

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



# OPEN LINE

## Superintendent's Report



*The new Garfield Heights City Schools Board of Education, from Left to Right, Ashley Thomas, Christine Kitson, Joe Juby, Nichelle Daniels, Robert A. Dobies, Sr.*

Dear Garfield Heights City Schools Community,

### Welcome New Members of the Board of Education!

On behalf of the Garfield Heights City Schools, Happy New Year to all! On Tuesday, January 7th Ashley Thomas and Nichelle Daniels were officially sworn in as new members of

the Board of Education at the annual Organizational Meeting. The District would like to formally welcome these new members of the Board of Education and wish them well in their new roles. For the upcoming term, Joseph M. Juby will serve as President of the Board of Education and Robert A. Dobies, Sr. will serve as Vice President. The month of January is Board Recognition month in the State of Ohio, and the Garfield Heights City Schools expresses its sincere gratitude to each of our members of the Board of Education. These individuals dedicate their time to serve as the liaison between the community and the school district and deserve our recognition.

### Community Based Strategic Planning Initiative Underway

The Garfield Heights City Schools is officially engaged in a Strategic Planning initiative whereby the community will have the opportunity to play a role in revitalizing the mission and vision for our school district. Individuals interested in participating in the Strategic Planning process will have the opportunity to do so by attending an upcoming Stakeholder Meeting that will take place on February 20th, 2020. Over the next several months, the community based strategic planning committee, comprised of residents, business community members, staff, students and administrators will thoughtfully consider where the Garfield Heights City Schools would like to be in the next 3 to 5 years, and then chart a course of action to achieve this vision.

### All Five Buildings Win Statewide Honors for Positive Behavior Initiatives

On page 3 of this publication, the community will learn more about the statewide recognition received by all five buildings in the Garfield Heights City Schools for their Positive Behavior Intervention Supports program. A foundational initiative in the District over the last several years, P.B.I.S. seeks to reward outstanding behavior with the intent to minimize negative activities. Congratulations to the High School, Middle School, Elmwood Elementary School and Maple Leaf for earning Bronze Stars. A special congratulations goes out to William Foster Elementary School for winning a Silver Star for the 4th consecutive year!

### Special Thanks to Community Partners Who Help Our Students Shine

The Garfield Heights City Schools is fortunate to have a solid base of community partners who continually provide opportunities for our students to learn, grow and achieve in a variety of educational ways. Please read more inside to learn about the continued kindness of our friends in the Kiwanis, Marymount Hospital's Helping Hands Committee and more!

Stay safe and warm during the remainder of the winter season.

**Chris Hanke**  
Superintendent of Schools



*The Helping Hands Committee from Marymount Hospital, the Garfield Heights Kiwanis and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health assembled donated items to create Hygiene Closets at each building in the District.*

# Board Brief

## 2019-2020 School Year Progresses Past Midway Point



Joseph M. Juby  
Board President  
Legislative Liaison  
Policy Liaison



Robert A. Dobies, Sr.  
Board Vice President  
City Liaison



Nichelle N. Daniels  
Board Member  
Policy Liaison



Christine A. Kitson  
Cuyahoga Valley  
Career Center



Ashley M. Thomas  
Board Member  
Student Activities

The Board of Education in the Garfield Heights City School District formally wishes everyone a Happy New Year and extends its best wishes to the community for a healthy and prosperous 2020. With a new year comes two new Board Members to the Garfield Heights City Schools, Nichelle Daniels and Ashley Thomas. We welcome them both and look forward to the collaboration, energy and exciting work in the future. As we welcome the incoming members of the Board of Education, the District offers its sincere gratitude to the two departing members from last term, Gary Wolske and Joan Chamberlin. These individuals were long-serving members of the Board and our community and we wish them well!

