

# Garfield Heights City Schools

A publication designed to keep an open line of communication with the community.



# OPEN LINE

## Superintendent's Message:



**Superintendent  
Terry Olszewski**

The students and staff of the Garfield Heights City Schools are hard at work preparing for the upcoming test-taking season, which generally takes place in the spring months of the school year. From the first day of school and throughout the entire year, assessments and benchmarking are underway for each of our district's students, in order to make sure that they are prepared for these tests. A full test-taking calendar is available online, and the district encourages families to visit the website to mark the dates. Parents can play an important role in preparing their students

for the upcoming testing season, including the following:

- Speak openly with your children about testing. Take some time to explain that tests are coming up in the next few months to help teachers and schools measure learning skills and comprehension.
- Stay positive and encouraging. By praising your child for his or her positive accomplishments, self-esteem increases, as does the likelihood that he or she will perform well on tests.
- When testing week arrives, please do all that you can to make sure your son or daughter is healthy and at school. Tight windows for re-taking the tests can do more harm to the student than good.
- Communicate with your child's teachers, parents who proactively discuss their children's progress remain informed.
- Ensure that your child attends school regularly. Since tests reflect a child's overall achievement, the more exposure he or she has to the learning process, the more likely his or her test scores will improve.
- Provide a quiet learning environment for school work at home. When studying at home in a quiet, comfortable place, overall learning performance can be achieved.
- Provide a variety of new reading materials at home. Books

and magazines provide the opportunity for your student to learn new words that might appear on tests.

- Despite all of these items above, refrain from placing TOO MUCH emphasis on your child's test score. Too much pressure could adversely affect his or her performance.

The Garfield Heights City Schools offers these reminders as you prepare with your children over the next few months. Thank you for your continued support of our school district, and as always, GO BULLDOGS!

Terry Olszewski  
Superintendent of Schools



Superintendent Terry Olszewski with elementary students in the Garfield Heights City Schools. Thank you for your continued support of the district!



**Gary Wolske**  
President



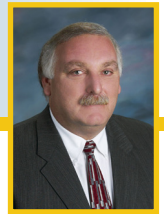
**Christine A. Kitson**  
Vice President



**Robert A. Dobies, Sr.**  
Sr. Member



**June A. Geraci**  
Member



**Joseph M. Juby**  
Member

## Board Report: Winter Edition 2017

The Garfield Heights Board of Education wishes everyone a Happy 2017. With new officers in place, Gary Wolske as President and Christine A. Kitson as Vice President, a formal 'thank you' is in order for Joseph M. Juby and his service as outgoing President. The district is grateful for your leadership. Despite the winter months, the Garfield Heights City Schools has been hard at work at a district-wide level to improve the schools on a strategic level.

First, the GHCS officially hired a Nutritionist/Dietician to help improve the menu for all students throughout the district. The community can read more about Briana Cates on page 4 of this newsletter. Members of the Board of Education see that for some of our students, the breakfast, lunch and snacks that they receive at their respective buildings are the only square meals they have for the entire day. Consequently, the district must continually improve its offerings to ensure nutrition as well as ensure that the food is actually being eaten. Waste can become prevalent in our cafeterias, and as an effort to minimize waste and maximize food intake, the district has moved in this direction. The Board's intent is that Ms. Cates will help to bring creative alternatives to healthy eating to each of our buildings.

Next, the Board of Education encourages all people in the community to go online and utilize the resources available regarding the district. Calendars are available for school programs

and organizations. Updates and important information can be found by parents. Resources for additional learning and growth are downloadable with the click of a button. The Board promotes the website and asks not only parents, but online users throughout the City to check out the website and take advantage of the offerings it provides.

The Board of Education also continues to strongly promote parent involvement in the lives of their students. Please get involved in the various Parent Teacher Organizations or All Pro Dads in the buildings. Plenty of chances for parent leadership exist in the schools today, the Board actively encourages you to take time to find a proper fit for your time. If parents cannot involve themselves at that level, please remember to be involved with your students at home. Extra reading and taking time to inquire about your students' academic well-being demonstrates interest, and a greater desire for your children to succeed.

Finally, the Board of Education wishes to commend its great teachers, great staff members, great coaches and great administrators for a job well done in each of the buildings. Your model helps to empower students to achieve more each and every day. Keep up the good work, and as always, contact any of the board members at any time. GO BULLDOGS!



