

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

# OPEN LINE



## Superintendent's Report



*Board Member Joe Juby, Vice President Christine Kitson, President Gary Wolske, Superintendent Chris Hanke, Member Joan Chamberlin and Member Bob Dobies at this summer's meeting when Mr. Hanke was hired.*

### Successful Start to the 2019-2020 School Year

Students successfully returned to the classroom on Thursday, August 22, 2019, for the first day of the 2019-2020 School Year. Students returned to welcoming teachers and learning began on day one. We thank the parents for their preparations for this

school year, and strongly encourage them to continue working with their students during the forthcoming year to supplement the work of the teachers at home.

### Collaboration and Cooperation

Throughout the entire school year, the GHCS will dedicate itself to collaborating and cooperating with its partners in the community, including parents and families, the City of Garfield Heights, public safety officials, the business and non-profit community and other stakeholders who work to make our school district successful. Collaboration and cooperation means a genuine exchange of ideas and openness to bold and progressive ways of enhancing student life in this District. The GHCS must be on the cutting edge of preparing students to be college and career ready. Staff will develop professionally to advance this cause. Parents will be given even more opportunities to be involved with their children's academic development. One such way will be through our newly hired Family and Civic Engagement Coordinator, Gina Wilson, who you can read more about on Page 3 of this edition. The District is dedicated to ensuring that your voice is heard and that we are properly equipping students for their respective futures.

### Community Input and Strategic Planning

To further promote community collaboration, the District is planning to launch a strategic planning effort beginning in 2020 to further refine its mission and vision for students, the beliefs we share about

education in our community and to set goals. Residents will have an opportunity to play a role in this planning process, as the District desires collaboration with all stakeholders that comprise the school family. Please remain on the lookout for opportunities to get involved later this fall and early in the winter months.

### Special Thanks to Marymount's Helping Hands Committee

The Garfield Heights City Schools would like to thank the Helping Hands Committee from Marymount Hospital, who graciously assembled a variety of school supply donations to each and every first grade student in the District. Pens, pencils, tissues, and other classroom supplies were all donated with the generosity of our friends on the Helping Hands Committee. We are grateful for your support!

Let's make the 2019-2020 School Year the best one yet!

**Chris Hanke**  
**Superintendent of Schools**



*Superintendent Chris Hanke with students on the first day of school.*



# Board Brief

## 2019-2020 School Year Off to a Fine Start



**Gary Wolske**  
Board President  
Legislative Liaison



**Christine A. Kitson**  
Board Vice President  
Cuyahoga Valley  
Career Center



**Joan Chamberlin**  
Policy Liaison



**Robert A. Dobies, Sr.**  
City Liaison



**Joseph M. Juby**  
Student Activities  
Policy Liaison

On behalf of the Garfield Heights City Schools Board of Education, welcome to the 2019-2020 School Year. The kickoff to another year always evokes a sense of Bulldog Pride and camaraderie with our extended school family, and such has been the case for the last several weeks in our school district. The staff is dedicated to providing our students with a robust and well-rounded education. The Board of Education thanks everyone for their commitment to our schools and love of our District.

The most significant news since our last edition of Open Line has been the hiring of Mr. Chris Hanke as our new school superintendent. By a unanimous vote at a Special Meeting that took place on Tuesday, August 6, 2019, The Garfield Heights City Schools Board of Education approved the hiring of Chris Hanke as the new Superintendent of the District. The approval of Mr. Hanke as the incoming Superintendent came as a result of a thorough and exhaustive search process that led to many qualified candidates applying for the job. Mr. Hanke's longevity in the District, experience and dedication to leading the Garfield Heights City Schools into a new era ultimately prompted the Board to name him as our new leader going forward. Chris Hanke enters his 19th year in the Garfield Heights City Schools, where he has served in a variety of capacities. Most recently, Mr. Hanke was Assistant Superintendent and Director of Human Resources. Prior to that, Mr. Hanke was Principal of Garfield Heights Middle School and Principal of the Learning Center. He began his tenure with the Garfield Heights City Schools as a history teacher at the High School. Please join us in welcoming Mr. Chris Hanke as the new superintendent, who we are confident, will do a fantastic job.

With this news, the Board of Education extends its gratitude to Mr. Terry Olszewski who retired over the summer after more than 35 years in education. We wish him well in his future endeavors.

Please pay special attention to the report of District Treasurer and Business Services Director, Allen Sluka. A number of important pieces of information are included with his message to the community, including an update on the Transportation Center and his presentation regarding a newly created 5-Year Capital Maintenance Plan.