The Garfield Heights City Schools has launched a highly-anticipated and community-based strategic planning initiative in our District that will officially commence on February 20, 2020 with a Steering Committee Meeting at the High School. For years, the Garfield Heights City Schools has been guided by a collaboratively created vision and mission with clearly articulated goals and action plans. The time has come to refresh our prior efforts with a new path forward to accommodate the continually-changing climate in public education. This, along with the fact that new areas of focus have emerged as very important to the school community. The Garfield Heights City Schools has invited a cross section of the community to serve as representatives for the Strategic Planning process. These individuals represent parents, students, elected officials, business leaders, senior citizens and more. In total, more than 85 participants have been invited to this kick off meeting. Thank you in advance for the all the work that will be done for the District to officially refresh its Strategic Planning effort.

The Garfield Heights City Schools hosted its first ever Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Week during the week of February 10th as a way to promote awareness about these topics. All throughout this week, various activities and events were planned to expose others to inclusionary topics and matters of diversity and equity. The community was invited to participate in a Cultural Dinner and Celebration on Wednesday evening, February 12th with a free dinner at 6 p.m. in the cafeteria as well as an engaging program in the Center for Performing Arts at 6:30 p.m.

Winter activities are constantly underway in the Garfield Heights City Schools and the Board of Education asks the community to check our district website as well as our individual building pages for updated events. The All Pro Dads organization is experiencing a surge of participation, with many fathers and father-figures attending these early-morning meetings at the Elementary Schools. Please check the website or social media, and take a moment to attend these events. The community is always welcome in the buildings and at our students' co-curricular activities of all ages and at all grade levels.

Finally, the Board of Education for the Garfield Heights City Schools thanks the generosity of various stakeholders in our community. From the Kiwanis to the Helping Hands Committee of Marymount Hospital and the City of Garfield Heights, our students are fortunate to have these type of friends in the community willing to donate time, money and other goods to make their lives better. On behalf of everyone in the Garfield Heights City Schools, thank you very much!

Stay safe and warm this winter season!

The Garfield Heights Board of Education



Allen Sluka,  
Treasurer

## Talking Finances\$

With Garfield Heights City Schools Treasurer and Business Director Allen Sluka

### Interested in the Strategic Planning Process? Get Involved!

The Garfield Heights City Schools will be engaging in a very meaningful Strategic Planning process that will establish a clear path forward for the District for the next 3 to 5 years. While any school district will take time to create an appropriate educational vision for the future to ensure student growth and achievement, one additional set of priorities will revolve around finances and facilities. For this edition of the Treasurer's Report, an elaboration of what the community can expect from this aspect of the strategic planning process will be outlined. **Anyone who is interested in participating on the Finances and Facilities Committee should plan on attending the kick-off Strategic Planning meeting on Thursday, February 20, 2020 from 5 – 7 p.m.**

### Financial Decisions Over the Next 5 Years

Fiscal stability and prudent use of resources ensures that our students receive the best public education the District can offer. Given the current political and socioeconomic climate, a close watch on tax dollars combined with state resources must be adhered to. How the District spends its money, and on what programming, services and resources the District invests its dollars will be part of the Strategic Planning discussion over the next several months. Even prior to the mention of the strategic planning initiative, the Finance Office was deliberately adhering to strict planning principles. As the community knows, the District is required by Ohio Revised Code to submit 5-year financial forecasts to the State of Ohio twice each year. This forward-thinking best management practice compels our Board of Education and Administration to be plan-oriented all the time. In addition to this, a 5-Year Capital Maintenance program was adopted by the Board of Education last fall as another internal control to force financial decisions to be deliberate and planned. The Strategic Planning focus for the District's finances will attempt to fine tune what has already been achieved, where the entire staff has experienced educational and co-curricular success while still doing more with less.