**Allen Sluka,**  
Treasurer

## Talking Finances\$ With Garfield Heights City Schools Treasurer and Business Director Allen Sluka

Have you wondered why your school property taxes have gone up with the start of the New Year, even though the Garfield Heights City Schools passed a renewal levy last year **that stated no new taxes?** This edition of Talking Finances will help the community to understand why their tax bills increased with the new calendar year. The answer **goes back to the way schools are funded.** Under Ohio Law, a school district can ask the voters for four basic types of property tax levies: Continuing, Emergency, Bond and Permanent Improvement. The district has currently one continuing levy, two bond issue levies, one permanent

improvement levy and three Emergency levies, including the renewal passed by voters in November 2016. All of the above levies were approved by voters. Before going further, the community needs to know a few basic terms:

**Assessed Valuation:** This is the property values within the school community that the district applies its millage rates against to generate its property tax revenues. **The assessed value of any property (land + building) is 35% of its market value.**

**Mills/Millage Rates:** Mills are the basic unit used for property taxation in the State of Ohio. 1 Mill is equivalent to \$1 in taxes for every \$1,000 in taxable value. In other words, for a home worth \$100,000, and assessed at a 1 Mill tax rate, you will pay \$100 in taxes.

**Continuing Levies:** are permanent, and will be collected until the school board elects, or voters vote to, cease collection. (The levies may collect at reduced rates, subject to reduction factors.)

**Emergency Levies:** are collected for the number of years designated in the ballot language submitted to voters (e.g. 10 years). The maximum term is set by statute.

**Bond Issue Levies:** are collected for the number of years designated in the ballot language submitted to voters (e.g. 10 years). The voters agree to be assessed the necessary millage to pay off the annual principal and interest due each year.

**Permanent Improvement Levies:** are collected for the number of years designated in the ballot language submitted to voters. The voters agree to be assessed per ballot language millage for permanent improvements.

### So Why Did My School Taxes Increase?

Having a basic understanding of these terms will help you to understand the answer to the question as to why your property tax increased. Let's start with the renewal levy that was passed last November. This levy was renewed to collect \$4.1 million annually for the next 10 years which is the same amount that was first passed by voters in March 2012. The amounts of the other Emergency Levies have not changed. Furthermore, the Bond Issue levies annual debt service payment due had not fluctuated significantly from last year to this. So what did change to cause the tax increase? **The district's Assessed Valuation.** The district again saw its residential and commercial valuation drop by over \$1.35 million from the previous year, with the most significant being \$1.19 million in residential. So how does the lower Assessed Valuations affect your taxes? Since property tax rates are set using assessed valuation, by law, the county fiscal officer is required to set the millage rates to an amount that we meet the dollar amounts voted on for the Emergency and Bond Issue levies. Here is a quick summary: if your house value is the same as the previous year, but the overall assessed valuation of the community dropped, your tax rate was increased to offset the valuation loss and meet the levy amounts. Basically, you are picking up the slack of those homeowners who got their values reduced while yours stayed the same. Due to the valuation loss, the school district needed to increase the tax rate 6.83 mills just to meet the **existing** levies that are already in place. **This is not new taxes.**

### What Can Be Done?

The bottom line is that the total assessed value of the community is the driving factor for tax rates. Preserving the existing assessed valuations and building on the valuation is paramount to keeping tax rates in check. Purchasing property below market value or filing for reductions has a significant impact on the valuation and ultimately your tax rate. This includes both residential and commercial valuations. Residents can remain informed about these matters by clicking to the website and learning more on the finance page.

# Student Success Stories from Around the District

## All Pro Dads to Promote Father-Son Interaction

Elmwood Elementary School has new leadership from two fathers for its All Pro Dads organization. Christopher Robinson and Justin Yarboro will lead the organization beginning this new calendar year, and the Elmwood building leadership is very grateful for their help. "There is no more important job as a father than being a role model," says Mr. Robinson, who has a son named Jaden in the 4th grade. "All Pro Dads will give us the opportunity to meet with other fathers and promote the idea of father, or father-figure/son engagement." All pro Dads meets regularly on the third Friday of each month in the elementary school buildings. According to Principal Gwen Abraham, this organization empowers Dads to help play that vital role in their children's lives. "The strength of the family is paramount to a solid education," says Mrs. Abraham. "We are very thankful for Mr. Robinson and Mr. Yarboro's time and energy." Currently, approximately 50 fathers and sons attend the monthly gathering, which is held in the gymnasium. For those looking to attend next month's All Pro Dads, please contact the main office.



