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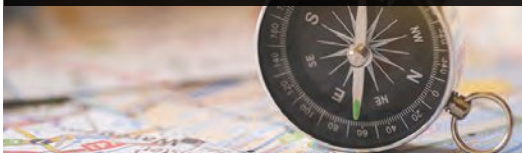
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Mission Statement

OSBA leads the way to educational excellence by serving Ohio's public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.

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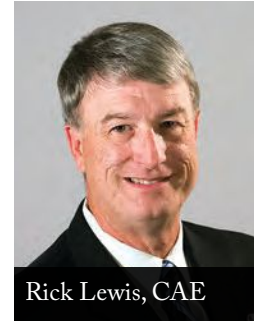
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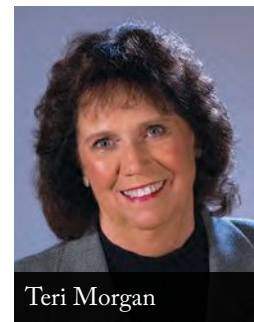
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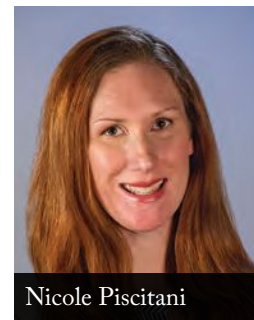
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OSBA: Your guide in challenging times

Rick Lewis, CAE, chief executive officer

As I review 2020, I have never been prouder of Ohio public education. This was a year of uncertainty, challenges, setbacks and polarity but, ultimately, success. OSBA was moved by the creativity and dedication of our 711 school boards. No matter what — you were there for Ohio's students.

There was no hesitation or indecision when school buildings closed in March due to the coronavirus pandemic. Students wanted to learn, and teachers wanted to teach. School board members and district administrators provided leadership to keep hope alive, quickly transforming operations to keep districts running and communities and families engaged.

In many communities, school boards were hailed for their creativity. In too many others, they were criticized, whether they allowed students to return to school buildings in person or transitioned to virtual learning for the fall. Regardless of your situation, recognize that both the compliments and the criticisms will fade.

When times are tough, Ohio public school boards and their diverse districts need an even stronger state organization to represent their interests. OSBA is proud to have delivered superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions to our members in a time when you needed it most.

This year, OSBA served as a source of assistance, guidance, unity and support to school board members, administrators and district staff. Some of this year's legislative efforts to help your district address the pandemic included acquiring

COVID-19 relief measures, including waiving testing requirements for the 2019-20 school year and prohibiting the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) from publishing the 2019-20 state report cards and issuing letter grades to districts; gaining flexibility for teacher and principal evaluations; obtaining discretion in the third grade reading guarantee promotion; and securing the ability for school boards to meet remotely.

Staff also worked with ODE and Gov. **Mike DeWine** to express districts' feedback and needs on school reopening plans. OSBA lobbyists participated in weekly strategic calls with Superintendent of Public Instruction **Paolo DeMaria** and met with legislators, the State Board of Education and ODE to advocate for the needs of districts during the rule-making process.

To help you navigate the worldwide crisis, OSBA implemented virtual professional development offerings, including 21 free weekly town hall meetings that covered a variety of issues pertaining to COVID-19 and its impact on schools. In addition to presentations by education leaders and association partners, the town halls featured staff legislative and legal updates. Association staff posted countless resources on the COVID-19 webpage (www.ohioschoolboards.org/coronavirus), including adding a link to every Ohio school district's reopening plan at www.ohioschoolboards.org/ohio-school-district-restart-plans. In addition, staff attorneys provided legal information and updates to districts at record levels. To make certain your district's unique requirements were addressed, the association contacted every district to

learn its needs and adapted our services, consulting with boards and their districts virtually.

All of this was done while still providing the high-quality services that you expect from your association. This year was hardly business as usual, but our service to Ohio school board members and their districts continued without interruption.

In 2020, OSBA pioneered a Mental Health and Social-Emotional Learning (MHSEL) Summit. Over 1,100 people attended this free event that provided relevant information to school board members, administrators, educators, counselors, psychologists, support staff, mental health professionals and parent leaders. Additionally, a series of MHSEL webinars took place in the spring and summer that discussed mental health issues and COVID-19.

Your legislative team represented you well at the Ohio Statehouse and on Capitol Hill. They successfully sought and received a funding adjustment for several districts that saw a lowering of valuation due to the decommissioning of coal-fired power plants. Earlier this year, staff lobbyists also helped stop initial expansion of the Educational Choice Scholarship (EdChoice) Program, which would have subjected over 1,200 buildings to vouchers.

During the Annual Business Meeting of the Delegate Assembly, a new equity plank was added to OSBA's Legislative Platform. The platform is an ongoing, evolving document that conveys to legislators, policymakers, the public and the media OSBA's positions on issues.

Our legal division responded to over 4,000 phone calls from members seeking legal information, many with questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Legal Assistance Fund provided support in cases addressing vouchers; sovereign immunity; territory transfers; and district reopening plans. Our support in these cases contributed to favorable judicial decisions that benefited public schools.

OSBA consultants continued to provide valuable services like strategic planning, board development, transportation consulting, superintendent and treasurer searches, communications programs, policy development and labor relations. We expanded our communication efforts to ensure members have the latest and most useful information at their fingertips, using the OSBA website and OSBA Update newsletter to provide members with timely information. In February, we launched the OSBA Leading the Way podcast, offering new ways to connect with members at their convenience. OSBA's flagship publication, the Journal magazine, showcased how school districts continued to lead and adapt during the pandemic.

I also want to thank our long-time education partners, the Buckeye Association of School Administrators

and Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) for their continued collaboration. Our three associations support Ohio School Plan, one of the largest and most successful alternative insurance programs in the state.

We also partner with the Ohio Schools Council to offer Power4Schools, an electricity purchasing program that has saved over \$52 million through this year. This program continues to supply electricity to districts with the lowest energy prices available.

OSBA and OASBO partnered to create Ohio SchoolComp, the largest, most stable workers' compensation pool in Ohio. Administered by CompManagement, Ohio SchoolComp consistently delivers the most reliable quotes and greatest savings. Projected savings of over \$2.8 million for the 2020 program will bring the total savings to over \$46 million. In addition, the Group Retrospective Rating program returned \$4.2 million in premium refunds to participants.

The OSBA Board of Trustees and other committees work tirelessly on your behalf. The association's officers deserve special recognition. President **Lee Schreiner, South-Western City;** President-elect **Scott E. Huddle,**

Mad River Local (Montgomery); and Immediate Past President **John W. Halkias, Plain Local (Stark),** have done an outstanding job guiding the association this year.

As we close 2020, please remember the temporary nature of today. We cannot rest on the accomplishments of this year but must recommit ourselves to becoming the best association and system of public education ever.

Begin making plans for when we come out of this pandemic. Engage your key players in helping you devise those strategies. Allow OSBA — your association — to help you in your work. You will hit the ground running and leave behind those who compete with you and are dwelling on negativity.

Celebrate the successful moments from this year, knowing you made a difference, but don't become too elated by our great triumphant moments. As long as we don't allow our successes to blind us, we will be even better prepared to face the future head on.

Thank you for everything you do every day, not just for your community but also for the 1.7 million children in Ohio's public schools. OSBA looks forward to working with you in the coming year. ■

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Reviewing free speech rights

Understanding students' free speech rights

Ralph H. Lusher III, staff attorney

The First Amendment states that Congress shall make no law “abridging the freedom of speech.” The guarantee of free speech applies to all citizens, including students, both while they are attending school or school activities and while they are off campus. However, there are some limits that apply to students’ free speech.

Free speech within the school

Political and social debates always find their way into schools, especially in today’s climate. School administrators constantly face the challenging task of balancing the constitutional rights of students with their responsibility to maintain an orderly learning environment. There is a blurry line for schools determining when the individual free speech rights of students outweigh the school’s duty to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment.

The U.S. Supreme Court has considered student speech in a number of cases. These cases form a legal framework that assists school administrators faced with similar issues. However, board counsel will be needed in many situations involving student speech.

One of the first student free speech cases heard by the Supreme Court was *West Virginia State Bd. of Edn. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943). This case involved a West Virginia regulation that required students to perform a “stiff-arm” salute, with the right hand raised and palm turned up while reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Failure to accede could have resulted in expulsion. The court held that “the action of the local authorities in compelling the flag salute and pledge transcends constitutional

limitations on their power and invades the sphere of intellect and spirit which is the purpose of the First Amendment to our Constitution to reserve from all official control.” Since this decision, many courts and school boards removed the requirement of standing during the pledge.

It is challenging for schools to determine what is disruptive or merely uncomfortable or unpleasant.

Roughly 25 years later, in the landmark *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Community School Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969), the Supreme Court famously stated, “(i)t can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” In this case, students wore black arm bands to silently protest the Vietnam War and were suspended for their actions. The court held schools cannot regulate student speech unless it materially and substantially interferes with the operations of the school or intrudes on the rights of others. In *Tinker*, the school district’s actions stemmed from a fear of possible disruption rather than any actual interference. As a result, the court concluded that the district’s suspension of the students for wearing arm bands was a violation of the student’s freedom of speech. The *Tinker* case is still the test courts use to determine a violation of free speech for students, unless it fits into another category.

The next case, *Bethel School Dist. v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 (1986), involved a student making a speech to the student assembly to nominate a fellow student for elective office. The student’s speech was full of sexual innuendos and metaphors, and the student was subsequently suspended. The Supreme Court concluded that the First Amendment did not prohibit schools from prohibiting vulgar and lewd speech since such discourse was inconsistent with the “fundamental values of public-school education.”

Another category of speech — the written word — was the subject of *Morse v. Frederick*, 551 U.S. 393 (2007). At a school-supervised event, a student held up a banner with the message “Bong Hits 4 Jesus,” and an administrator suspended the student. The Supreme Court overturned the lower court’s decision and held that school officials can prohibit students from displaying messages that promote illegal drug use. The court affirmed that the speech rights of public school students are not as extensive as those of adults.

Schools can apply these cases by reviewing policies to ensure they are not compelling a student to forcibly express themselves or limiting permissible expression. Also, schools can establish practices for administrators to analyze whether questioned student speech is political or religious in nature; will cause a material and substantial disruption at school; is lewd; or promotes illegal drugs.

Off-campus social media

The facts in the cases already examined occurred either at school or at school-

related activities. The next question is whether a school can discipline a student for speech that is off campus on social media.

As stated above, *Tinker* still is the hallmark case of student free speech rights, and it provides an answer. The court stated, “conduct by the student, *in class or out of it*, which for any reason — whether it stems from time, place or type of behavior — materially disrupts classwork or involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others is, of course, not immunized by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech.”

However, courts have struggled with the issue of whether the *Tinker* substantial disruption test applies if the speech occurs outside of the school and doesn’t involve the use of school resources or property. Many courts suggest that the regulation of such student speech is appropriate under *Tinker* if a district can show a nexus between the speech and the school or some form of disruption to the district from such speech or an actual threat. Until the Supreme Court considers and renders a decision in a case involving student speech and electronic media, providing clear guidance for districts, use caution. If your district is faced with such a situation, it is advisable to seek the assistance of counsel.

Dress codes

Another area of student expression is dress and appearance. As a result, dress and appearance codes may implicate the First Amendment. Specific disputes regarding dress codes and the board of education’s restrictions on dress — from the 1970s arguments over boys’ hair length to more recent controversies over hair color — have not reached the high court. The Supreme Court has never heard a case solely regarding public school dress codes and the possible violation of the First Amendment, although *Tinker* was indirectly about dress. As recently as 2010, the Supreme Court declined to take up a student’s challenge to a Texas school’s dress code.

An appeals court ruling said the policy, which bars nonschool-related messages on clothing, did not violate student free-speech rights.

The guidelines for dress codes must, therefore, stem from the Supreme Court cases mentioned above. Content-neutral bans on T-shirts or hats are typically upheld in the courts as long as the district provides a reason that it is important to the schools’ educational mission and isn’t meant to suppress student’s freedom of expression. However, schools can discipline students for wearing clothing with words, images or symbols that are likely to cause material and significant disruption at school or violate other students’ rights; are vulgar or lewd; or promote illegal drug use. Other than promoting illegal drugs, the other standards are not specifically defined and force schools to determine what is lewd or how significant a disruption must be to tip the scales in favor of discipline.

In 2003, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit ruled on *Barber Ex Rel. Barber v. Dearborn Pub. Schools*, 286 F.Supp.2d 847 (E.D. Mich. 2003), in which a student was sent home for wearing a T-shirt that had a picture of President **George W. Bush** with the caption “International Terrorist.” The student eventually prevailed in the case, and the judge referenced *Tinker* throughout. The judge stated, “(t)he tension between students who support and those who oppose President Bush’s decision to invade Iraq is no greater than the tension that existed during the United States’ involvement in Vietnam between supporters of the war and war protesters.” This emphasizes that schools are forced to make a quick decision on what is disruptive and in sufficiently poor taste to justify school regulation.

Conclusion

As schools grapple with the many difficult questions emerging from the current educational environment, these cases and questions become more relevant. Items in students’ homes shown during online classes; words and

images on face masks worn at school or school-related events; statements in shared virtual documents; and even comments in chat boxes could all raise questions for administrators that implicate students’ First Amendment rights. It is challenging for schools to determine what is disruptive or merely uncomfortable or unpleasant.

OSBA’s Division of Legal Services will continue to monitor cases and other developments and share information with districts. For assistance with general questions, please contact the division at (855) OSBA-LAW. As always, districts with questions on specific facts should contact their board’s legal counsel. ■

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Ensuring policies are current

Considerations for your student discipline policies

Kenna S. Haycox, senior policy consultant

As you begin planning for the 2021-22 school year, let's review some aspects of student discipline that may require significant updates to your handbooks and policies for compliance.

Title IX sexual harassment

On May 6, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education issued the long-awaited final Title IX regulations, which took effect Aug. 14, 2020. The Title IX regulations specifically define sexual harassment and establish detailed procedures for how school districts must respond to allegations of sexual harassment that fall under Title IX. Districts must follow the Title IX complaint process before imposing any disciplinary sanctions or other actions that are not supportive measures when the behavior meets the Title IX definition of sexual harassment. This requirement likely will impact a district's current procedures for handling

student discipline. Districts should ensure that all sexual harassment complaints are handled in accordance with Title IX regulations.

How does this impact your discipline procedures? If an employee receives a complaint of behavior that meets the definition of sexual harassment under Title IX, the Title IX coordinator must be contacted and the Title IX sexual harassment grievance process must be followed, if applicable, prior to imposing any discipline that cannot be imposed without resolution of the Title IX process.

