

Garfield Heights City Schools

Community Newsletter

Every Child | Every Day | Together.



Superintendent's Report



Dr. Richard D. Reynolds
Superintendent

Dear Garfield Heights City Schools Families,

As we begin the new calendar-year while at the same time reach the mid-point of the 2024-2025 school year, the Garfield Heights City Schools finds itself among continued achievement, growth, and amidst challenges that could impact the district for years to come. The importance of this newsletter is significant, as the district always intends to share great stories that share student and staff achievement in our schools. This newsletter also serves as a vehicle to share important information

as well, as readers will see on its internal pages. A May 2025 levy is forthcoming this spring, and the GHCS encourages you all to become informed about its significant impact.

State of the Schools Presentation on Wednesday, March 5th

As a way to share important updates during a live, in-person gathering, the Garfield Heights City Schools will be hosting a State of the Schools presentation on Wednesday, March 5th at 6 p.m., at Garfield Heights High School in the Center for Performing Arts. During this presentation, I, along with Treasurer Phil Oko, will share an update of the district, and several of the important matters being discussed in the Garfield Heights City Schools. Items of academic achievement, behavioral improvements and metrics, a finance update, and more will be shared. Please mark your calendar for Wednesday, March 5th, for the State of the Schools presentation at the GHHS Center for Performing Arts.

Preparations for OST Testing in the Spring

The OST tests will be taking place in the next several months, and various methods of preparing are already underway in the buildings. Several grade levels are utilizing the state-issued preparatory exams and questions as a way to prepare, setting aside specific times during each week to administer and take exams. If your child mentions these practice efforts, please do your best to help them get good nights of sleep, proper nutrition, and adequate mental calmness time at home. Reading on a regular basis, nightly if possible, helps to reinforce what students at all grade levels are doing in the classroom. Testing season is likely to begin in early April 2025.

Learning and Growth Beyond Academics

High School students in the Students of Service organization (S.O.S.) were recently instructed on how to help professionals and technicians take others'

blood during a blood drive opportunity with the American Red Cross. The more blood that was donated, the more such donations translate into scholarships for Garfield Heights High School Bulldogs. We consider this a great opportunity for growth and learning, outside of the classroom, and represents some of the stories contained within this newsletter.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Reynolds, Ph.D.
Superintendent



SOS Students at the High School learn how to assist during a blood drive with the American Red Cross recently.



The spring testing season is right around the corner, so families who are able to help prepare their students with good habits and proper rest and nutrition will play a big role.

Board Brief

Board of Education Report: Winter 2025



Millette King, M.Ed., L.S.W.
President
Academic Excellence Committee (ACE)
Wellness Liaison



Heather Morrison
Vice President
Finance
Legislative
Strategic Planning



Thandeka Cox, M.Ed
Member
Academic Excellence Committee (ACE)
Legislative Liaison
Policy
Strategic Planning



Nichelle N. Daniels
Member
Family & Community Engagement
Finance



Ashley M. Thomas, M.Ed.
Member
CVCC Board President
Legislative Committee
Policy Committee

Dear Garfield Heights City Schools Community,

The GHCS Board of Education would like to wish everyone a Happy 2025. During the second half of the 2024-2025 school year, the community will learn more about several significant needs and initiatives from our school district. The first is our Renewal Issue, that will not raise taxes. This renewal issue will go to continue funding aspects of general operations for the Garfield Heights City Schools including educational resources, curricular and programming needs, personnel expenses, and other items. The community also needs to be aware of a major source of funding that will be taken away from the State of Ohio if this issue is not passed. You can read more about this in Treasurer Oko's report on the bottom half of this page.

Another important initiative underway is the revising of our district's strategic plan. Helped and facilitated by our partners at the Educational Services Center of Northeast Ohio, a committee has been formed that contains members from the community and other stakeholders. Over the course of the last several months, and those to come in the future, citizens will share their important attitudes and values with the school district. Since the Board of Education desires our strategic plan to be truly community-based, we will rely on our stakeholder input to inform and direct our efforts. Ultimately, the community can expect that this new strategic plan will contain a new mission statement, vision statement, core values or beliefs, and strategies, goals, and action steps as well. More will certainly be coming in the future.

The month of January was Board of Education recognition month, and we would like to thank the community for the opportunity to serve them as liaisons between the citizens and our district's leadership team. During the month of January, we also celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., for his unwavering and torch-bearing demonstration of non-violence, and his leadership in working against racial discrimination and for civil rights for all. This occasion, along with February as Black History Month, are wonderful times in the Garfield Heights City Schools, to uphold and celebrate our joint diversity and efforts for inclusion.