All Pro Dads at Elmwood has recently received a boost of support from increased parent involvement.

## Middle School Students Succeed at Raising Awareness about Anti-Bullying Initiative

Students at Garfield Heights Middle School are playing an active role in helping to raise awareness about the harm of bullying, and in the process, empowering students to promote positivity and friendliness. Spearheaded by the guidance department at the Middle School, more than 100 students recently participated in a contest to artistically promote the negative affects of bullying while promoting positivity. Posters were created with artwork, drawings, and statements about creating a positive atmosphere in school and at home, while discouraging the affects of cyber-bullying, verbal bullying and physical bullying. One student clearly demonstrated the concept of the contest by developing a poster that reiterated the idea of being the change that you want to see in the world. This anti-bullying initiative has been an ongoing, yearlong focus for students in 6th, 7th and 8th grade at the Middle School. A highlight of this heightened awareness was a program which took place in early February where representatives from Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force came and addressed parents in the district. For more information regarding anti-bullying initiatives in the district, please contact the Central Office.



Middle School Principal Chris Sauer with Middle School Guidance Counselors and the Winners of the Anti-Bullying Contest

## Maple Leaf Instructors Participate in New ODE Initiative to Enhance Early Literacy Among Elementary Students

Staff members at Maple Leaf Elementary Schools are in the process of implementing a breakthrough curriculum from a new initiative of the Ohio Department of Education that is designed to improve a teacher's capacity to assess students' literacy needs, intervene where improvement is required and then receive specialized coaching from highly trained mentors. In the process, this "LETRS" (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) curriculum is designed to empower teachers with deliberate professional development to sharpen their skills in helping students grow in their reading skills. This "PD" prepares teachers to better learn and use any well-designed reading program. Students will ultimately benefit, since the district and the state have found that targeted intervention at earlier ages help to lay a strong foundation for continued reading and academic success. Consequently, teachers who instruct Pre-K through Grade 3 will be the primary focus for the coaching. The ultimate goal is to provide evidence-based literacy instruction and intervention through a multi-layered system of supports for our district's youngest students. Stay tuned as the GHCS shares more with you in the future.



Early Literacy is a major focus at Maple Leaf, where staff members are implementing the LETRS curriculum



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## ***District Spotlight:*** Briana Cates, District Nutritionist/Dietician

The Garfield Heights City Schools recently hired a Nutritionist/Dietician in an effort to play a more proactive role in helping improve the overall nutrition and eating habits of the people served by the Garfield Heights City Schools. Briana Cates was recently hired to fill this role because her energy, knowledge, and overall desire to help students grow in a healthy way is clearly what motivates her in this capacity. She is our District Spotlight for this edition, and the Garfield Heights City Schools formally welcomes her to our school district.

Her primary responsibility will be to enhance the menu from a nutritional standpoint at all of the buildings. This will include the preparation for school breakfast, lunch and all snacks delivered by the district to others. She also hopes to educate students and adults on healthy alternatives. Her first order of business will be observing “plate waste” in the cafeterias, which basically means to see what students are eating and what they are not eating and to determine why. She will conduct “plate waste” observations throughout the rest of this school year and analyze her findings over the summer months and, with the intention of making menu changes next school year.

Briana sees the new trend to bring on Nutritionists in public education as a positive thing, in that proper health and nutrition are directly correlated to success in the classroom. Briana brings with her an exceptional resume. She has her Bachelor’s of Science degree in Nutrition and Dietetics from Kent State University and her Master’s Degree in Human Nutrition from Winthrop University in South Carolina. Prior to coming to Garfield Heights, Briana spent time as a clinical dietician in Alabama after completing an extensive internship at Auburn University. When you see Briana at the schools, make sure you say hello.

On behalf of the entire Garfield Heights City Schools, welcome to the district, Briana!



**District Nutritionist Briana Cates is working to improve the school menu with healthy choices, but ones that students enjoy eating as well!**