Pre-K-three discipline requirements

House Bill (HB) 318, effective in 2018, restricts out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for students in grades pre-K through third unless the behavior rises to a certain level specified in state law.

Suspensions and expulsions issued

to students in grades pre-K-third are categorized as follows:

- Type 1 — A serious offense for which suspension or expulsion is required or authorized by law:
 - ◆ bringing a firearm to a school or onto any other district property.
 - ◆ bringing a firearm to an interscholastic competition, an extracurricular event or any other school program or activity that is not on the district's property.
 - ◆ bringing a knife capable of causing serious bodily injury to a school or other school property, an interscholastic competition, an extracurricular event or other program or activity sponsored by the school or in which the district is participating.
 - ◆ possessing a firearm or knife capable of serious bodily injury at a school, on district property, at an interscholastic competition,

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an extracurricular event or any other school program or activity for which the firearm or knife was initially brought onto school property by another person.

- ◆ committing an act that is a criminal offense when committed by an adult and that results in serious physical harm to persons or property while the student is at school, on other district property, at an interscholastic competition, an extracurricular event or any other school program or activity.
- ◆ making a bomb threat to a school building or to any premises at which a school activity is occurring at the time of the threat.
- Type 2 — An offense not classified as a Type 1 serious offense but for which the school determines suspension or expulsion is necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student, the student's classmates, or the staff and teachers.
- Type 3 — Any other offense not described above.

Recognizing that these forms of discipline are commonly used as a behavior management tool, the General Assembly established a gradual phase-in over the 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years. Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, all suspensions and expulsions for students in any of grades pre-K-third can only be for Type 1 or Type 2 offenses. Type 3 offenses must be at zero.

Emergency removals

State law allows for the emergency removal of a student when his or her presence poses a continuing danger to persons or property or an ongoing threat of disrupting the academic process. If either suspension or expulsion is contemplated, statutory due process procedures must be followed.

In an emergency removal, a student can be kept from class until the matter of the alleged misconduct is disposed of either

by reinstatement, suspension or expulsion. However, students in grades pre-K through third may only be removed for the remainder of the school day and must be permitted to return the following school day. The district may only proceed with a related suspension or expulsion in compliance with state law.

Some aspects of student discipline may require significant updates to your handbooks and policies for compliance.

While state law allows for this removal, when the behavior is related to a complaint of sexual harassment, the process in the Title IX regulations must be followed. When the behavior is sexual harassment, as defined by Title IX regulations, the student may be removed on an emergency basis, provided the district undertakes an individualized safety and risk analysis; determines that an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations of sexual harassment justifies removal; and provides the student with notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal.

Suspension and expulsion

State law outlines the specific process districts must go through when moving forward with a student suspension, whether in school or out of school, or expulsion. If a district completes a Title IX investigation and recommends discipline as a result, then the district should follow the applicable statutory requirements and policies for moving forward with the suspension or expulsion.

If a pre-K-three student has committed a Type 1 or 2 offense and the district is

moving forward with suspension or expulsion procedures outlined in state law for all students, there are some additional requirements. When possible, principals must consult with a mental health professional under contract with the district or school prior to suspending or expelling a student in grades pre-K through third. If needed, the principal or mental health professional also needs to assist the student's parent in locating additional mental health services.

Additional considerations

Other important areas to confirm your compliance include but are not limited to: systemwide implementation of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS); statutory requirements for in-school suspensions; the ability of students to make up classroom assignments missed due to suspensions; the inability to extend suspensions into the remaining school year; and the prohibition of exclusionary discipline solely because of unexcused absences.

Practical considerations

The following actions are recommended:

- Review student discipline policies and handbooks for consistency with your statutory requirements. Consider adding language clearly outlining the different process to be followed for Title IX sexual harassment investigations and pre-K-three requirements.
- Educate staff on the sexual harassment definition and required procedures as well the requirements specific to pre-K-three discipline.
- Review your weapons policy. A "knife" should be defined in your board policy, and it is strongly recommended that you use "capable of serious bodily injury" in the definition. OSBA's sample policy language defines a knife as "a cutting instrument having a sharp blade that is capable of causing serious bodily injury."
- Stay current on updates from your policy provider, and make sure that handbooks and district-level procedures are updated when board policy changes are adopted. ■



Board behaving badly? Rein in your meetings

Teri Morgan, senior deputy director of board and management services

Effective meetings are key to developing an excellent leadership team with a high level of trust and accountability. The board meeting is a crucial time for members to come together for honest conversation, deliberation and decision-making. Board of education meetings are vital because, by law, the board cannot take action except during a regular or special meeting. A meeting is defined as “any

prearranged discussion of the public business of the public body by a majority of its members.” But by concept, a board meeting is the time for planning, discussing, adopting policies and appraising the school district with the leadership team, consisting of the board, superintendent and treasurer.

Michael T. Adamson, a colleague from the Indiana School Boards Association, shared in his book, “Building Great School Board-Superintendent Teams: A Systematic Approach to Balancing Roles and Responsibilities” that “trust, conflict, commitment, accountability and results are essential attributes of every healthy team. They trust one another. They engage in unfiltered conflict around ideas. They commit to decisions and plans of actions. They hold one another accountable for delivering against those plans. They focus on the achievement of collective results.” All of this takes place during board meetings. How can a meeting damage trust? The following present some realistic considerations.

Consider the meeting room’s layout. It can actually hamper effective discussion among the board and administrators. The board meeting is a “meeting of the board in public,” not a public meeting. Having board members sit in a straight line facing the audience does not allow for trusting dialogue during discussions among members, particularly ones with opposing viewpoints. Using arc-shaped or V-shaped tables allows board members to talk to each other in a more natural and comfortable way and with constant eye contact.

Lack of preparation can hurt an individual board member’s reputation,

but more importantly, can set up meeting problems. The draft agenda should be prepared in advance so members have time to read and digest the items and accompanying documentation. Reading the materials and contacting the superintendent and/or treasurer with any questions or requests prior to the meeting goes a long way in building trust. The board member isn’t catching anyone by surprise during the actual meeting, but rather giving administrators time to prepare answers or even respond in advance of the meeting.

Board members also can build trust with their team by providing the superintendent and others with advance notice of items not on the agenda that members wish to discuss. Even though the agenda is the *board’s* agenda, the superintendent is much better positioned to know what items need to come before the board and when. If an item needs to be added during the meeting, the parliamentary procedure is to require a motion, second, discussion and vote. A majority is required to change items on the agenda. If the agenda is adopted, a two-thirds vote or general consent is required to change the agenda.

The public participation item on agendas also can become problematic for some boards. I once read that public participation really is “public comment.” There shouldn’t be participation or discussion *with* the board during this time. The board should listen. The board president directs each person’s comments to the appropriate staff, usually the superintendent, to address within a reasonable time frame or refers the topic for a future agenda if it falls within the board’s responsibility.



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For more information on how bargaining consultation can work for your district, contact OSBA’s legal services division at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA.

The public might need a little retraining about the purpose of and procedure for participation. It will ensure fair and objective treatment for all if a board has a public participation policy.

As OSBA Deputy Director of Legislative Services **Jennifer A.**

Hardin reminds boards about public participation:

- Make sure your policy matches your meeting practice or vice versa.
- Best practice is to offer public participation at the beginning of the meeting and again with any “hot” topics.
- Allow three minutes per person and a total of 30 minutes of public participation.
- Be sure to have a sign-in sheet, the board policy and meeting agenda at the meeting room entrance.

Board culture also is extremely important and should be a part of any orientation with new board members.

An effective board president is a calm and effective meeting manager who sets the tone for the meeting and encourages active participation from all members.

Having a step-by-step review of the agenda with new members prior to their first meeting helps when questions come up, such as when it is OK to speak, the protocol for making a motion or the process for bringing up an issue before the whole board.

Well-run meetings encourage time for good discussion or comment, breaking the rote “motion, second, vote.” Having board members sharing their thoughts publicly also helps ensure transparency. The public appreciates that each member is doing his or her homework and being thoughtful about their decisions.

The board president also can play a vital role in helping the team, the media and the public “mind the message.” With those particularly difficult decisions, such as redistricting, the board

president can be immensely helpful by summarizing the final decision and the top two or three reasons for passage or failure by the majority. Hopefully, those reasons become top of mind for board members and the lead for the local newspaper article.

Reining in meetings and making them the board’s time to shine can make a difference. Adamson states: “Truthfully, any team may encounter some temporary operational or interpersonal mistakes anytime its actions, reactions or both depart from its standard operating profile; however, these temporary departures are often self-correcting and frequently occur without any outside intervention, especially if the team has enjoyed a history of effective governance and leadership.”

Any meeting might have a challenge or two, but a solid governing board and highly effective operational administrative team can address it positively and smoothly. Make your meetings count. ■

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Welcome to the 134th General Assembly

Nicole Piscitani, lobbyist

The Nov. 3 general election set the stage for the next Ohio General Assembly, with new faces entering the Statehouse and the departures of those who've reached the term limit for holding office or lost reelection. Leadership positions and committee chairs will be selected, and bills that didn't get enacted before the Ohio Senate and Ohio House ended their sessions could reemerge in the legislative process. In addition, Republicans gained seats in the legislature, so a new process for drawing legislative districts will soon be underway.

Ohio Senate

The Ohio Senate is composed of 33 senators who serve four-year terms and are eligible to serve two consecutive terms before term limits take effect. In the November election, Republicans were able to flip one seat to increase their total seats to 25 while Democrats have eight seats. Senate Republicans will continue to hold a supermajority, also known as a veto-proof majority.

Senate leadership

Sen. President **Larry Obhof** (R-Medina) is term limited and his departure creates a new majority-party leadership team for the upcoming 134th General Assembly. The Senate Republican Caucus elected Sen. **Matt Huffman** (R-Lima) during an informal vote to lead the Senate for the next two years. Sen. Minority Leader **Kenny Yuko** (D-Richmond Heights) will again lead the Democratic Caucus.

All leadership positions will need a formal floor vote at the commencement of the next General Assembly. The remaining leadership positions are:

- President pro tempore: Sen. **Jay**

- **Hottinger** (R-Newark);
- Majority floor leader: Sen. **Kirk Schuring** (R-Canton);
- Majority whip: Sen. **Rob McColley** (R-Napoleon);
- Assistant minority leader: Sen. **Cecil Thomas** (D-Cincinnati);
- Minority whip: Sen. **Nickie Antonio** (D-Lakewood);
- Assistant minority whip: **Tina Maharath** (D-Canal Winchester).

New faces in the Senate

The Ohio Senate will welcome six new senators. Both senators and state representatives are subject to term limits but are eligible to run for election in the other chamber once their current term expires. Additionally, legislators can return to the chamber where their term expired after a four-year absence.

With education-related experience noted, the new senators are:

- District 4: Rep. **George Lang** (R-West Chester);
- District 6: Rep. **Niraj Antani** (R-Miamisburg);
- District 18: **Jerry Cirino** (R-Kirtland);
- District 22: Rep. **Mark Romanchuk** (R-Ontario);
- District 26: Rep. **Bill Reineke** (R-Tiffin);
- District 32: **Sandra O'Brien** (R-Rome), a former teacher and adjunct faculty member at Lakeland Community College.

Ohio House

With 99 seats, the Ohio House is where state representatives serve two-year terms and are eligible to serve four consecutive terms. In the November election, Republicans were able to flip

four seats to increase their total seats to 64, while Democrats were able to gain one seat to secure 35 seats. Interestingly, in the 2018 general election, Democrats were able to flip six seats and maintain control of those seats in November.

House leadership

In July, Rep. **Robert R. Cupp** (R-Lima) was elected by a formal vote to serve as House speaker following the arrest of former speaker Rep. **Larry Householder** (R-Glenford) in connection with an alleged \$60 million bribery and racketeering investigation. Cupp was reelected by the House Republican Caucus with an informal vote. House Minority Leader **Emilia Strong Sykes** (D-Akron) will again lead the House Democratic Caucus. The remaining leadership positions are:

- Speaker pro tempore: Rep. **Timothy E. Ginter** (R-Salem);
- Majority floor leader: Rep. **Bill Seitz** (R-Cincinnati);
- Assistant majority floor leader: Rep. **Rick Carfagna** (R-Genoa Township);
- Majority whip: Rep. **Don Jones** (R-Freeport);
- Assistant majority whip: Rep. **Cindy Abrams** (R-Harrison);
- Assistant minority leader: Rep. **Kristin Boggs** (D-Columbus);
- Minority whip: Rep. **Paula Hicks-Hudson** (D-Toledo);
- Assistant minority whip: Rep. **Richard Brown** (D-Canal Winchester).

New faces in the House

The Ohio House will welcome 22 new legislators. With education-related experience noted, they are:

- District 2: **Marilyn John** (R-Shelby);

- District 16: **Monique Smith** (D-Fairview Park);
- District 25: **Dontavius Jarrells** (D-Columbus);
- District 36: **Bob Young** (R-North Canton);
- District 39: **Willis Blackshear** (D-Dayton);
- District 41: **Andrea White** (R-Kettering), who served as a board member for Partners for Healthy Youth, a city-school-community collaboration and also co-founded the South Suburban Coalition, which works closely with five area high schools on alcohol and drug abuse prevention;
- District 42: **Tom Young** (R-Dayton);
- District 43: **Rodney Creech** (R-West Alexandria);
- District 52: **Jennifer Gross** (R-West Chester);
- District 53: **Thomas Hall** (R-Middletown);
- District 60: **Daniel Troy** (D-Willowick), a former state representative who has chaired the Education Subcommittee of the House Finance and Appropriations Committee and the Joint House-Senate Education Oversight Committee;
- District 63: **Mike Loychik** (R-Cortland);
- District 65: **Jean Schmidt** (R-Loveland);
- District 66: **Adam Bird** (R-Cincinnati), a former teacher and principal who also served as superintendent of **New Richmond**

- EV** for nine years;
- District 69: **Sharon Ray** (R-Wadsworth);
- District 73: **Brian Lampton** (R-Fairborn);
- District 75: **Gail Pavliga** (R-Atwater);
- District 78: **Brian Stewart** (R-Ashville);
- District 88: **Gary Click** (R-Vickery);
- District 92: **Mark Johnson** (R-Chillicothe);
- District 96: **Ron Ferguson** (R-Wintersville);
- District 99: **Sarah Fowler Arthur** (R-Rock Creek), who served on the State Board of Education in an elected position for eight years.