Let's have a great start to the second half of the school year.

Treasurer's Report

Important Facts and Information Regarding the May 2025 Renewal Issue



Phillip J. Oko, M.B.A.
Treasurer/CFO

The Garfield Heights City Schools will once again have a Renewal Levy on the May 2025 ballot, the facts of which, are important for our taxpaying citizens to comprehend. **The levy will not increase taxes.** This ballot issue represents a renewal of two levies that have been continuously approved by the voters since 1986 and 1992, respectively, including a \$2.5 million emergency tax issue that was originally passed by the voters in 1986 and a \$2.85 million emergency issue that was originally passed by the voters in 1992, and subsequently have been approved for renewal every five years since 1992. If approved, the renewal would be for a term of 10 years. The extended renewal period has been proposed to address the long-term financial security of the district. If approved, funds generated would be used for the same items as the previously approved measures. More specifically, the funds would primarily be used for core educational programming, textbooks, building safety and security, technology, science equipment, and operations.

If the levy fails, the district would face a \$5.35 million shortfall, which would require the district to consider available cost-cutting measures to account for the shortfall, including staffing and programming cuts.

Most importantly, Garfield Heights City Schools levies are subject to the Rollback and Homestead Credit programs through the State. Taxpayers only pay 87.5% of the total levy collection cost. If the levy expires, a new levy will be taxed at the full 100% collection rate. Meaning an increased cost JUST TO COLLECT the same amount they currently pay. In other words, 12.5% of your current cost subsidized by the state will be lost permanently if this issue is not renewed.

Staffing cuts, core program cuts, and extracurricular opportunities will be cut as well, if not approved by the voters.

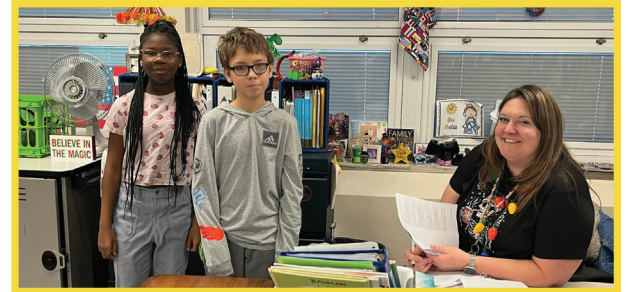
*** The information being provided is merely factual, district personnel are not allowed to advocate for or against the passage of the levy or bond issue during times they are being compensated by the district.**

Stories to Make You Support the Garfield Heights City Schools!

Students and staff throughout the district are shining, and we invite you to learn more about the Garfield Heights City Schools with the following several articles in detail.

Spelling Bee Competition Underway at Maple Leaf

Over the last several weeks, students at Maple Leaf have continued improving their reading and literacy skills along with some added competition as part of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Before winter break, individual classrooms hosted their own "internal competitions," whereby a winner from each room emerged. From there, a building-wide competition took place on January 15th, that helped to identify the most-proficient speller throughout Maple Leaf. Next steps include the Maple Leaf champion competing in the Northern Ohio Regional competition which will take place later this spring. The competitive spirit combined with proper spelling, and the pressure of having to perform in front of the classroom instructors and their peers. Great job to each and every speller. Way to go in performing on a class-by-class, building, and now, a regional stage.



Maple Leaf students participating in the Scripps National Spelling Bee!

Garfield Heights High School Student-Athletes, Athletic Director Cruz Lead LEL Student Athletic Leadership Summit



GHHS Student Athlete Mentors Lead the LEL Conference on Leadership before Winter Break, showing their skills and capabilities.

The Garfield Heights Athletic Department continues to stay on-the-move, who under the direction of Athletic Director Mike Cruz recently oversaw and led a student-athlete leadership summit for all of the schools in the Lake Erie League. The conference was hosted late last fall before the holiday season at Cuyahoga Community College East Campus and was kicked-off by A.D. Cruz, who led the day-long sessions in one of the college's conference rooms full of student-athletes through various leadership activities, discussion, and exercises. Attending for the Bulldogs were sophomores Rayshawn Myers (basketball), Ian Case (bowling, cross country, track and field), and Halia Boulds (softball and volleyball), along with senior Franshlinete Santoni (volleyball and track and field). Special guest speaker and Garfield Heights alumnus Trey Lewis, who played in college and the National Basketball Association, provided inspiration remarks to the student-athletes. Some of the sessions included discussions on leadership in pressure situations, helping to overcome obstacles in athletics and in life, and time management solutions. In all, a great day of student leadership and opportunity took place with Garfield Heights students and administrators leading the way.