The fall season is filled with opportunities and activities to showcase the talents and skills of the students in our District. Please take a moment to visit the District website or social media to see when and where you can watch our student-athletes or young leaders demonstrate their capabilities. Thank you for your continued support of the Garfield Heights City Schools. GO BULLDOGS!

*The Garfield Heights City Schools Board of Education*



**Allen Sluka,**  
Treasurer

## Talking Finances\$

With Garfield Heights City Schools Treasurer and Business Director Allen Sluka

The Garfield Heights City Schools Treasurer/Business Services Director's Office has had several active months that have revolved around key updates and initiatives.

### State of Ohio Allocates Minimal 2.6% Revenue Increase for GHCS

The most important of which is the real impact on the District's State Basic Aide of the statewide budget bill since its passage over the summer. The Garfield Heights City Schools will unfortunately receive a nominal 2.6% increase in revenue in year one and 1.5% increase in year two over the next biennium budget. This is an unfortunate downward trend compared to 6.5% average annual change over the last five years. This nominal increase does not keep pace with the increases in Ed-Choice, Community School, and Scholarship eligibility rules that public schools will still be required to fund through the state basic aid

deductions for the charter/community/Ed-Choice school students. Until policymakers in Columbus make the commitment to more revenue for urban districts, schools like Garfield Heights will continue to experience the realities of stagnant budgets or go to the voters for more tax increases. Please stay tuned for more information regarding the state budget's impact on the Garfield Heights City Schools.

### 5-Year Capital Maintenance Plan

As a way for the District to be more thoughtful and strategic when it comes to planning capital infrastructure investments, the GHCS created a 5-Year Capital Maintenance Plan. The idea behind this plan is to proactively project the cost for facility improvements over the next 5 years and begin to either set aside funding on an incremental yearly basis or in the case of major facility upgrades or replacement, engage the community in dialogue on a funding mechanism for this purpose. This five-year plan and funding direction demonstrates a prudent approach to budgeting, and fosters a plan-oriented mindset throughout the entire District. The 5-year Capital Maintenance Plan reflects a distinct best management practice for public education financial and facility planning.

### Transportation Center Update

Those residents who have driven by the southwest corner of Garfield Boulevard and Turney Road have undoubtedly seen the progress towards constructing a new Transportation Facility. That progress came in the form of razing the two old Medical Buildings. This demolition was performed through a grant from the City and Cuyahoga County land bank. Site work is scheduled to be completed over the coming fall months, and once winter is over, a pre-fabricated building will begin construction. This Transportation Center is scheduled to be move in ready in time to start the next school year. The community should know that a creative financing lease/purchase agreement between the District and Key Bank for a 15-year period has allowed us to finance this project without using any operating funds. Thank you to everyone who has been involved in this process.

If you have any questions about our initiatives or endeavors, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time. Thank you for your continued support of the Garfield Heights City Schools.

*Allen Sluka*

# The Garfield Heights City Schools... All About Opportunities!

## Garfield Heights City Schools Thanks Kiwanis for Book Donation!

As part of the District's effort to remain collaboratively and cooperatively engaged with stakeholders in the community, 5th graders in the Garfield Heights City Schools recently met with the generous leaders of the Garfield Heights Kiwanis, who graciously donated several hundred dictionaries to students in our District. In total, nearly 300 dictionaries were donated to all 5th grade students in the GHCS, in a ceremony that took place at Elmwood Elementary School earlier this week. Longtime Kiwanis member Debra Sarnowski played an active role in bringing the donations of dictionaries to reality for the students, who were gratefully accepting of the learning tools. "The Garfield Heights City Schools thanks the long-standing partnership it has with the Kiwanis organization," said Chris Hanke, Superintendent of Schools. "They have been proud partners with our schools and embody firsthand a model type of collaboration we seek with external stakeholders in our community." On behalf of everyone in the Garfield Heights City Schools, thank you to the Kiwanis organization for their dictionary donation.



*The Garfield Heights City Schools thanks the Kiwanis for their generosity and support by donating approximately 300 dictionaries to elementary students in the District. The GHCS values the collaboration and cooperation it has with important stakeholders such as Kiwanis. Thank you!*

## Fall Family Fun Night and Superintendent Meet-and-Greet Draws Hundreds of Participants



*More than 400 people came out to attend this year's Fall Family Fun Night*

The Garfield Heights City Schools would like to thank everyone who participated in this past weekend's annual Fall Family Fun Night at Garfield Heights High School. With more than 400 participants attending to show their Bulldog Pride, this year's Fall Family Fun Night ranks as among the most popular and well attended since its beginning. Families had the opportunity to say hello to the District's new Superintendent, Chris Hanke, while enjoying hot dogs, soft drinks and bounce house fun. The City of Garfield Heights graciously provided a fire engine and other public safety vehicles for children to tour and about which they could ask questions. Superintendent Hanke delivered remarks thanking those in attendance, while Board President Gary Wolske, and Board Members Joe Juby and Joan Chamberlin drew the winners from the tickets of attendees for the raffle. A special thanks goes out to the staff of the Garfield Heights City Schools who helped to cook hotdogs, advise on the bounce houses and provide tours of the various city public safety vehicles. All in attendance had a wonderful time.