House and Senate committee chairs

At the beginning of every General Assembly, the House speaker and Senate president, along with their leadership teams, select chairs for the standing committees and subcommittees. With Obhof's departure, expect changes to Senate committee leaders. Huffman has created a leadership team that will help advance the Senate's legislative priorities. One thing we know for sure is that the Senate Education Committee will have a new chair due to Sen. **Peggy Lehner** (R-Kettering) reaching her term limit.

In the House, Cupp also selects a leadership team. He refrained from making major changes to the committee chairs in July. The House Primary and Secondary Education Committee will

likely see a change with Rep. **Don Jones** (R-Freeport) being selected to serve as the majority whip. While his new position doesn't prevent him from chairing a committee, those who serve in leadership positions typically do not lead committees.


Budget and other issues

The kickoff of a new General Assembly will soon be followed by the introduction of the fiscal year 2022-23 operating budget, a bill that will dominate much of the legislative schedule during the spring and early summer. As for other major pieces of legislation, the House and Senate caucuses will develop a priority list in January and February that will largely determine the legislative actions for the next two years.

The end of a map

Next year will begin the process of redrawing congressional districts, and Ohio is expected to lose a seat based on U.S. Census data. Additionally, the 132 state legislative districts also will be redrawn. Ohio will go through a new process following the passage of Issue 1, the Fair District Plan, a ballot initiative that made changes to the process of drawing the districts. Issue 1 passed in the May 2018 primary election. It requires bipartisan agreement, more transparency and limits the time the maps are in effect if there is not bipartisan support. ■

Editor's note: Information in this article was current as of Dec. 20, 2020.



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Ohio School
Boards Association

*Improving district processes*

Saving your district money through P-cards

PNC Bank

A procurement card (P-card) is similar to a credit card but with many internal controls. Its purpose is to streamline purchasing to reduce manual paperwork which, in turn, can reduce administrative costs.

School districts have implemented P-card programs to help improve cash flow, increase purchasing convenience, control travel expenses, reduce back-office tasks and time, minimize fraud and benefit from revenue sharing.

Over the past few years, P-cards have gained momentum as an opportunity to help improve processes and reduce the use of costly checks within the financial supply chain of Ohio schools.

Card program benefits

A card program can help your district:

- improve cash flow through float and revenue sharing;

- gain greater control over spending;
- increase visibility into employee purchases and supplier relationships;
- reduce bank fees as the volume of payments via Automated Clearing House, check and wire diminishes;
- decrease administrative costs resulting from processing low-value payments and improve employee satisfaction for a more efficient process.

Best practices

As you look to implement or increase your P-card program, you should:

- Get in the habit of reviewing all invoices to determine if vendors accept card payments. Be sure that you and your employees are always using cards to make payments to all vendors that accept card payments, especially for small-dollar purchases. Check with your

vendors, such as providers of technology, textbooks, food services, waste management or janitorial services, as they typically accept payments by card.

- Include card payments in strategic vendor conversations and, where possible, add language to your vendor contracts requiring the acceptance of card payments.
- Promote the benefits of card acceptance, including improvements in speed, safety and efficiency, when communicating with vendors.
- Make sure you promote transparency and accountability by establishing and enforcing internal policies, procedure guides and usage agreements.
- Take advantage of the online training and tools available to help your employees use the program and learn the expense management system.



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P-card program benefits include enhanced visibility into overall expense management and technology, allowing for additional controls over the card program. These types of controls can help mitigate misuse or fraud. Districts using PNC P-cards also are supported by the Visa network, which deploys proactive strategies for monitoring and tracking purchases.

PNC's EasyProcure program started in 2005 and was originally intended to foster collaboration among Pennsylvania school districts. It became available to Ohio school districts in 2010 through the efforts of OSBA, the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and the Ohio Association of School Business Officials, and has returned, on average, over \$3,000 to participating districts each year.

To improve procurement card management, the EasyProcure program enables you to customize card activities. You can:

- Set card transaction and monthly spend limits in line with employee spending authority to help manage appropriate card use. Dollar limits can be increased temporarily in real time and automatically decreased based on established rules.
- Establish control over the type of transaction by implementing merchant category codes based on expected purchasing needs. Unblock any restrictions that could prevent employees from making the business purchases required to perform their roles.
- Provide online access to statements for spend management. This also can serve as an audit trail.
- Emboss the Federal Tax Identification Number and school logo on cards to help differentiate them from personal employee credit cards.
- Review all controls periodically to confirm they continue to meet your objectives.
- Actively measure card use and the total benefit to your organization from your card program.

- Set up fraud monitoring alerts for card users.

Vendors who accept Visa credit cards as a means of payment typically accept P-cards. By implementing a process to match existing vendors against a PNC and Visa database, you can determine which vendors accept procurement cards. PNC also can provide a vendor acceptance analysis to help you determine the potential benefits of the EasyProcure program for your school district.

PNC has a team devoted to working exclusively with public finance clients, including school districts. It can provide references, support, training and procedure documents.

With effective internal controls and these simple tips, you can position your organization to get the maximum benefit from a P-card program. For more information, contact ohioeasyprocure@pnc.com or visit www.ohioschoolboards.org/pnc-financial-services. ■



From planning to action

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OEPI offers districts premier school-funding expertise

Nicole Piscitani, lobbyist

Trying to understand Ohio's school-funding system and the various local, state and federal tax policies can be intimidating. The system is loaded with terminology like per-pupil funding, gain caps, the guarantee, community school deductions, set-asides, local tax effort, temporary transitional aid, rollbacks, homestead exemptions, state share index, full-time equivalency, EMIS and HB 920 tax reduction factors. Then include the constant changes to both the funding and tax structures and how they interact with each other, and it is overwhelming to say the least.

That complexity is further muddled by frequent state education and tax policy changes. With so many moving parts, even financial experts sometimes struggle to stay current with the funding system. Fortunately, there's one source of expertise Ohio school districts can count on to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information: the Ohio Education Policy Institute (OEPI).

Formed in 1997, OEPI is a not-for-profit research arm of the Ohio education community. The institute is a highly respected resource for education stakeholders and helps

address Ohio school districts' needs by conducting in-depth research and analysis of the complex interaction of school funding and Ohio tax policy. This enables OEPI to share continuously updated information on education policy, tax policy and other issues affecting public education.

OEPI also plays an influential role during the state budget process by providing policymakers and legislators with credible and objective information on how decisions made in Columbus will impact local school districts. In short, the institute delivers the in-depth research and technical analysis upon which the development of sound public policy depends. OEPI is considered the premier school-funding and educational public policy resource in Ohio.

The institute's work includes:

- Examining the extent to which the school-funding formula distributes state funds adequately and equitably. Every new school-funding formula may affect districts differently.
- Analyzing expenditure patterns across Ohio's school districts, including the expenditure-per-equivalent-pupil measure computed by the Ohio Department of Education.
- Conducting research on the achievement disparity between students who are economically disadvantaged and their wealthier counterparts that continues to plague districts around the state.
- Studying the changing composition of the local tax base, including the shift over time from business to residential taxpayers, and recent changes in the agricultural component of the tax base.
- Examining ongoing efforts to undermine school districts' local tax base, such as the continued phase out of public utility and business tangible personal property tax replacement payments, that provide challenges for those districts most reliant on the lost tax base.

OEPI consultant Dr. **Howard Fleeter** shares the results of this research through a series of comprehensive and data-driven reports, newsletters and testimony before the Ohio



The Ohio Education Policy Institute provides school districts and policymakers with accurate and up-to-date information on school-funding issues and local, state and federal tax policies.

General Assembly. Fleeter, one of the top school-funding experts in the state, also regularly consults with legislative and education policy leaders.

Recent OEPI reports include:

- an analysis of House Bill 305, the Cupp-Patterson school-funding proposal;
- a study examining how Ohio's school-funding system has fared since the landmark *DeRolph* case was decided by the Ohio Supreme Court in 1997;
- a report finding that economically disadvantaged students continued to perform at lower levels than noneconomically disadvantaged students on all measures.

OEPI is funded by dues from members, ranging from school districts to statewide education organizations. These funds provide the resources OEPI needs to conduct research, analyze data and provide resources for solutions to state policy issues.

OEPI benefits its members by publishing studies, articles and reports for use by school districts, the media and the public. Another major benefit of OEPI is its ability to

respond quickly to legislative proposals and comprehensively evaluate the long-term effects of existing law.

OEPI membership is open to any school district or organization. Members are provided quarterly newsletters, briefings and special case studies on tax issues and school funding in Ohio.

OEPI provides policymakers and legislators with credible and objective information on how decisions made in Columbus will impact local school districts.

For details on how to join OEPI and its dues schedule, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/60470>.

For more information, contact OSBA Deputy Director of Legislative Services **Will Schwartz**, OEPI treasurer, at (614) 540-4000 or wschwartz@ohioschoolboards.org. ■



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Thank those who are ‘building the future of public education’

Angela Penquite, managing editor

Every January, school districts across Ohio are invited to recognize the dedicated work of their school board members during School Board Recognition Month. This annual celebration is the time to focus on the crucial role school board members play in their communities and schools.

Although showing appreciation for your school board is a year-round process, taking advantage of the designated School Board Recognition Month in January ensures that these important people receive the thanks they deserve. The theme for the 2021 celebrations — Building the future of public education — is the core goal of all who serve as members of their board of education.

“Nearly 3,500 school board members across the state are building the future of public education for Ohio’s 1.7 million schoolchildren,” said OSBA Chief Executive Officer **Rick Lewis**. “Through their guidance, Ohio public

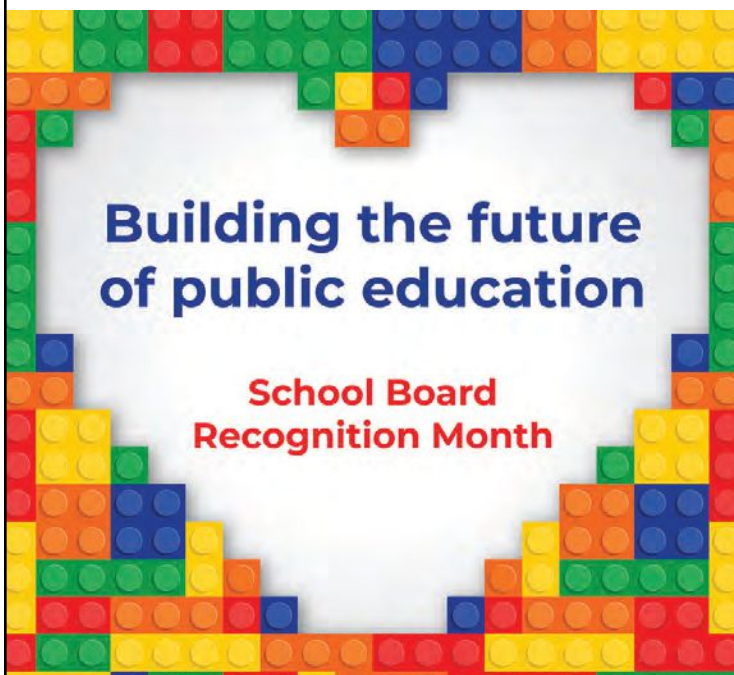
schools are helping all students prepare for successful futures. The leadership of school board members at the local, state and national levels is creating a strong system of public education that will benefit Ohio and its citizens for years to come.”

Public school board members are dedicated individuals who are elected to represent their communities’ educational values. The beauty of public education is that its opportunities are open to everyone, and it’s up to those who lead the district to ensure that all students are given everything they need to achieve and succeed. Among those district leaders, school board members stand out. Putting in long hours, these dedicated public servants strive day in and day out to preserve the dream of public education.

Across the state, recognition month activities range from acknowledgements on school marquees and in district newsletters to videos created by students and customized cards thanking board members for their service. Gov. **Mike DeWine** issued a proclamation recognizing January as School Board Recognition Month. Chambers of commerce, local governments and other organizations often pass resolutions honoring school boards and their members, and many newspapers run editorials praising these dedicated community servants.

The Ohio School Boards Association has created a resource kit to help districts recognize their local school board members. The kit, centered on the 2021 theme, has ideas for honoring board members and letting the community know of their many contributions. The kit includes customizable social media graphics and messaging, artwork, sample editorials and more. You can view the governor’s proclamation and access the kit, including sample district activities, at www.ohioschoolboards.org/sbrm.

Please feel free to use all the items in the resource kit or modify them to create your own way to honor the wonderful things school board members do for your district.



Each district will receive a large poster and personalized certificates for its board members to use at recognition events. During the month of January, use #SchoolBoardMonth on Twitter and Instagram and follow OSBA on social media to see how other districts are celebrating.

“The leadership of school board members ... is creating a strong system of public education that will benefit Ohio and its citizens for years to come.”

— Rick Lewis


Following their January celebrations, districts are asked to submit articles, photos and videos of their events to OSBA. A summary of district recognitions will be included in the April issue of the Journal and on the OSBA website. Recaps of your district celebrations can be submitted at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/84140>. The deadline is Feb. 10. For more information or questions, please contact the author at apenquite@ohioschoolboards.org. ■

Share how you honor your board members during School Board Recognition Month

Recognize your district’s school board members by submitting articles and photos to OSBA that highlight the 2021 School Board Recognition Month theme: Building the future of public education. Send us photos and videos of your district’s board appreciation activities, and your submissions will be featured in the association’s Journal magazine and on its website.

OSBA has created a resource kit with social media graphics, news releases and other tips to help you thank your board of education. The kit is available at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/52515>.

OSBA also will send every district a large poster and personalized recognition certificates to present its board members. After your celebrations, submit articles and high-resolution photos online at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/84140>. You also can send them to Angela Penquite at apenquite@ohioschoolboards.org or 8050 N. High St., Suite 100, Columbus, OH 43235. The deadline for submissions is Feb. 10.



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Nelson Mandela

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Delegates pass equity resolution, pick president-elect

Angela Penquite, managing editor

Although the 2020 OSBA Delegate Assembly looked different than in previous years, more than 300 delegates participated in the meeting, where they approved amendments to the OSBA Legislative Platform and selected the association's next president-elect.

The Annual Business Meeting of the OSBA Delegate Assembly was conducted prior to the OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show. The meeting was held virtually on Oct. 29 because of limits mandated due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Although the meeting was held in a new format, the business of the Delegate Assembly, which is composed of representatives from Ohio public school boards, was conducted successfully. Each delegate was issued a user-specific link that allowed him or her into the meeting. In addition, the meeting was livestreamed on Facebook to allow those who weren't their districts' delegates to view the proceedings. A recording of the meeting is available at <http://conference.ohioschoolboards.org/delegates>.