### Facilities Assessment for Those Aspects of our District in Disrepair and Need

While many of the facilities in our District have experienced relatively newer renovations, some of our buildings and facilities need to be strongly assessed for their continued sustainability in serving students. The Middle School, currently, has reached capacity with HVAC systems, electrical grid and plumbing that virtually render upgrades or enhancements impossible. The windows require replacement and the roof continues to be patched with band-aid fixes that are not long-term solutions. Serious assessment of the future viability of this building is in order, and will be a topic of great consideration during the Strategic Planning process. So too will be our High School and Middle School athletic facilities and amenities. The needs at our varsity football and soccer field along with the track persist and will not improve without a sizeable investment. The facilities limit opportunities for our students, and do not represent the quality of amenities serving other students at various ages in our District. We need your help to determine how viable an upgrade can be with the community's support.

Once again, if you are interested in the topics outlined in this article, we ask for your help. Please attend the Strategic Planning kickoff meeting on Thursday, February 20, 2020 and register to be part of the Finances and Facilities subcommittee. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

As always, please feel free to contact me at any time with financial and facility questions.

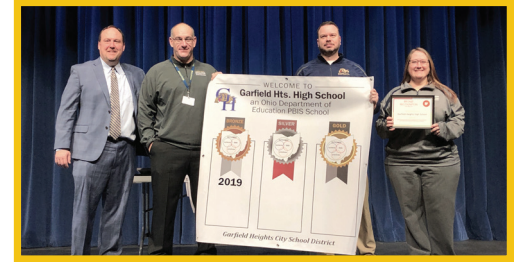


# Student Success Stories from Around the District



## All Five Buildings in Garfield Heights City Schools Earn Positive Behavior Honors from the State of Ohio

All five buildings in the Garfield Heights City Schools, the High School, Middle School, Elmwood Elementary, Maple Leaf Elementary and William Foster Elementary, earned statewide honors for their high achievement and dedication to Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (P.B.I.S.). Superintendent Chris Hanke received the honors at the Ohio P.B.I.S. Awards Showcase held in Dayton, Ohio, late last year. The Ohio P.B.I.S. Showcase recognized schools for their quality P.B.I.S. implementation during the past year. Assistant Superintendent Sean Patton has played a lead role in developing the District's dedication to P.B.I.S. for many years. According to Mr. Patton, "The Garfield Heights City Schools has made a priority of combining the importance of academics along with behavior, and we are pleased to have been recognized by the state for this commitment." Specifically, William Foster Elementary School earned a Silver Award from the State of Ohio, making this the fourth consecutive year of such behavior achievement. The High School, Middle School, Elmwood and Maple Leaf Elementary School each won a Bronze Award from the State of Ohio. The entire school district has earned this high honor and deserves a round of applause. Congratulations to everyone for placing a successful emphasis on the Positive Behavior Intervention Supports.



*All Five Buildings in the Garfield Heights City Schools Earned State Recognition for Positive Behavior Intervention Supports!*

## Garfield Heights Alumnus Jasmine Brown Named Top 19 Female Journalists Changing the Industry



*Jasmine Brown, an alumnus of GHCS, has gone onto bold and bright accomplishments in the field of journalism!*

Garfield Heights City Schools alumnus Jasmine Brown has recently ascended to the highest ranks of the International Women's Media Foundation by being named among their 19 Women Changing Journalism in 2019 listing. Jasmine's reporting over the years has covered a variety of issues from social justice to climate change. She has taken a lead role in helping to create and advance the Fund for Women Journalists project: "The Marshall Island, a Nation That Fears It's on the Brink of Extinction," which aired on ABC News' Nightlines program. Her work has also appeared on ABC News' 20/20 and she is currently a member of the Gwen Ifell Mentorship cohort. On behalf of her home public education school community, congratulations to Jasmine Brown for being named among the top 19 female journalists working to change the industry. Go Bulldogs!

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Week beginning on Monday, February 10th through Thursday, February 13th

The GHCS will be hosting its first ever DEI Week for the purpose of integrating programmatic activities and opportunities for dialogue around these very important topics in the District. Check the website for more details!

