

Dear Supporters of the Garfield Heights City Schools,

I want to take a moment to discuss the Garfield Heights City Schools' results on the State Report Card. *Time-and-time again I keep coming back to the same answer: The students enrolled in the Garfield Heights City Schools are among the finest, most hard-working and conscientious students I have ever met.* Our district's vision is to prepare our students with skills that will prepare them for the 21st Century, and I believe that each and every day, this is happening in the Garfield Heights City Schools. Those who know me, know that I have never made excuses for an 'F' on the state report card, nor viewed this grade as acceptable. We must do better. We will do better. However, this is my 6th year as superintendent of the Garfield Heights City Schools, and this past year's testing methods are my 4th different type of testing and evaluating system handed down to us by the state. To quote a recent article that ran in The Plain Dealer, even the so-called experts can't even agree as to what the state report card letter grades mean. That speaks volumes. What I can tell you, in addition to the letter grade for the 2016-2017 School Year, is all that our students accomplished during roughly the same time frame. Here's a recap:

- The Class of 2017 earned more than \$3.4 million in scholarships last year
- Members of that graduating Class went on to such prestigious colleges as The Ohio State University, Arizona State University, Kent State University, Shawnee State University and the Honors Program at Cleveland State University and beyond
- Students in our district are becoming technologically proficient, as we currently deploy 600 desktop computers, 2000 Chromebook and 280 iPads with more to come
- Our high school continues to add a variety of new and innovative academic programs including Sign Language, AP Government, AP Studio Art 2-D and AP Studio Art 3-D
- Garfield Heights High School received the Momentum Award from the State of Ohio for receiving A's on value added test scores
- Our Music Express was named "Grand Champion" of the Great Lakes Invitational at Walsh Jesuit High School, one of the most competitive show choir competitions in the entire state
- William Foster Elementary School recently earned the Silver medal from the State of Ohio for their Positive Behavior Intervention Supports initiative, joining only 24 other schools out of the 611 schools statewide, to earn this distinction.
- Maple Leaf Elementary School was recently selected from a pool of regional and statewide applicants to be a pilot school for the LETRS literacy training program for its students
...Honestly, the list of accomplishments by our students goes on-and-on-and-and-on... There are another dozen accolades I could share about accomplishments and positive initiatives underway in the Garfield Heights City Schools at the present time. It prompts the question: *With all of these accolades, do the state letter grades really*

mean anything at all? What's more, the GHCS is accomplishing all of this despite several challenges that our district confronts on a daily basis. Some of those include:

- A district that will receive nearly \$1MILLION LESS from the state government over the next biennium, when our district is 55% reliant on state funding every year.
- More than 72% of our students qualify for free-and-reduced lunch status
- Our district experiences greater than 60% mobility rate from one year to the end of another year.

It prompts the fair and legitimate question: How can the state fairly and equally evaluate a student from our district with the very same standard, when the same socio-economic and monetary metrics aren't equally applied to each student. The bottom line is this: We're all Bulldogs in the Garfield Heights City Schools, figuratively and in reality. We've got to fight for every accomplishment, scholarship, piece of technology, win on the basketball court and in the classroom. And I see this tenacity each and every day in this district. As superintendent, you have my word, the Garfield Heights City Schools has and will continue to educate our students regardless of some letter grade... we will continue to provide opportunities despite statewide rankings... and we will continue to motivate, prepare and equip our students with skills that will make them contributing members of a 21st Century global society.

Thank you for your continued support of the Garfield Heights City Schools.

GO BULLDOGS!

Terry Olszewski

Superintendent