The Delegate Assembly sets the association's policies and



Heard

endorses the OSBA Legislative Platform. The platform serves as the association's ideals and lets legislators, policymakers, the media and others know where OSBA stands on the issues impacting public education.

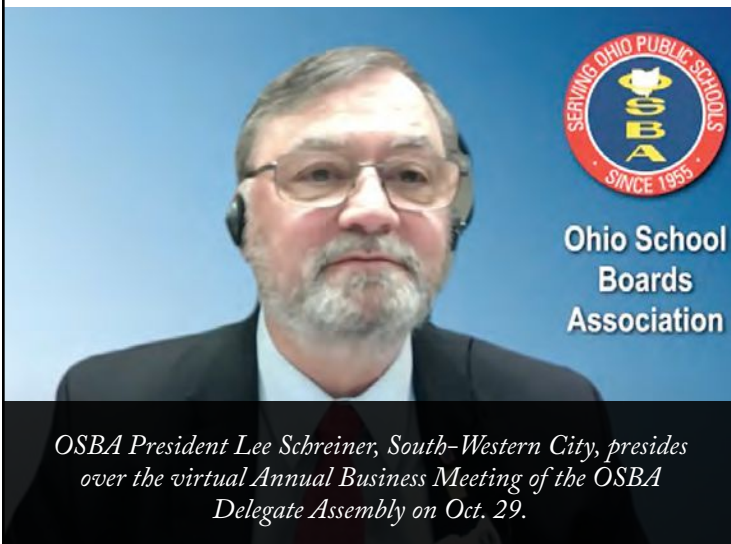
OSBA President **Lee Schreiner, South-Western City**, presided over the meeting, which featured an address from OSBA Chief Executive Officer **Rick Lewis**. The assembly also heard reports from the Credentials, Rules, Nominating and Legislative Platform committees.

Delegates elected **Robert M. Heard Sr., Cleveland Municipal**, as 2021 president-elect. He will become president in 2022 following his term as president-elect. His duties during that term will include serving on OSBA's Board of Trustees and Executive Committee and chairing the Legislative Platform Committee and Federal Relations Network.

"Thank you to the nominating committee for the opportunity to serve this association," Heard said before thanking his wife, **Gennorris**, for her support. "I want to thank the members of the Delegate Assembly for the support and confidence in your vote. I'm looking forward to the work we have to do through this pandemic."

"After this pandemic, we will be different educators, a different association and different individuals. We have an opportunity to transform all of these things as we move through this pandemic."

A board member for 15 years, Heard currently serves as his board's vice president, a role he has held since 2017. He also served as board president from 2007-09. The retired claims investigator is the OSBA Northeast Region president and represents Ohio in the National School Boards Association Delegate Assembly.



OSBA President Lee Schreiner, South-Western City, presides over the virtual Annual Business Meeting of the OSBA Delegate Assembly on Oct. 29.

He is in his 13th year on the OSBA Board of Trustees and serves on the association's Executive Committee, Urban Network, Diversity and Equity Committee and Legislative Platform Committee, among others.

Turning their attention to the platform, delegates added a new plank to the Students and learning section around racism and equity, ensuring school boards have the tools and resources they need to provide students of all backgrounds and abilities with a high-quality education. OSBA believes it is essential that we create an inclusive environment that ensures students have a future that allows all students to be successful, no matter their race, ethnicity or socioeconomic background.

In other action, delegates approved amendments supporting legislation that:

- Ensures the graduation rate as computed by the Ohio Department of Education does not penalize districts for allowing students with disabilities additional time to complete graduation requirements as stated in federal requirements.
- Requires all private, nonpublic schools receiving public tax money to be held to the same accountability standards governing Ohio's public schools, including licensure requirements.
- Requires all private, nonpublic schools receiving tax money to be subject to the same financial reporting, audit requirements and sunshine laws as Ohio's public schools.

The Delegate Assembly also approved amending the phrase "being an effective board member" in the Board member training plank in the School governance section to "for board members to be effective." The plank addresses training for elected school board members.

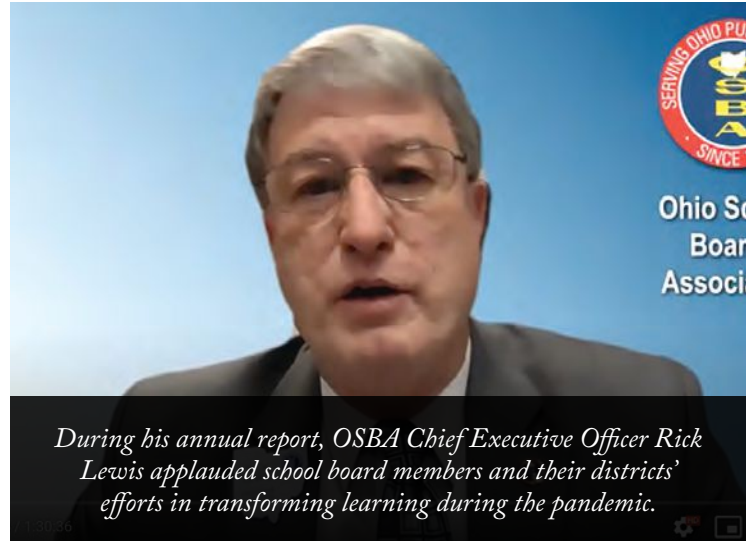
In his annual report to the assembly, Lewis applauded school board members and their districts for their creativity and dedication to serving the students in their schools, whether virtually, in a hybrid learning model or in the classroom each day.

"You provided leadership to keep hope alive," he said. "You quickly transformed operations to keep districts running and keep communities engaged."

OSBA is honored to have aided districts, serving as a source of assistance, guidance, unity and support, Lewis said.

As we move forward, he reminded board members that we must not rest on the accomplishments of this year.

"Begin making plans for when we come out of this pandemic. Engage your key players in helping you devise those strategies. Allow OSBA to help you in your work.



You will hit the ground running and leave behind those who compete with you and are dwelling on negativity.

"In the same way, don't become too elated by our great, triumphant moments. Briefly celebrate those successful times, because you made a difference. But as long as we don't allow our successes to blind us, we'll be even better prepared to face the future head on.

"Thank you for everything you do each and every day, not just for your community, but collectively for the 1.7 million children in Ohio's public schools."

The OSBA 2021 Legislative Platform will be distributed to all OSBA members in January and available on the OSBA website at www.ohioschoolboards.org/legislative-platform. For more information on the platform, contact the OSBA legislative services division at (614) 540-4000. ■



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10 ways school boards can champion racial equity



To successfully educate all students who attend their schools, it is essential that school board members focus their work on racial equity in schools and identify all forms of racial inequity.

Pat Savage-Williams

In the United States, virtually all schools from preschool through higher education, have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For many of us, since mid-March 2020, school buildings have not routinely been open. While we miss the in-person contact with students and staff, we have all pivoted to some form of virtual instruction or remote learning. This has impacted how schools function and has required massive adjustments in operation systems. Disparities in the educational system have always been in place but have become dreadfully evident during this pandemic.

What's more, while most of us learned about the COVID-19

pandemic several months ago, many of us have been living with the pandemic of racism for all of our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the disparities that we always knew were present. As a result, many school boards are looking to increase their effectiveness in disrupting the racial disparities that have been in place in their district and their communities.

This article, originally printed in the March/April 2018 issue of the Illinois School Board Journal, provides school boards with actionable possibilities to address racial inequities in their districts.

School board members are expected to understand board structure, board functioning and the board's role. They are responsible for approving policy decisions that affect the educational environment in many ways. These decisions include how students learn; how students are taught; how learning is measured; how teachers are supported with professional development; how funds are allocated based on district priorities; and how effectively the community at large is engaged around student learning. If we consider these roles using an equity lens, we quickly understand that unless board members are “on board” with the implementation of racial equity within their school district, there are many opportunities for failure.

All students should have equal access to a high-quality education. As long as race, class and ethnicity continue to be strong predictors of student achievement, college success and successful life experiences, school board members must work within their school systems to identify barriers and obstacles to opportunity, interrupt their negative impact and eliminate persistent disparities in student outcomes. When we look at racial achievement data in our nation, we see disparities in education pervasively across all areas. We must never make excuses for those disparities in our schools or lower our expectations for any students. Our purpose is to successfully educate all the students who attend our schools — all the

children in our community — and implement improvements to address racial disparities. It is essential that we, as school board members, focus our work on racial equity in schools and identify all forms of racial inequity for two reasons:

- to increase awareness of systemic barriers that disadvantage students of color;
- to encourage and support educators as they seek to adapt instructional and leadership practices to respond more effectively to the needs and aspirations of all the children they serve.

Many school districts and communities across our state and in the country are experiencing a movement to raise awareness of equity issues, with a particular emphasis on racial equity. The long-term impact of race and racism on student achievement, how instruction is delivered, discipline and resource allocation, among other topics, is discussed and debated at many different levels.

Getting school boards to commit to implementing racial equity work within a district requires more than finding people with assumed good hearts to serve on the board. Most school board members want to provide opportunities for students and community members. However, securing a real impact on student achievement requires skills, courage, strength and determination. Moving the equity work from theory to



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practice at the board level means that school board members must be willing to craft policies that encompass equity and empower the district to undertake the work of racial equity.

Here are 10 ways school board members can move the district towards racial equity.

1. The school board must have a strong commitment to racial equity.

Members of the school board must be willing to commit to creating a school culture that embraces and implements racial equity practices, with board members holding themselves accountable to progress towards equity. A key example is Evanston Township High School (ETHS) in Illinois. In 2010, ETHS dramatically changed its curriculum for incoming freshman-year students. ETHS de-tracked freshman humanities classes (English and history) and biology. The goal of this dramatic change was to remove barriers that historically caused the under-representation of students of color in honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes. The district believed that students who have access to and are successful in highly rigorous courses have greater opportunities to be accepted to and successful in colleges and universities. Moreover, they will have a greater likelihood of successful life experiences in general. Because there was so much dialogue regarding these changes, the school board's public commitment empowered the superintendent to move forward. In the last five years, there has been a 61% increase in the number of African American students taking AP courses, with 91% of them earning a 3 or higher on the AP exams. There has been a 48% increase in the number of Latinx students taking AP courses, with 51% earning a 3 or higher on AP exams. Without the clear commitment of the school board, the superintendent will be unable to make large-scale, systemic changes that will

impact the district. The board will need to be solid in its commitment to the importance of racial equity work and endorse the efforts of the superintendent to move forward.

2. Adopt an equity statement.

The equity statement will serve as a guidepost for the equity work of the district and provide the framework to focus on racial equity at every level. This statement is meant to guide the equity work and is not an actual policy. Samples of the statements ETHS has developed can be found at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/48209>.

3. Know your district demographics.

School board members should know the racial demographics of the district — both staff and students. It is necessary for the board to have a level of understanding about the intersection of race and education to make decisions about important districtwide equity initiatives in order to approve the expenditures for the large-scale changes.

Data must be disaggregated by race. School board members should understand the community and relevant demographic data as well, including housing patterns and the history of these housing patterns. They should be able to discern where most people of color live in the community and what schools students of color attend. Data can help school board members discuss and ask questions about achievement patterns: which student groups participate in various programs; the racial makeup of classes; who is in special education; who participates in extracurricular activities and clubs; attendance patterns; graduation rates; and which students are being disciplined most and why.

Identify trends that run through the school district and



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community. Be aware of classes and activities that tend to be comprised of racially homogeneous students. At this level, try to avoid explaining or excusing why you believe these disparities exist. There are many theories and opinions that you will review, debate and consider. What truly matters is the board having the determination to address the disparities. Consequently, it is important to have a clear understanding of your district and the breakdown of the experiences of racial groups in your community.

4. School board members must be willing to engage in their own personal journey to expand their knowledge and understanding of issues of race.

The first critical step of this journey is expanding your racial consciousness. Unconscious biases influence institutional and structural racism and impact student learning in school systems. As school board members become aware of their own individual biases, they will reflect upon their personal life experiences. This will equip them to determine how these experiences have shaped those biases and how they have affected interactions with others. They will develop better ability to weigh and consider the perspectives of others. Be ready to share your perspectives and listen thoughtfully and responsibly to colleagues and community members. Engage in formal trainings, as a group and individually, to provide you with the opportunity to undertake your personal journey

and give you a context and language to engage in courageous conversations about race. These board trainings should be done with facilitator-led discussions to debrief and follow up. School board members will be encouraged to challenge the internal and external systems — that have been in place for decades in the district and in the community — that maintain the disparities between students of color and white students. The trainings develop the capacity to systematically change and challenge insensitive policies that serve to impede the success of students of color. It is essential that school board members take the time to engage in ongoing training and courageous conversations about race to deepen their understanding of how the district's governing body can create a more welcoming and culturally conscious school district.

In addition, consider a book study or explore resources to help further the school board's learning about racial impact. As a beginning, I would suggest "What It Means to be White" or "White Fragility" by **Robin DiAngelo** or "How to Be an Antiracist" by **Ibram X. Kendi**. Beyond these books, a list of suggested additional resources can be found at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/78250>.

There are many resources available as this is not an exhaustive list. It is essential to make a point to review relevant literature on institutional racism and class bias in public schools.



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In addition, attend lectures and find articles that are written about your community, various cultures and topics around equity to read as a board and discuss at board meetings. It is important for the staff and community to see the board engage in this learning process.

5. Be able to initiate and create structural changes that challenge the status quo and support equity for all.

Look at the areas of disparities within your district with the goal of identifying the structures that hold them together. Finding these disparities will lead you to determine the structures that support these disparities.

Because you are considering the history of the district and community, you may be learning about the long trends and decades of patterns set. In addition, some of these patterns have been in place for a long time; therefore, it is difficult for many to see them as problematic. Tradition and customs are often named as “reasons” for patterns that usually support racial inequities.

In collaboration with the superintendent and within your role as a school board member, dream and create a different narrative, a counter-narrative with different outcomes. For example, if your district is separating students by “ability level” in classes, look at the traditions and the outcomes of this. Challenge the policies and practices that maintain and uphold this. Look at where students are separated by race and talk to your superintendent and board colleagues about the impact and outcome of these separations. Consider how to work backward to dismantle the structures that hold this together.

6. As a board, commit to developing goals and policies with a strong equity lens, and identify and dismantle the policies that support the disparities.

Because every student in your district deserves the right to excel, be compelled to ensure that all students have an opportunity to achieve. As school board members, we must ensure that students are on track to graduate and attend college and/or pursue successful careers. This accountability to all learners means that we promote high academic standards and outcomes for all, embracing and accommodating differing characteristics of the students, always having high expectations for all students, not just for some. Thus, an equitable education that will increase each student’s academic and functional trajectory to realize college/career readiness and independence should be included in the goals. Striving to eliminate the predictability of academic achievement based upon race should be embedded within the mission, goals and vision of the district.

