

Oakwood City School District
President's Address
January 9, 2012
R. Sam Davis, Board President
State of the Schools – 2012

It is a sincere privilege to offer the annual report concerning the state of the Oakwood Schools. There is a wealth of information and accomplishments to share – much too much to list here.

First, I wish to welcome new board member, Todd Duwel, and express our appreciation and gratitude to Kathy Hollingsworth for her years of service to the district. Further, I would like to recognize and thank Elizabeth Reger for serving as board president for the past two years. Elizabeth's leadership and professionalism have guided us through challenging times. We are grateful for her dedication, and our community has benefited significantly from her service.

Once again, the Oakwood Schools achieved "Excellent with Distinction" status from the Ohio Department of Education for the 2010-2011 academic year. In meeting all 26 state report card indicators, and earning a 110.2 performance index, Oakwood was again among the top schools in the state of Ohio both overall and among districts with similar demographics.

Through the work of our Treasurer Kevin Philo and his staff, and as a result of community support of past operating levies, the district's finances are sound and stable. We will again be seeking support this spring for a renewal request for our Permanent Improvement levy to continue funding facility maintenance and infrastructure (with no increase in taxes).

This past year saw the Lange School kindergarten class become the first in Oakwood's history to experience an all-day/everyday curriculum. 2011 also saw enrollment at the junior/senior high building at historic levels. Through generous contributions collected at school music performances and through grants from groups like the PTO, the high school auditorium received a new audio system, installed over the holiday break. On the heels of last winter's severe ice storm – an event that left many in our city without power or heat – Smith Elementary School was transformed in a matter of hours into an overnight shelter for citizens in need. Last summer, our district undertook a broad public survey on many school-related topics, garnering significant input and useful information from many in our community. We remain grateful to all who participated, and we continue to draw value from the effort.

While these local occurrences were remarkable, arguably the most significant challenges came from last year's change in leadership in our state government. 2011 saw the predicted reduction in state financial support for Oakwood Schools, along with reform legislation targeting employee compensation, teacher and principal evaluation, and school funding.

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Not waiting for circumstances at the state level to dictate outcomes in Oakwood, our administrative leaders – Superintendent Dr. Mary Jo Scalzo and Treasurer Kevin Philo – worked hand-in-hand with our teachers and staff to manage outcomes in favor of our district. Placing students first, our administrators and teachers agreed to a contract extension with a true salary freeze and the elimination of future compensation increases based solely on years of service. This unprecedented achievement was negotiated professionally and respectfully, and was fueled by a spirit of trust and cooperation manifested by the leadership of the Oakwood Teachers Association.

Carrying forward a sense of mutual ownership, Dr. Scalzo and “leadership teams” comprised of teachers and principals are investing in reform efforts in the areas of professional development, federal Race to the Top transformation, and data analysis, as well as crafting our district’s move toward differentiated compensation. On all counts, these efforts demand long hours of work and include input from all stakeholders in our district, eventually resulting in outcomes assuring the best for our students.

While we are proud to hang the 12th consecutive “Excellent with Distinction” banner, we are ever mindful of what goes into making it happen. At the core of district-wide success is a community that actively supports its public schools. This, combined with the high expectations and involvement of parents, and students eager and ready to pursue education as the key to their future, provide the ingredients for continued success. Rest assured, the board of education does not take this winning combination for granted. Nor do we relax in our efforts to seek higher levels of achievement for our students.

We employ the finest team of administrators, teachers, and staff in the state of Ohio, and they work around the clock and beyond the scope of any job description. We are buoyed by immeasurable support from volunteers and organizations that dedicate their time and resources in every building and in all facets of students’ lives. Most of all, we are thankful to live and work in a community where education is valued and strong schools are central to our quality of life.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as board president, and for the greater privilege of serving on behalf of the students of Oakwood.