GHMS Student Has Very Own Book Published Courtesy of Believe in Dreams

The Garfield Heights City Schools proudly and joyfully commends our very own Middle School student Mi'Kiyah Patterson, and the publishing of her own book, with original writings and poetry, that became the focus of an interview with Ms. Danielle Wiggins from WKYC Channel 3 news recently. Encouraged and inspired by the Garfield Heights City Schools' Dean of Students at William Foster and prior Intervention Specialist Salina Sutton, Ms. Patterson used her own deeply personal experiences to artfully and meaningfully craft the words and stanzas that comprise the book. The WKYC reporter took the time to interview Mi'Kiyah, Ms. Sutton, and a representative from the Believe in Dreams organization, a local group dedicated to fulfilling the dreams and aspirations for youths in our community. You can find the video of this story, and the wonderful and unique accomplishment, on our webpage and social media. Congratulations Mi'Kiyah on your persistence, talent, and working to help others in need through your own experiences to make the world a better place.



Mi'Kiyah Patterson, along with Salina Sutton, Dean of Students at William Foster, and a representative from Believe in Dreams, who helped get her very own book published!



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With Superintendent Dr. Reynolds

Come and have an informal chat with GHCS
Superintendent Dr. Richard Reynolds and
Treasurer Phil Oko, M.B.A.

All Coffee chats are from 9 a.m. until 10 a.m.

- ☕ Wednesday, March 12th at Dunkin' Donuts on Turney Road
- ☕ Wednesday, March 26th at Dunkin' Donuts on Turney Road
- ☕ Wednesday April 9th at McDonalds on Turney Road
- ☕ Wednesday, April 23rd at McDonalds on Turney Road

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

District Spotlight:

GHCS Welcomes Mac Stephens as Varsity Head Football Coach

The Garfield Heights High School extends a Bulldog welcome to Mac Stephens in joining our program as our new head varsity football coach. Coach Stephens brings two decades of coaching experience and a distinguished career both on and off the field, with unparalleled expertise and a proven record of success.

"Coach Stephens is a proven winner who develops student athletes into outstanding young men," said Athletic Director Michael Cruz. "His approach is to instill life skills, prepare players for success beyond the field, and help athletes earn scholarships."

Coach Stephens' coaching career includes ten years as the head coach of Cleveland Heights High School, where he led the program to unprecedented success. Under his leadership, Cleveland Heights earned five Lake Erie League championships, qualified for the OHSAA Division 1 Region 1 State Playoffs seven times, and achieved a near-90% conference win rate. His coaching accolades include multiple L.E.L. Coach of the Year awards, 2021 Northeast Ohio District Coach of the Year, 2023 Division 1 Coach of the Year, and the prestigious Cleveland Browns Coach of the Year awards in 2021 and 2023 and 2024.

When asked about the opportunity to become the new head coach at Garfield Heights, Coach Stephens expressed his excitement and gratitude: "I am honored and grateful to be named the new head coach at Garfield Heights High School. I look forward to working with our talented student-athletes, staff, and community to create a foundation of success and foster excellence both on and off the field. I want to thank the Garfield Heights Athletic Director, Board of Education, Superintendent, and the rest of the Garfield Heights City Schools Administration Team for this responsibility, and I am excited to get to work."

In addition to his high school coaching accomplishments, Coach Stephens has served in key leadership roles, including Co-President of the North Coast Youth Football Conference and as a member of the Cleveland Browns Football Advisory Council. His professional background also includes his role as Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Euclid. As a former collegiate and professional player, Coach Stephens was a captain and starter at the University of Minnesota and played with the New York Jets and Minnesota Vikings. His experience as a player and coach uniquely positions him to inspire Garfield Heights student-athletes and guide them to success on and off the field.

While a state championship is a Bulldog goal, our district's priority is hiring coaches who makes a lasting impact on the lives of our student-athletes. Coach Stephens excels at doing just that as well as any coach in our state. Please join us in welcoming Coach Stephens to the Garfield Heights family!



Visit us online at: www.garfieldheightscityschools.com