7. Fiscal accountability: Change the school budget options to prevent disparities.

Every district is facing challenges and threats that could impact its financial stability. School board members should partner with the superintendent and collaborate with the chief financial officer to ensure that equitable resources are allotted for all students. Be certain that all funding, staffing,

materials, equipment, facilities, space, school trips and all other resources are carefully established with an equity-based lens. Highly qualified staff and facilities — including learning environments, technology and instructional support — should be dispersed with racial equity considerations. The distribution of resources in an equitable and fair manner ensures that all learners have equal opportunity to achieve high academic standards. Equitable allocation of resources is paramount to equity in a school district.

“Ethics and equity and the principles of justice do not change with the calendar.”

— D.H. Lawrence

8. Be data informed.

Require the superintendent to develop inclusion practices and methods to measure, report, interpret and analyze data regularly for the purpose of improvement and transparency. Examine data on student academic performance; discipline; attendance; dropout and graduation rates; involvement in extracurricular activities; special education classification; and access to student services. Identify areas of inequity in student success and participation, disaggregating data by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, disability and English language proficiency. Develop statistical measures to assess equity in these areas.

Remember, the patterns established have been in place for decades if not hundreds of years. It is unlikely that disparities will disappear within a few years. Recognize and understand the intersection of race, socioeconomics, mobility, gender and sexual orientation/identity through district data. Determine how you will gain evidence of success, and be willing to make changes or tweaks if the data indicates the need to do so.

9. Develop partnerships and allies to achieve equity.

Communicate clearly throughout the community the district’s strategies and efforts to promote equity, diversity and a safe environment. Acknowledge challenges and problems where they exist within the district and the history behind the patterns of disparities. Elicit community support for racial equity. Celebrate successes and accomplishments of all students and staff, particularly those who don’t often get the spotlight. Find a way to focus specifically on programs for parents and guardians of children who are struggling in school or who are experiencing lower rates of success and participation in school. Reach out to parents who do not typically come to school or speak at meetings. Ask parents how they feel most comfortable connecting with your school and be willing to make changes to meet their needs. It could be that joining the PTA, for example, does not work for all parents. Identify what does work for them. Work with staff to make sure these

parents feel they are welcome in school and see the school as working on behalf of their students' best interests.

Promote parent involvement as the cornerstone of students' success in all facets of school life. Develop allies by partnering with community organizations such as local universities, faith-based institutions and city government to promote racial equity in the district. Invite members of these groups to the school for training and other professional development activities to model this work, and encourage other agencies and organizations to implement similar goals and strategies in their organizations.

10. Expect opposition.

Change is difficult and not always welcomed by everyone. Many will engage in vocal discussions and conversations about racial disparities, but proposals for structural and policy changes towards dismantling what has been in place for decades are not often met with universal approval. This can divide a community as there is significant controversy surrounding racial equity work. This does not help the equity-centered school board members or superintendents gain confidence. Board members are elected officials and members of the community. The fact that this controversy is almost exclusively generated by white parents, educators, policymakers and other community stakeholders, most of

whom have never personally engaged in racial equity training, presents another significant challenge. While it is important to continue engaging with them as community members, employ careful and thoughtful responses and strategies. Listening to their concerns, providing opportunities to share and hear other perspectives and working to incorporate their thoughts into the plan may transform these critics into supporters.

Most importantly, do not lose your focus or your resolve to do what is right for all students. Every student deserves to have access to the best opportunities and the best education we can provide in our schools. When our schools are lacking equity, we are obligated to address inequities or we are failing to do our jobs properly. Our students are relying on us to ensure equity for them in our schools. That is the purpose of public education. ■

About the author: Pat Savage-Williams is the president of the Evanston THSD 202 Board of Education. She also is the special education coordinator, SEED facilitator, equity liaison and PEG affiliate at New Trier THSD 203 in Illinois.

Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the March/April 2018 issue of the Illinois School Board Journal. It was updated by the author in July 2020 and reprinted with permission of Pat Savage-Williams and the Illinois Association of School Boards.

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Rocky River City advances DEIJ educational initiatives

Dr. Michael G. Shoaf, Elizabeth Anderson, Kei Graves, Sam Gifford and Greg Murphy

The **Rocky River City** School District (RRCSD) has embarked on a process to embed diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ) programs into student instruction and staff professional development to prepare students for an ever-changing global society.

The district's long-standing partnership with the Diversity Center of Northeast Ohio (DCNEO) has led to DEIJ educational opportunities for secondary students and staff. This important partnership was initiated in 2013 by Assistant Superintendent **Elizabeth Anderson** and Superintendent Dr. **Michael G. Shoaf** as a result of their collaboration with DCNEO at a prior district.

RRCSD's DEIJ planning, instruction and activities have expanded since DCNEO was introduced to the district in 2013. Specifically, the partnership was enhanced for the 2020-21 school year to include primary students as well as the addition of a DEIJ leader.

"Strategic leadership for the current and desired DEIJ programs was needed," said Shoaf. "Throughout the 2019-20 school year, and commencing August 2020, RRCSD made meaningful plans to identify a DEIJ leader who would implement educational opportunities for pre-K-12 students and all staff."

RRCSD's DEIJ leader is **Kei Graves**, director of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion programs for school and youth at DCNEO. Graves shares dual responsibilities as part of the administrative team and instructional staff while providing program direction, planning and implementation strategies for DEIJ initiatives throughout RRCSD.

"With 2,600 students across five schools in grades pre-K-12, the efforts of diversity and inclusion education will focus on ways to continue to create an inclusive environment for all students and help prepare students for an ever-changing global society," said Shoaf.

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Identifying a DEIJ leader

The district's partnership with DCNEO provides it with access to skilled experts within the DEIJ field, each of whom specialize in working with different age ranges around these topics. As a convener of these experts, Graves is responsible for overseeing the district's DEIJ efforts. He works closely with administration, school leaders and educators to ensure that all parties' needs are met, in service of the learning community.

"This leadership position will provide direction for DEIJ educational opportunities, foster employment and outreach programs, and explore communication and feedback opportunities," said Shoaf. "Additionally, Kei will lead RRCSD in writing a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) statement."

Creating the district's DEI statement

A DEI statement is an organization's commitment to fostering diversity, equity and inclusion. This statement details the importance of DEIJ to the work of education for all stakeholders, including students, employees and community members. Further, it outlines the school's values related to understanding and learning about DEI. Often, these statements will include specific goals, tasks or areas of focus for the institution.

The district is taking a grassroots approach to developing and implementing the DEI statement. Employees have volunteered to participate in Visioning Committees and are leaders within their respective buildings for this initiative. In September 2020, all employees were invited to participate in the statement's development by submitting

their thoughts on the words, statements, values and/or ideals that the districtwide statement should embody.

From that point forward, the statements will be further refined at the grade and departmental levels. Teams will meet to discuss the feedback provided by their colleagues and create a more finalized version to put forward to the building's Visioning Committee.

"Visioning Committees at each school will use the feedback from the grade and department teams to craft a building-level statement," said Anderson. "These are further refined versions for consideration at the district level."

The process of developing a DEI statement for the district continues to be an ongoing process:

- A majority of areas at each school building have completed their grade- or department-level statements.
- These statements will be refined at the building level by the building Visioning Committees with the goal of having building-level statements completed by the end of 2020.
- At the start of the 2021 calendar year, we will begin to draft a district DEI statement. At that time, we will invite students to share their thoughts and feedback and engage parents and guardians in the process.
- The goal is to have a final version of the DEI statement completed and ready to share with the board of education by spring 2021.

Including DEIJ in instruction and supporting staff

DEIJ should be infused throughout every layer of education. Within instructional materials, that can look



like having a diverse representation of people, places and cultures in reading materials, assignments and supplemental materials. Discussion of various groups, such as people of color, LGBTQ or people with disabilities, should be included throughout the year and not only during specific celebration or awareness months. Instead, the addition of these groups should be organic, much like it is in the real world.

“It is important to center discussions not just on traumatic events related to identity groups, such as the Trail of Tears, when learning about Indigenous Americans,” said Graves. “These elements are important to understanding (the) historical and modern challenges these groups face. It is just as crucial, however, to center on stories of joy, innovation, creativity and brilliance for these groups.”

Employees at all levels of the district have expressed their support and excitement for having the DEIJ leader available to support them. Survey responses have indicated areas where educators would like more support in growing their awareness, resources and classroom materials on these subjects. Topics related to how to talk about race in the classroom, how to teach pronouns in a way that does not promote gender stereotypes and more have been identified as areas where Graves can provide support and expertise.

Past staff professional development sessions have included:

- Unconscious Bias and Micro Messages;
- SAGA (Sexuality and Gender Acceptance);
- Socioeconomics and Learning;
- Building Relationships and Creating Inclusive Environments.

Diversity programs for secondary students have focused on identified areas for growth and improvement. These include a selection of the DCNEO’s YouLEAD series. The YouLEAD program promotes understanding, respect and inclusion through facilitated conversations, simulations and hands-on activities.

Since 2013, student sessions have included:

- Diversity 101
- Problem Solving and Teamwork
- Anti-bullying
- Race and Ethnicity
- Socioeconomics
- Student Leadership/Ally Behavior
- Student Facilitation Training
- #Rethink
- #RethinkLabels

While COVID-19 has produced some challenges, a goal for spring of the 2020-21 school year is to also provide age-appropriate programming opportunities for our K-five students through DCNEO’s YouLEAD Junior.

Next steps

This meaningful collaboration will embed DEIJ initiatives throughout the school district and will be advanced by our students and staff in future endeavors. We will seek input and evaluate our DEI initiatives by implementing:

- surveys for staff, students and parents and guardians to help in developing a DEI statement for the district;
- building DEI committees to monitor and advance DEIJ needs and initiatives at the building level;
- updates on DEI initiatives shared in future monthly newsletters, weekly communications, podcasts and “state of the schools” addresses;
- town halls and coffee chats to engage community conversations on DEI topics.
- a webpage within the district’s website (www.rrcs.org) dedicated to the RRCSD partnership with DCNEO, highlighting how we are working together to further advance our mission, which includes the DEI statement.

Through our partnership with DCNEO, the district is committed to working with all students and staff toward a deeper understanding of diverse views and perspectives. This aligns with RRCSD’s mission of providing a caring environment and exceptional opportunities, resulting in successful students who are globally competitive.

If you are interested in implementing a DEIJ leader within your district, please feel free to reach out to the authors at (440) 356-6000 and DCNEO (www.diversitycenterneo.org) to learn more. ■

About the authors:

Dr. Michael G. Shoaf, superintendent at Rocky River City, has 28 years of experience in education and is a member of the university graduate faculty at Cleveland State University.

Elizabeth Anderson, assistant superintendent at Rocky River City, has 25 years of experience in education and is an adjunct professor at Cleveland State University.

Kei Graves is Rocky River City’s DEIJ leader and a senior program associate for school and youth at DCNEO. He is a doctoral candidate at Union Institute & University and has eight years of experience in education.

Sam Gifford, executive director of human resources and business manager at Rocky River City, has 22 years of experience in education and oversees human resources, facilities, transportation and food service operations for the district.

Greg Murphy, communication specialist at Rocky River City, has 20 years of experience in the communications field in education.

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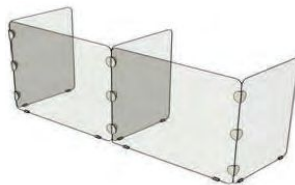
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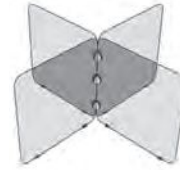
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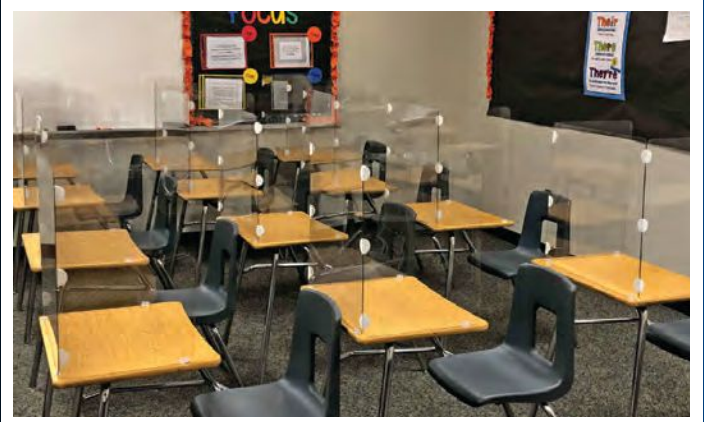
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Virtual conference



OSBA President Lee Schreiner, South-Western City, welcomes attendees to the Opening General Session of the 2020 Capital Conference and Trade Show on Nov. 8. This year's virtual conference drew more than 2,800 public education leaders.

2020 Capital Conference inspires, engages

Guided by the model of Leadership for Learning, the OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show abounds with knowledge, networking opportunities and other events that year after year leave attendees motivated and ready to confront the challenges facing their school districts.

This year, not even a pandemic could stop the unequalled professional development delivered by the Capital Conference, which traditionally draws 9,000 attendees to the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

While coronavirus health and safety precautions and state restrictions prevented thousands from gathering in person this year, the 65th annual conference, held virtually from Saturday, Nov. 7, through Tuesday, Nov. 10, drew more than 2,800 public education leaders.

This engaging virtual event included more than 60 learning sessions and four Spotlight Sessions, with topics ranging from the impact of the coronavirus on schools, student achievement and social-emotional learning to linking students to career pathways, essential policies and the power of teams to build success. During these sessions, presenters were on hand to answer questions, expand on their topics and provide additional resources through the sessions' chat feature. In addition, eight sessions were approved for Continuing Legal Education hours and five sessions were approved for Center for Public Investment Management credit.

The Trade Show was packed with nearly 175 vendor booths. Exhibitors shared resources and videos on their products and services and were on hand to chat with attendees on Monday, Nov. 9, and Tuesday, Nov. 10. New this year, the conference

a premier event

*Scott Gerfen,
assistant editor*

held Exhibitor Express Talks, where sponsoring companies showcased their products, services and programs and answered questions.

Attendees also participated in nearly 40 networking sessions led by OSBA staff, sponsoring companies and partnering associations. Topics ranged from top five questions with OSBA's chief executive officer and a school transportation roundtable to Title IX issues and what election 2020 means for public schools.