## GHCS To Promote Family and Civic Engagement

In an effort to promote an even greater partnership between the community and the schools, Garfield Heights High School alumnus, Gina Wilson, was recently hired as the District's Family and Civic Engagement Coordinator. The mission of the Family and Civic Engagement Coordinator is to collaborate and cooperate with parents and families in our community, so that they will become more engaged and informed about what is taking place in their children's academic journeys. The Garfield Heights City Schools deeply desires children to become highly motivated, contributing members of society one day, and families demonstrating such involvement help children on that path. Gina Wilson graduated from Garfield Heights High School in 2010, and always hoped to return and serve the community in which she was raised. She earned a Bachelor's Degree from Wisconsin in Psychology and a Master's Degree from Cleveland State University in Social Work. Her husband, Rob, is an alumnus of the District, a former successful student-athlete and current staff member as well. Together, they will show current students that two proud graduates are willing to come home and invest in the community and future. On a greater level, as Family and Civic Engagement Coordinator, Gina is hoping to bridge the gap between home and school. Specifically, she hopes to boost PTA involvement, create new and innovative events and activities for parents to attend and partner with outside agencies to better serve our students and parents. Mrs. Wilson would like to achieve a TRUE SENSE of family within the Garfield Heights City Schools at each grade level who will become more engaged, better informed and... ultimately help our students grow. Keep an eye out for Gina Wilson and be sure to say hello to her when you see her in the buildings!



*The District's New Family and Civic Engagement Coordinator Gina Wilson with students*





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## District Spotlight:

### District Spotlight: Amanda Sizler and Ashley Turner

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Diversity training and the education of inclusion has become a very important component in the Garfield Heights City Schools over the last several years. This edition's District Spotlight shines brightly on Amanda Sizler and Ashley Turner, two individuals who worked closely with the late Michael Douglas, the GHCS's previous Chief Diversity Officer, for the advancement of diversity discussions among our student population. Both staff members at Garfield Heights High School, Amanda serves students as an Intervention Specialist while Ashley teaches Social Studies. In dealing with students firsthand every day, Ms. Hager and Mr. Hanke identified these two individuals to become involved in the Project Mosaic, Michael Douglas' brainchild initiative that taught important lessons on diversity, valuing different ideas and having such conversations in a safe environment. Each dedicated to helping students grow and achieve, the combined efforts of Amanda and Ashley provide a powerful and positive influence among our student body at the High School.

#### Amanda Sizler: Building Organic Relationships with Students

Amanda is in her second year at the High School, but 15th year in education total. She believes in what she describes as an "organic approach" to students where developing safe relationships with the young adults helps them to truly grow. This approach allows her to go beyond traditional school data, expose students' sense of humor and help them to prepare for adulthood. Once the comfort was established, students could open up and engage in thoughtful discussion about differences among students.

#### Ashley Turner: Student-Centered Approach to Learning

Ashley Turner, who is in her 7th year in education total, knows that students at Garfield Heights High School "get life," but that they value being in a District that promotes the understanding of what makes us different. As a teacher, she promotes different ideas, thoughts and learning styles. This provides an added sense of freedom for students to share in her classes.

Together, Amanda and Ashley participated in the Project Mosaic, which was an assembly of students who engaged in discussions about 'hot topic' issues such as bullying, racism and gender-related topics. The back-and-forth discussion was intended to highlight differences but to help students feel safe as well. While the Project Mosaic took place last school year, with the untimely passing of Michael Douglas, Amanda and Ashley are hopeful that such discussions about diversity will continue at all buildings. For their efforts and participation in helping students to break down barriers and discuss tough topics regarding diversity, both were winners of this year's Michael Douglas Diversity Champion Award. A special word of gratitude is expressed to Amanda Sizler and Ashley Turner for helping to promote a challenging, but very valuable set of lessons in diversity training and inclusion education.



**Amanda Sizler and Ashley Turner won this year's Diversity Champion Award for promoting diversity and establishing safe environments for students to share their differences.**

