff member feels valued and supported. He first realized his desire to support students through Washington-Nile Local's Beta Club years ago.

Seeing their excitement for the future, he says, made him want to help students succeed in any way he could. Craig's guiding principles have kept him focused and grounded — whether standing by his beliefs, supporting his community or lifting up staff members across the district.

“One thing I'm incredibly proud of is that, even after all these years, I have remained unbiased, listened to all sides and opinions and consistently tried to do what's best for all of the students in our district,” Hazelbaker said.

A photo of Hazelbaker is available at <https://osba.link/CraigHazelbaker>.

Bobbie A. Grice, Southwest Region

Bobbie Grice says her 36-year teaching career inspired her to continue advocating for students and educators at the school board level. Education has always been her passion.

After years in the classroom, joining the school board was a natural step to continue making a difference for students and the community. Grice's commitment to public education runs deep, with nearly 30 years on the Little Miami Local school board and two decades on the Warren County Career Center board.

“Being involved at this level allows me to continue making a positive impact, ensuring every student receives the quality education they deserve,” Grice said.

A photo of Grice is available at <https://osba.link/BobbieGrice>.

Contact your local school district or OSBA for more information.