The virtual platform also allowed attendees to view content on-demand. Nearly 90 learning sessions and networking presentations on numerous topics, including the latest developments in school law, student achievement, operational success, board policy updates, governance issues and mental health and social-emotional initiatives, were available through Dec. 31.

Two General Sessions and the Monday Town Hall featured keynote speakers to inspire and educate school board members, administrators and district staff. The General Sessions also included award presentations and student performances by **South-Western City** and **Mad River Local (Montgomery)** bands.

The Opening General Session on Sunday, Nov. 8, was highlighted by composer and classical violinist **Kai Kight**, who uses his music as a metaphor to inspire people to reach their full potential. He began composing his own music after his mother was diagnosed with cancer. Kight asked his audiences: "When it comes to our lives and works, are we writing new music or just playing the notes we've been handed?"

Election law expert Professor **Edward B. (Ned) Foley** headlined the Closing General Session on Tuesday, Nov. 10. Foley holds the Ebersold Chair in Constitutional Law at Ohio State University, where he heads the Moritz College of Law's election law program. With his special knowledge on disputed elections and a recently published book about the history of the Electoral College, Foley provided plenty of insight into the November general election. (For more on the General Sessions, see "General Session speakers entertain and educate" on page 36.)

The Opening General Session also recognized more than 30 veteran board members who've completed 25 years of service and the All-Ohio School Board. See who these exemplary board members are beginning on pages 46 and 50. In addition, OSBA President **Lee Schreiner**, South-Western City, presented the President's Award to Buckeye Association of School

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Students from South-Western City's Bolton Crossing Elementary School lead the Pledge of Allegiance during the Capital Conference's Opening General Session. Students from Mad River Local (Montgomery) performed during the Closing General Session.

Administrators Executive Director Dr. **R. Kirk Hamilton**.

A new event — the Monday Town Hall — featured keynote speaker and author **Kate Fagan**. Her New York Times bestseller, “What Made Maddy Run,” tells the story of a successful young athlete whose life ended in suicide. Fagan also wrote “The Reappearing Act,” a coming-of-age memoir about her experience of coming out as gay while playing basketball at the University of Colorado. See “Understanding the secret struggles of student athletes” on page 42 for coverage of her insightful presentation on a sobering topic.

Also, Ohio Lt. Gov. **Jon Husted**, who applauded the leadership of board members and educators during the pandemic, was a special guest during the Closing General Session. Read more about his talk on page 40.

More than 25 school districts shared nearly 40 student programs, performance groups and student artwork in the Student Achievement Fair and Student Performing Arts. The virtual conference made it easy for districts to participate by uploading resources, videos and images of art. For a list of participating districts, see “Students shine during the 2020 Capital Conference” on page 52.

The Capital Conference usually hosts the Annual Business Meeting of the OSBA Delegate Assembly. However, delegates met virtually on Oct. 29 this year to approve amendments to the OSBA Legislative Platform and elect **Robert M. Heard Sr.**, a **Cleveland Municipal** board member, as OSBA's 2021 president-elect. For details on the meeting, see “Delegates pass equity resolution, pick president-elect,” starting on page 20.

As soon as one conference is over, planning begins for the next one. That means organizers already are exploring curriculum ideas and lining up keynote speakers for the 2021 Capital Conference and Trade Show, set for Nov. 7-9, 2021. Be sure

to mark your calendar for those dates and plan on joining thousands of your colleagues from around the state for the premier professional development you expect from the conference.

OSBA also encourages districts and others to share their ideas and innovative programs by nominating presenters for next year's conference. In addition, districts can highlight their students by nominating innovative programs and talented performing groups for the Student Achievement Fair. Keep an eye on OSBA's publications, emails and website for more information about participating.

For decades, Ohio's public education leaders have valued the OSBA Capital Conference for its premier professional development that enhances leadership skills and results in more efficient district operations. But most of all, the knowledge you bring home to your district impacts your students and helps them succeed. If your school district wasn't able to attend the Capital Conference in 2020, OSBA hopes to see you next year. ■



Almitra Berry, chief executive officer and principal consultant of A L Berry Consulting Inc. and an OSBA Diversity & Equity Consulting Services consultant, leads a Spotlight Session on systematic oppression and its impact on policy.

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General Session speakers entertain and educate



Classical violinist and composer Kai Kight prepares to play a few notes during the Nov. 8 Opening General Session of the 2020 Capital Conference and Trade Show. Kight was one of three stimulating keynote speakers at this year's virtual conference, held Nov. 7-10.

Margo Bartlett, freelance correspondent

The Capital Conference General Sessions' keynote presenters entertained and educated their virtual audiences of education leaders, offering insight into mastering your work amid disruption, challenging the status quo and how healthy competition can lead to success for students and our democracy.

Opening General Session speaker **Kai Kight** captivated his audience on Sunday, Nov. 8, pointing out that the best performers are the best students. The classical violinist and innovative composer reminded attendees that there is value in disruption and difficulty in the pursuit of excellence, and encouraged them to find the harmony in their work.

Ohio State University professor and election law expert **Edward (Ned) B. Foley** reflected on the electoral process during his Closing General Session talk on Tuesday, Nov. 10. He answered questions on the significance and procedures of the Electoral College and explained its impact on history.

Prior to the keynote presentations, conference attendees enjoyed student performances, recognized their peers for their accomplishments and heard from OSBA President **Lee Schreiner, South-Western City**, who welcomed attendees to each General Session; OSBA President-elect **Scott E. Huddle, Mad River Local (Montgomery)**; National School Boards Association (NSBA) President **Charlie Wilson**,

Worthington City; and Ohio Lt. Gov. **Jon Husted**.

During the Opening General Session, Schreiner's work for OSBA was praised by South-Western City Superintendent Dr. **Bill Wise**, who said Schreiner worked around and through the exigencies of the pandemic, scheduling meetings, conferences and trainings, and learning the ins and outs of Zoom while he was at it.

"His love of learning has helped him adjust," Wise said. "Lee works tirelessly for our children and our community."

In his remarks, Schreiner thanked school board members for their leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic and reminded them they are part of the success of public education in Ohio.

"We are definitely part of history this year," he said. "But we also are part of the constant, the logic, the common sense, the creativity, the innovation, the spark that, together with our district leadership, our education staff, with the use of what technology we have, communication and our concern for steadfast health and safety, (are working) to educate the students and communities we serve across Ohio."

During the Opening General Session, Schreiner recognized Dr. **R. Kirk Hamilton**, executive director of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, with the OSBA President's Award. Hamilton, who retired Dec. 31, has worked in public education for 40 years and served as superintendent at South-Western City and **Batavia Local (Clermont)**, among other positions.

At the Closing General Session, Schreiner turned over the gavel to Huddle, who became OSBA president on Jan. 1.

Huddle spoke briefly, recognizing the accomplishments of school board members and district leadership to educate students "in a meaningful and productive way ... despite the lack of any manual or playbook titled 'How to run a school system during a global pandemic.'"

"One thing I can assure you, especially this year, is that you are making a difference," Huddle said. "My ask of you is simply this: Keep sharing, keep advocating and keep serving."

The value of school board members' commitment to Ohio's children as they work "on the front lines, balancing student and staff safety with students' learning and support needs," was echoed by Wilson. He encouraged board members to work with NSBA to fight for increased public school funding; stop efforts to privatize public schools; work to close opportunity and access gaps, including the digital divide; and champion equity for vulnerable and at-risk students.



National School Boards Association President Charlie Wilson, Worthington City, praised board members for their commitment to students and staff during the pandemic.



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VC19097 (04/2019) J295201

“The job before us will be challenging on many fronts, and it certainly cannot be done alone,” Wilson said. “We are, without a doubt, stronger together, our voices are louder in unison and what we could accomplish together will benefit current and future generations of students.”

Husted also addressed school board members and other educational professionals at the Closing General Session, reminding them that parents and students are looking to them for their leadership. For more on his speech, see “Husted applauds leadership of board members, educators” on page 40.

Finding harmony among the disruption

As a classical violinist, Kai Kight can read and play music like the professional he is, while he also exults in composing his own work.

During his Opening General Session presentation, the musician and composer urged his virtual OSBA audience to balance the music they’ve learned by heart with innovation and originality. Improvise; compose, find the notes that work. Then, having mastered a piece of music, move on to something more challenging.

Kight, who began playing violin at age 3, became, he said, “the

most traditional classical violinist you can imagine.” He played music by **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven** ... “all the composers you expect to hear in the background of a jewelry commercial.” He was always preparing for the next program, the next audition, the next competition.

But when other performers were warming up on stage, Kight said, “I would start to jam.”

A graduate of Stanford University’s design and engineering program, Kight regularly speaks about the value of disruption and difficulty in the pursuit of excellence, and often tells of his mother’s regrets after she was diagnosed with cancer. He offered several musical metaphors to help conference goers “find harmony in your work in education.”

School board members and people who care about public education during a pandemic must balance public health concerns with the long-term effects of children not being around each other, Kight said. At a time often described as “unprecedented,” improvising can be an effective way of handling problems and challenges.

After jamming during orchestral warm-ups, Kight said he sometimes faked playing actual music passages that he had failed to learn.



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“I’d play air violin,” Kight said. “It sounds funny, but it’s an art form of its own. I was pretty good at air violin. Maybe a little too good.”

As a young musician, he was outed as an air violinist during a rehearsal at which each musician was required to play his or her part solo. Kight failed the exercise and was booted from the orchestra’s next concert. That humiliation was enough to keep Kight up late, practicing the right-hand technique he’d been avoiding. He learned it so well, Kight said, it’s now one of his great strengths as an artist.

Then Kight turned the question on his audience of school board members and district administrators and staff. Everyone logged in right now must ask, “What are we doing with the difficult music that’s already in front of us?”

Children are observing and learning from how they see adults handling the challenges of public education during a pandemic. “We have to ask ourselves, are we putting music in front of other people that we aren’t willing to play ourselves?” Kight said. “Students need for you to be a student, too.”

In music, Kight said, the best performers are the best students. When excellent performers master a piece of music, they don’t continue to play that piece ad infinitum. “They toss it aside, because the end product is their own growth.” The greatest threat to their own progress is to keep repeating music they’ve already learned. They don’t play to make themselves look good; they play to learn more and then more.

Kight noted OSBA’s many conference sessions, asking, “Which type of music will you choose? What makes you sound good, or will you choose the music that makes you stronger?”

He acknowledged that people pay to hear experts’ expertise. “They’re coming to you for a sense of certainty,” he said. But we can be both the master and the student simultaneously. Teachers both know the notes a student *should* play and hear what the student *does* play. That’s the same “inherent gap” between who we want to be and who we are.

To be human is to aspire to do what we can’t do, Kight said. It’s natural to avoid hearing our imperfections or mistakes, since they reveal our shortcomings, but efforts that fall short of our aspirations aren’t failures; they merely suggest we’re not as far along as we thought.

“We often have visions of what the future should be, but we drastically underestimate the amount of time and repetitive work it will take to get there,” he said.

Kight recalled a competition, the winner of which would perform at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. One of the judges was the same conductor who’d caught

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him playing air violin. The list of winners, posted in the audition hall, was written in “his” conductor’s hand, which led to a reflection on the role of the teacher and guide.

“What do you do when the red pen (for corrections) is in your own hand?” Kight asked. A conductor must study each section of an orchestra and understand what each instrument contributes to the whole. A good conductor will “zoom in and listen” when the music sounds the worst. “Face the dissonance,” Kight said, because keeping things smooth is a very superficial path to harmony.

In life, he said, we think of optimism as being focused on good stuff. But maybe it’s focusing on what’s in front of us and knowing we’re strong enough to handle it.

After winning the contest, Kight said, he prepared to play at the Kennedy Center. He practiced hours each day for weeks and knew the piece thoroughly. Still, when he walked on stage and the audience hushed, he was practically frozen with anxiety.

For a moment after he began to play, the music flowed as

written. Then his finger slipped and he missed a whole series of notes.

Kight was devastated. At the post-concert reception, he said, he used his violin as a shield — here Kight raised the violin he was holding and demonstrated how he hid behind it — hoping to avoid people’s accusing gazes and the criticism he thought would come.

Then a woman touched him on the arm and thanked him for his performance. The music reminded her of her late brother, she said.

“I was so lost in the technique, in the notes, I forgot why I was playing in the first place,” Kight said. “We consume ourselves with playing the right notes, but the audience doesn’t experience the notes we’re trying to play, only those we do play.”

This doesn’t mean that the notes don’t matter. You don’t want a doctor who doesn’t know the right notes, Kight cautioned with a grin. “Technique isn’t trivial. ... But there are moments you must understand what’s best of the world is not about the notes.”

Mozart, Kight reminded his audience, always challenged the status quo. As a living musician, he pursued originality and

innovation. To focus only on the notes Mozart wrote goes against everything the composer stood for.

An authentic bond with a virtual audience isn’t easy to achieve, but Kight achieved it in spite of the odds.

Baird Public Finance, CompManagement and Pepple & Waggoner Ltd. sponsored the Nov. 8 Opening General Session.

A test of a healthy democracy

Edward (Ned) B. Foley gave his virtual audience a concise and reassuring history lesson during the Closing General Session of the 2020 OSBA Capital Conference.

Foley holds the Ebersold Chair in Constitutional Law at Ohio State University (OSU), where he heads the Moritz College of Law’s election law program. A graduate of the Columbia University School of Law, he has taught at OSU since 1991. An expert on disputed elections and the author of a new book about the Electoral College, Foley recently agreed to serve as an election analyst for NBC.

OSBA Chief Executive Officer **Rick Lewis** posed questions during the presentation.

Foley said the 2020 election, which drew more voters than have been seen in a century, was “in many ways, a remarkable

Husted applauds leadership of board members, educators

Margo Bartlett, freelance correspondent

Ohio Lt. Gov. **Jon Husted** told the Nov. 10 Closing General Session audience that he and Ohio Gov. **Mike DeWine** are “focused on the coronavirus.”

“The virus puts a strain on many families,” in terms of health and family dynamics, Husted said. He and the governor, he explained, are concerned about the mental, social and emotional well-being of all students.

In October, DeWine and Husted announced a package of \$419.5 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding, which includes funding for low-income Ohioans affected financially by the pandemic, as well as aid for small businesses, restaurants and bars, hospitals, higher education, arts and nonprofit organizations.

Ohio “will work to get those funds to you,” Husted said. He also encouraged school board members and other educational professionals to offer students and parents strong and steady guidance.

“These are the times leadership matters more than ever,” Husted said. “People will be looking to you. Be their rock, be their sources of strength. We will do our best to support you.”