## Bucket Drummers Becoming Exposed to Performing Arts Program in District

Sixth, seventh and eighth grade students at Garfield Heights Middle School have been presented with a creative performing arts opportunity that may very well serve as an initial exposure to the successful musical and band programs in our District. Called the Bucket Drummers, approximately 15 middle school students meet every Monday after school to introduce themselves to learning the nuances of drumming on buckets. Led by advisor Brett Balika, this "starter session" for students emerged after the considerable interest in percussion but not enough drums in the formal Middle School band. "Our hope is that students will begin to read music and establish an alternate path for music in a creative and fun way," said Mr. Balika. The Bucket Drummers had top billing at a recent Board of Education meeting that took place in the Middle School cafeteria and also at Family Engagement Night that was held earlier this fall. "Garfield Heights Middle School is all about providing meaningful opportunities to our students," said Building Principal Mr. Chris Sauer. "The Bucket Drummers is one example of many creative and constructive programs designed to help students learn." Thank you for your continued support of the Garfield Heights City Schools.



*The bucket drummers were formed to involve middle school students in performing arts opportunities.*

## Garfield Heights High School Students Engage Our Senior Citizens



In three separate opportunities late last year, students from the Garfield Heights City Schools meaningfully engaged our senior citizen family in the community and the District would like to say thank you to them. In November, students from Elmwood played a role in the Veterans Ceremony at Jennings Home, holding flags and paying respect to those who served. The High School Drama Department invited senior citizens for a Preview of *Check, Please Take Two* which was their fall performance. Senior citizens watched a preview and met the cast and crew as well. Finally, just before the holiday season, the enchanting vocalists from the High School led by Mr. Pernod entertained senior citizens during their holiday party at the Civic Center. For years, the Garfield Heights City Schools has made a distinct effort to engage, interact with and include the City's senior citizens in our many activities. Thank you to everyone who participates to make this so special!





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## District Spotlight:

**Yolanda Hamilton, Diversity Consultant & Coordinator, Garfield Heights City Schools**



*Yolanda Hamilton, the District's Diversity Consultant, is a Garfield Heights alumnus and community member as well.*

The Garfield Heights City Schools would like to introduce someone who is no stranger to the community, Yolanda Hamilton, our very own Diversity Consultant and Coordinator, who was recently hired this past school year to play a vital and important role in the District. Ms. Hamilton comes to the GHCS with a robust 15 years of experience and has worked firsthand with the positive impact that social awareness and inclusion training can, and should have, on students. Ms. Hamilton is very excited to be working with the students and staff in the community she calls home.

In fulfilling the role of Diversity Consultant, Ms. Hamilton's role is to provide culturally relevant professional development & training for all educators and staff across the District so that they can be prepared to acknowledge and address situations of all types. In a partnership with students and staff, the entire Garfield Heights family will advance diversity, equity, and inclusion through an effective model that engages the important relationship between students, educators and the community at large. One way this can be done is through effective communication and engagement between families, educators, and administrators across the district, and will be another primary focus as well.

Ms. Hamilton takes over in the role that was occupied by Michael Douglas over the last several years, but who unexpectedly passed away last summer. The foundation of Diversity training begun by Mr. Douglas, and encouraged by Superintendent Hanke, will only continue to flourish and grow with Ms. Hamilton in this role for many years to come.

Her many years of experience in the field has demonstrated that a collaboration together can create a culture that prioritizes equitable practices in the classroom, provide ongoing professional development around diversity, equity and inclusion for all staff and in the process, increase parental involvement in their students' academic and co-curricular journeys through our District.

Best of all, Yolanda Hamilton has a heart for Garfield Heights, as she was raised here, and also graduated from Garfield Heights High School. To this day, she lives in our community and calls Garfield Heights her home. Please join the District in welcoming Yolanda Hamilton to this important role in the District. Be sure to say hello when you see her throughout the District. Thank you for your continued support of the Garfield Heights City Schools.