Ohio Lt. Gov. Jon Husted pledged to get COVID-19 relief funds to school districts during the Closing General Session.

Husted said the state values the feedback provided by OSBA and promised to turn that feedback into action.

“The sun is coming up, but we’re going to have to get through a tough winter,” he said. ■



OSBA Chief Executive Officer Rick Lewis, right, poses questions to election law expert Professor Edward (Ned) B. Foley, who reflected on the electoral process and the significance of the Electoral College during the Capital Conference's Closing General Session.

success.” While not perfect — “There’s no election that’s perfect,” he said — the “nightmarish” violence and attacks predicted by some didn’t materialize.

Asked what he’d tell a high school history class about the Electoral College, Foley said our current electoral system was not the original one.

“It’s a product of the 12th Amendment, after (Thomas) Jefferson became president,” he said. “The rewrite, if you will, the reengineering, was based on different principles.”

Republicans Jefferson and Aaron Burr received the same number of electoral votes in 1800, leading to a tense, six-day, 35-vote standoff during which the candidates slept on cots and ate the 1800s version of takeout food while voters worried about civil war.

The original federal Constitution made no distinction between votes for president and vice president. The 12th Amendment, which was ratified before the 1804 election, required Electoral College members to cast one vote for president and another for vice president, ensuring that future presidential elections would be based on political parties, which the original planners had hoped to avoid.

Changing the Electoral College systems would require another amendment, Foley said.

The 2000 presidential election, which hung on a recount of Florida votes and came down to a difference of 537 votes, has not been repeated this year, he said.

President Donald Trump is challenging several states, not just one, as was the case in 2000, and the margins are “not

anywhere like 537,” Foley said. “Last I looked, Pennsylvania had a margin of 45,000 votes. ... At the moment, it doesn’t seem like litigation is necessary” to decide the outcome.

Asked about other hotly contested elections, Foley mentioned the presidential contest of 1876, when Ohio’s **Rutherford B. Hayes** emerged the winner over New York Gov. **Samuel Tilden** by one electoral vote.

Hayes’ election led to the Compromise of 1877, which included the withdrawal of federal troops from the South and the end of Reconstruction. Foley said the compromise had “profound effects” on civil rights and on history in general.

Foley awarded the 2020 election good grades. “Up to this point, up to this point,” he cautioned. “The final grade will be how we bring it to closure.”

He also praised Ohio’s election record.

“Ohio runs a really good electoral system,” he said. “I really want to applaud our leaders for doing that.”

But he worries about the country’s current political divide.

“Both sides can’t win. Elections have to be competitive to be free and fair,” Foley said. The test of a healthy democracy is to fight the good fight, let the people decide, count the votes according to how they were cast and then accept the results, he said.

CompManagement Health Systems, Peters Kalail & Markakis Co. LPA and Scott Scriven LLP sponsored the Nov. 10 General Session. ■



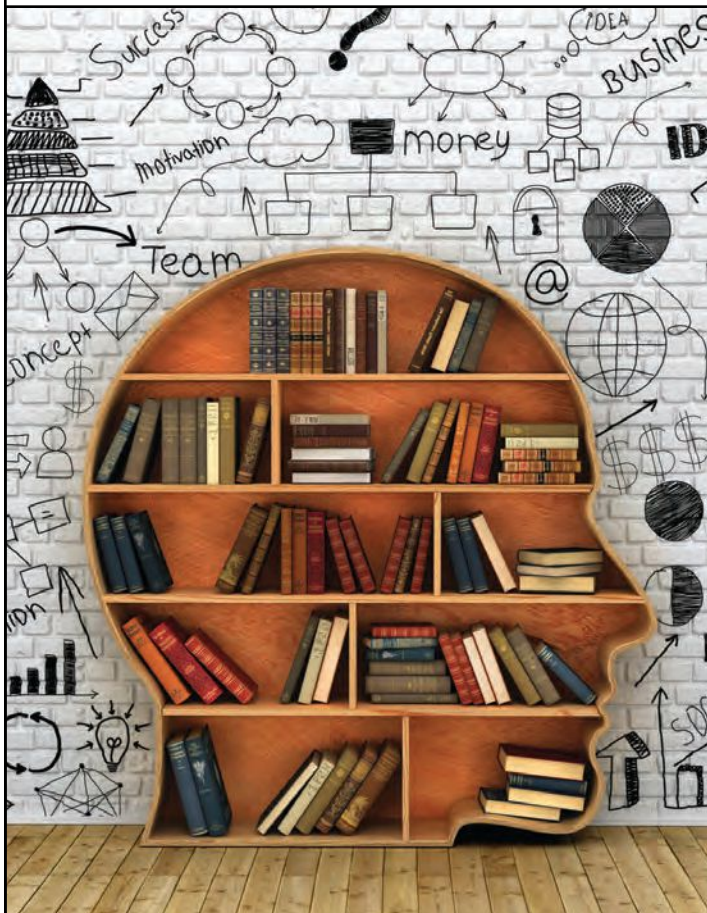
Understanding the secret struggles of student athletes

Margo Bartlett, freelance correspondent

Award-winning sports writer **Kate Fagan** discussed student athletes and the challenges they face during the Monday Town Hall on Nov. 9.

Fagan, whose new book, “All the Colors Came Out: A Father, a Daughter and a Lifetime of Lessons,” will be published in May, wrote the 2017 best-selling book, “What Made Maddy Run: The Secret Struggles and Tragic Death of an All-American Teen,” the story of **Madison** (Maddy) **Holleran**, who died by suicide during her freshman year at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn).

Fagan, who for seven years was a columnist and feature writer for espnW, **ESPN.com** and ESPN The Magazine, in addition to being a founding member of the first all-female national sports radio show, “The Trifecta,” wrote a magazine piece about Maddy before embarking upon the book. She was drawn to the project, Fagan said, in part, because she herself played basketball at the University of Colorado and understood something of the struggles student athletes face. Also, Fagan’s sister ran track at an Ivy League school, and Fagan saw her sister’s experience as “very similar” to Maddy’s.



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Most compelling, though, were the messages that flooded in after the magazine story was published. High school and college students rushed to share with Fagan their experiences of “trying to be perfect and trying to be happy.”

Maddy’s family offered Fagan her social media accounts and introduced Fagan to **Emma**, Maddy’s best friend from high school. Fagan said Emma told her, “Kate, you’re going to think you can chase down a ‘why,’ that there will be one specific catalyst that led to this. ... We all did it; we all tried to do it.”

In fact, Fagan did expect to find a heretofore secret “why”: drug addiction, perhaps, or rape. Instead, she found a three-part pattern: the pressures of college culture, and Ivy League culture in particular; technology and social media; and mental health. As Fagan wrote in the book, “There is no one thing. There are rivers that merge and create a powerful current.”

At Penn, Fagan said, students talk about “Penn face,” the “everything is awesome” mask students wear, sometimes, no doubt, concealing the fact that everything is far from awesome. Students are reluctant to admit that the work and social demands are harder than they thought they would be. Maddy was a high school superstar: academically successful, athletically gifted and surrounded by friends. She had been recruited to play soccer at Lehigh University but chose instead to run track at an Ivy League school. The choice alone illustrates “achievement culture,” another common

issue. Soccer made Maddy happy, Fagan said; running wasn’t as “joyful.” But the Ivy League wanted her for track, so track it was.

Nothing in the lives of children is validated as much as being good at sports, Fagan said. Talented children and teenagers get adult feedback that’s “pretty overwhelming when you’re a kid. ... You want to keep doing this thing.”

We need to debunk the myth that suicide is a “deep, dark thing that goes over there in the corner” and isn’t mentioned for fear someone we love will act on it, Fagan said.

When young athletes are the focus of adult adulation, it’s easy to lose track of why they’re playing a sport — because they love it or because they like the rewards? Then there’s the guilt that accompanies the decision to stop playing. “‘Quitting’ is such a loaded word,” Fagan said. Being a “quitter” is anathema, whereas she didn’t “quit” playing viola as a kid. She just stopped playing it.

“Destructive perfectionism” is a term coined at Penn



in the aftermath of several student suicides, including Maddy's. Young people who think they should say "yes" to everything, should improve constantly, should always advance and never retreat or go sideways, put themselves under tremendous pressure, with or without the exterior influence of coaches, professors or peers.

Another factor that can lead to college student despair: social media.

"Social media is not an accurate reflection of life," Fagan said. Maddy knew this, as we all know it, and yet, the "everything is awesome" theme of social media can exacerbate fear, doubt and uncertainty. For Maddy, her situation looked like personal failure. "Nothing came as easily as it once had," Fagan said.

When Maddy came home after her first semester, her family noticed a change. She no longer smiled. When questioned, she admitted to struggling, which she'd expressed on social media but always with an emoji to lighten the message and ward off serious concerns. Face to face, her parents listened, found her a therapist and discussed options, including quitting track or leaving Penn.

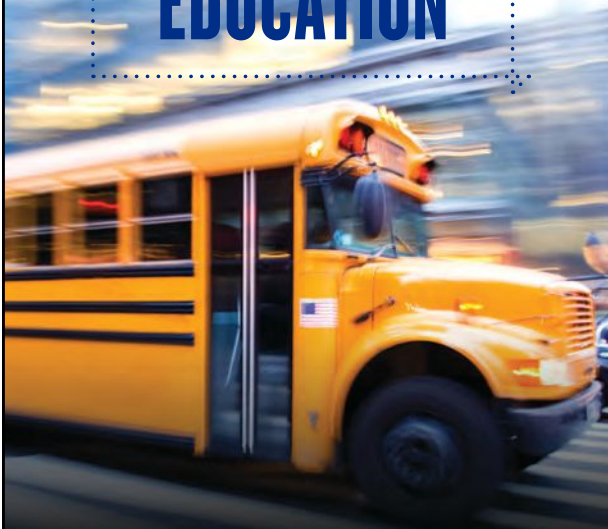
But the Hollerans did not tell Maddy that depression ran in the family. They cautioned her not to hurt herself — "Promise us you won't do anything like that," they told her — but they didn't talk about genetic components, fearing they would give her ideas. They didn't realize, Fagan wrote, "how strong the currents or deep the river."

After the break, Maddy returned to school. On Jan. 17, 2014, she climbed to the top of a nine-story parking garage and jumped. She left a note and gifts for her family on the floor of the garage. Two hours earlier, she'd posted a picture of Rittenhouse Square on Instagram. She'd taken seven versions of the same scene.

We need to debunk the myth that suicide is a "deep, dark thing that goes over there in the corner" and isn't mentioned for fear someone we love will act on it, Fagan said. Those who work with young people must discuss concerns and tell our stories as we communicate with the next generation and "try to understand the water in which they swim."

Hilltop Securities, Ohio School Plan and Squire Patton Boggs (US) LLP sponsored the Nov. 9 Town Hall. ■

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OSBA honors the best of the best in boardmanship

Five board members receive OSBA's highest honor

Scott Gerfen, assistant editor

Five school board members were awarded OSBA's most prestigious honor during the virtual 2020 OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show.

Founded in 1971, the All-Ohio School Board program recognizes admirable boardmanship and service to public education. Only five of Ohio's more than 3,400 school board members receive the recognition each year.

OSBA Chief Executive Officer **Rick Lewis** announced the winners Nov. 8 during the Opening General Session of the 65th annual OSBA Capital Conference.

"This esteemed award is viewed as a crowning achievement in boardmanship in Ohio," Lewis said. "They are the best of the best among Ohio school board members."

Members of the 2020 All-Ohio School Board are:

- **Michael Fador, St. Clairsville-Richland City and Belmont Harrison Career Center**
- **John W. Halkias, Plain Local (Stark)**
- **Richard McLarnan, Knox County ESC and Knox County Career Center**

- **Carol-Ann Molnar, Oregon City**
- **David E. Yockey, Milford EV and Great Oaks Career Campuses**

Central Region

Richard McLarnan

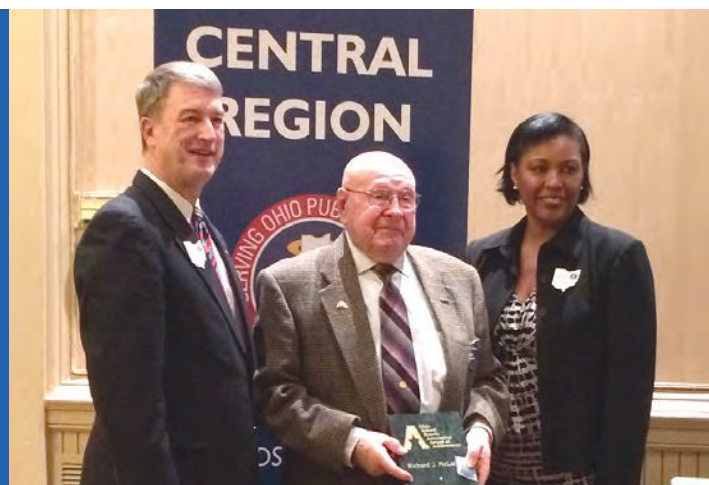
McLarnan, who represents the Central Region, is serving in his 45th year on the Knox County ESC and Knox County Career Center boards. He is the president of both boards.

First elected in 1975, McLarnan hasn't forgotten who urged him to serve his community.

"My children were in school, and my dad encouraged me to get involved with the school board," he said. "I had been working with the schools by setting up a tool chest for the machinist class at the Knox County Career Center."

He also was a member of a committee that spearheaded construction of a new 18,000-square-foot building on the career center campus, which opened in August 2014.

McLarnan, who was honored with OSBA's Master Board



Richard McLarnan, Knox County ESC and Knox County Career Center, center, has served 45 years on his boards. He was first elected in 1975.



John W. Halkias, Plain Local (Stark), left, served as OSBA president in 2019. He also serves on the National School Boards Association's Board of Directors.

Member award in 2017, also serves on the Central Region Executive Committee and Arrangements and Hospitality Team.

Northeast Region

John W. Halkias

Halkias, who represents the Northeast Region, was appointed in 1999 and then elected five times to the Plain Local board.

He served as OSBA president in 2019 and as his board's president six times, including in 2003 when voters approved a bond issue for a new high school and 2009 when voters passed an operating levy.

"Serving on my local school board is my way of paying forward to my children and the over 6,000 children in my school district the gift of education my community gave to me," Halkias told the Journal in February 2019. "It's also my way of paying back my parents, who instilled that respect for public education in me."

Halkias, who received the Master Board Member award in 2019, is a member of the Northeast Region Executive Committee and was region president in 2015. He also is a member of OSBA's Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, Board Member Cabinet, Legislative Platform

Committee, Federal Relations Network, Diversity and Equity Committee, Student Achievement Leadership Team and Capital Conference Planning Task Force.

At the national level, Halkias serves on the National School Boards Association's (NSBA) Board of Directors, representing NSBA's Central Region.



Carol-Ann Molnar is serving in her 11th year on the Oregon City board. The retired teacher taught grades first through sixth for nearly 40 years.



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Michael Fador has served 29 years on the St. Clairsville-Richland City board and 20 years on the Belmont-Harrison Career Center board.



David E. Yockey, left, is in his 19th year on the Milford EV and Great Oaks Career Campuses boards. He has served as his boards' president four times.

Northwest Region

Carol-Ann Molnar

Molnar, who represents the Northwest Region, is serving in her 11th year on the Oregon City board and as its president, a role she's held seven times.

The retired teacher taught grades first through sixth for nearly 40 years and developed and implemented the Remedial Mathematics Program for the district.

"My parents instilled a love of reading and learning in both my brother and in me," Molnar said. "Our teachers nurtured us to become lifelong learners. The role models presented by my elementary teachers influenced and motivated me to become a teacher to pass on the love of reading and lifelong learning."

Molnar, who earned the Master Board Member award in 2014, also serves on OSBA's Board of Trustees and is president-elect of the association's Northwest Region. In addition, she is part of the Capital Conference Planning Task Force and Arrangements and Hospitality Team.

Southeast Region

Michael Fador

Fador, who represents the Southeast Region, has served 29

years on the St. Clairsville-Richland City board and 20 years on the Belmont-Harrison Career Center board. He's most proud of helping St. Clairsville-Richland City pass a much-needed permanent improvement levy in the late 1980s and a bond levy for a connector building between the middle school, high school and gymnasium.

Helping students achieve always has been his top priority.

"I have always emphasized a strong curriculum to keep our students challenged," said Fador, who also received the Master Board Member award in 2020.

Fador, who taught special education for 38 years, serves on the Southeast Region Executive Committee. He was the region's president in 2017. He also is a member of the Federal Relations Network.

Southwest Region

David E. Yockey

Yockey, who represents OSBA's Southwest Region, is in his 19th year on the Milford EV and Great Oaks Career Campuses boards. He has served as his boards' president four times.

Yockey is most proud of "seeing our school system getting better each year and providing more and more opportunities for our students and finding the funding to improve our facilities for student learning. During my tenure on the (Milford) board, we have built six new elementary schools, remodeled the high school, built a new board of education building and improved our campus and athletic facilities."

The retired educator earned the Master Board Member award in 2018. He serves on OSBA's Board of Trustees and is a member of the Southwest Region Executive Committee. ■

Videos honor 2020 award recipients

View a video honoring the 2020 All-Ohio School Board on OSBA's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/OSBAVideos. You also can view videos recognizing school board members who have completed 25 years of board service and the 2020 OSBA President's Award recipient, Dr. R. Kirk Hamilton, executive director of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators.



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Honoring a quarter century of service

Angela Penquite, managing editor

As far as milestones go, it's a big one — 25 years of dedicated service to their students, schools and communities. It's a goal that's difficult to meet, and OSBA would like to recognize those school board members who were up to the challenge.

In 2020, 32 board members completed 25 years of service. Although OSBA was unable to honor them in person at the OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show, this level of service should not go unnoticed.

The dedication shown by these board members is highlighted by the fact that, according to OSBA's most recent board member survey in 2020, 19% have served more than 12 years; 13% have served nine to 12 years; 27% have served five to eight years; 28% have served one to four years; and 14% have served less than a year.

"Each of these men and women has dedicated a significant portion of their life to the improvement of public education and the betterment of their community," said OSBA Chief Executive Officer **Rick Lewis**. "They

have gone above and beyond in donating their time as citizen servants.

"It is appropriate that we honor and say 'thank you' to this very special group of members."

Board members being honored for 25 years of service are:

- **John R. Auld, Crestview Local (Van Wert)**
- **Brian L. Baker, Northwest Ohio ESC and Four County Career Center**
- **David Belden, Port Clinton City**
- **Brad Brubaker, Columbus Grove Local (Putnam)**
- **Mark Caudill, Minford Local (Scioto)**
- **Ron L. Crawford, Northwest Ohio ESC and Four County Career Center**
- **John Depoy, Athens-Meigs ESC and Tri-County Career Center**
- **Marie D. Dockry, Mahoning County ESC and Mahoning County Career and Technical Center**
- **Robert W. Doughty, Muskingum Valley ESC**
- **Debbie Drummond, Dawson-Bryant Local (Lawrence)**

Administrative salary analysis

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- **Ronald Friend, Fairfield Local (Highland) and Great Oaks Career Campuses**
- **Johnny Garber, Berne Union Local (Fairfield)**
- **Mary Pat Hanson, Morgan Local (Morgan)**
- **Kenneth Kelch, Eastern Local (Brown)**
- **Bruce Kirkpatrick, Miami Trace Local (Fayette) and Great Oaks Career Campuses**
- **Dave Lapp, River View Local (Coshocton)**
- **Kathy Limes, Wood County ESC and Penta Career Center**
- **Doug Maggied, Tolles Career & Technical Center**
- **Kimberly Mark, Indian Creek Local (Jefferson) and Jefferson County Vocational School**
- **Lynn McCann, Centerburg Local (Knox)**
- **Lillian McKibben, Putnam County ESC**
- **Deborah Melda, Lorain County ESC and Lorain County JVSD**
- **Anthony Micelli, ESC of Northeast Ohio**
- **Linda Morris, Southern Local (Columbiana) and Columbiana County Career & Technical Center**
- **Christine Oberlin, Defiance City and Four County Career Center**
- **Gary Peruchetti, Lisbon EV and Columbiana County Career & Technical Center**
- **John D. Seibert, College Corner Local (Preble)**
- **Dr. Ted Starkey, Indian Creek Local**

- **Kenneth Upthegrove, Washington Court House City**
- **David VanderKaay, Lake Local (Stark)**
- **Sally J. Williams, Warren County ESC**
- **Sue Williams, Southeast Local (Wayne) and Wayne County Schools Career Center ■**

Conference attendees take to social media

Those who attended the virtual 2020 OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show used Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to share their experiences and connect with others participating in the conference.

Attendees also were able to view video tributes to All-Ohio School Board honorees and other award winners on the social media platforms and YouTube.

During the four-day event and the month preceding it, the conference hashtag, #OSBACC, was seen nearly 570,000 times across all platforms.

OSBA's tweets during the event were seen nearly 56,000 times and retweeted and "liked" over 200 times.

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Students shine during the 2020 Capital Conference

Angela Penquite, managing editor

Student success was on display during the 65th annual Capital Conference and Trade Show. More than 25 school districts shared nearly 40 programs, performance groups and examples of student artwork that showcase the best of Ohio's students.

"The Student Achievement Fair is one of the best parts of the OSBA Capital Conference," said **Teri Morgan**, senior deputy director of board and management services and a coordinator of the Student Achievement Fair. "Highlighting student success is vital for promoting public education, and we were excited to provide a virtual opportunity for school districts to share their student programs, performances and artwork."

The virtual environment made it easy for districts to participate. Districts could submit nominations of student programs to the Student Achievement Fair or showcase student performances and artwork in Student Performing Arts. There was no limit to the number of nominations,

and program directors could upload videos and resources that showcased their student programs and performing groups, as well as images of student art.

In addition, performances by **South-Western City** and **Mad River Local (Montgomery)** bands kicked off the Opening General Session on Nov. 8 and the Closing General Session on Nov. 10.

"At a time when most school board members and others can't go into a classroom or attend a student performance, it's gratifying to see students in action," said Morgan. "It's a reminder that despite everything, students continue to surpass our expectations and the work of board members, district administrators and teachers is more essential and effective than ever before."

Below is a list of the district programs, performing groups and artwork on display in the Student Achievement Fair and Student Performing Arts:

- **Clermont-Northeastern Local (Clermont):** Clermont-Northeastern Local Marching Band
- **Clermont-Northeastern Local (Clermont):** Clermont-Northeastern Local Varsity Cheerleading
- **Clermont-Northeastern Local (Clermont):** Turtles and Telemetry
- **Dayton City:** Belmont High School Steel Band
- **Dayton City:** Stivers School for the Arts Dance Ensemble
- **Fremont City:** STEM
- **Goshen Local (Clermont):** Goshen UC IT partnership and Cyberpatriot team
- **Greenville City:** Greenville CTEC IMTV Never Stop Serving
- **Greenville City:** Greenville FCCLA Comfort Closet
- **Hardin Northern Local (Hardin):** History Brigade
- **Jackson City:** Jackson High School Media Productions
- **LaBrae Local (Trumbull):** LaBrae Robotics — RoboVikes
- **Lakota Local (Butler):** Lakota Cyber Academy
- **Lakota Local (Butler):** Transition to Work at Lakota



West Clermont Local (Clermont) student Tenia Baskerville created this beautiful book sculpture by building the tree with wire and manipulating the paper with folds, cuts and curls.
(submitted photo)

- **Lakota Local (Butler):** We are Personalized
- **Mad River Local (Montgomery):** Stebbins High School Marching Band
- **Mason City:** Mason Broadcast Crew
- **Mason City:** Student artwork
- **Medina City:** Student artwork
- **Mount Vernon City:** Student artwork
- **New Richmond EV:** New Richmond High School Troubadours
- **Niles City:** Student artwork
- **North Olmsted City:** Coming Attractions and Special Edition
- **North Union Local (Union):** North Union VEX Robotics Program
- **Northwest Local (Stark):** Kokopelli Scholars
- **Norwalk City:** Teen Leadership Corps (TLC)
- **Olentangy Local (Delaware):** Student artwork
- **Riverside Local (Lake):** SIDE Entrepreneurship, Leadership & Service
- **South-Western City:** South-Western City bands
- **Tallmadge City:** Builders' Club
- **Three Rivers Local (Hamilton):** APT/Enrichment Gifted Services
- **Three Rivers Local (Hamilton):** MathCounts Club
- **Three Rivers Local (Hamilton):** Sparkle Jacket Cheerleading

- **Three Rivers Local (Hamilton):** Taylor High School student artwork
- **Upper Scioto Valley Local (Hardin):** USV Videography
- **West Clermont Local (Clermont):** Mission Moon Robotics Competition
- **West Clermont Local (Clermont):** Student artwork
- **Windham EV:** Windham High School student artwork ■



An on-field camera operator in Jackson City's Jackson High School Media Productions program captures footage during a football game. (submitted photo)

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OSBA announces 2020 Media Honor Roll winners

Jeff Chambers, director of communication services

During the past year, school districts have relied heavily on local news outlets to get information out quickly to their communities. Even with social media, traditional news outlets are still a comprehensive way to reach all community members.

Having a good relationship with local media has provided a consistency of coverage and information during the COVID-19 pandemic. As districts worked through decisions each day amid changing conditions during the pandemic — often contradicting previous decisions — they could work with local journalists to ensure that the information was being reported quickly and fairly.

To recognize these relationships, OSBA launched the Media Honor Roll in 2002. Since then, districts have named more than 2,000 reporters, editors and news outlets to the honor roll. Nearly 80 journalists and media outlets are among the honorees on the 2020 OSBA Media Honor Roll.

The program recognizes media representatives who:

- work to get to know the superintendent, board president and district communication director as well as the district's mission and goals;
- report school news in a fair, accurate and balanced manner;
- give a high profile to positive news about schools;
- visit schools;
- maintain a policy of “no surprises” by always giving school officials the opportunity to comment on information to be aired or published.

In addition to recognizing reporters for fair and balanced coverage of local schools, the OSBA Media Honor Roll helps districts develop and maintain good working relationships with their local news media. Establishing a positive rapport and open line of communication with journalists can go a long way toward generating news coverage about the many great things that students, teachers, school boards and administrators are accomplishing.

These relationships can prove important when the news is less than positive. It's a reporter's job to cover what's happening, good or bad. If a reporter already knows you and knows you're accessible, he or she is more likely to reach out to you for your side of a contentious news story. Districts that work well with their local media stand a much better chance of having negative issues that arise covered fairly and objectively. Building bridges with the local media can go a long way toward preventing misinformation and “gotcha” journalism.

The program allows districts to select as many journalists as they feel are deserving of this statewide honor. Below are members of the 2020 OSBA Media Honor Roll, followed by the school districts that selected them.

- **Katy Andersen**, WHIO-TV, Springboro Community City
- **Russ Axon**, Point & Shoreland Journal, Washington Local (Lucas)
- **Kirsten Barnhart**, Times Bulletin Media, Lincolnview Local (Van Wert)
- **Kirsten Barnhart**, Times Bulletin Media, Vantage Career Center
- **Glenn Battishill**, The Delaware Gazette, Delaware City
- **Mike Bechtol**, WTNS Radio, Coshocton City
- **Brad Bournival**, Akron Beacon Journal, Medina City
- **Mike Brookbank**, WEWS-TV, Berea City
- **Phillip Buffington**, The Telegram, Jackson City
- **Daniel Carson**, Fremont News Messenger, Fremont City
- **Andrew Carter**, Marion Star, Marion City
- **Emily Chesnic**, South Side Leader, Springfield Local (Summit)
- **Todd Compston**, The Telegram, Jackson City
- **Paul Comstock**, ThisWeek Community News, Delaware City
- **Bob Coupland**, Tribune Chronicle, Trumbull County Board of Developmental Disabilities
- **George Davis**, Akron Beacon Journal and Canton Repository, Green Local (Summit)

- **Dale Depew**, Seneca News Daily, Vanguard-Sentinel Career & Technology Centers
- **Nate Dunham**, Peak of Ohio, Riverside Local (Logan)
- **Nate Ellis**, ThisWeek Community News, Pickerington Local (Fairfield)
- **Jane Ernsberger**, Willard Times-Junction, Willard City
- **Chad Felton**, The News-Herald, Auburn Career Center
- **Tom Fullen**, BAS Broadcasting/WFRO Radio, Fremont City
- **Julianna Furfari**, WTOV-TV, Toronto City
- **Nancy Gagnet**, The Mirror Newspapers, Maumee City
- **Ross Gallabrese**, Herald-Star, Jefferson County ESC
- **Geauga County Maple Leaf**, Auburn Career Center
- **Eric Gerhardt**, WKRC-TV, Lockland Local (Hamilton)
- **Jeff Harrison**, The Journal Leader, Noble Local (Noble)
- **Sarah Hawley**, The Daily Sentinel, Meigs Local (Meigs)
- **Leonard Hayhurst**, Coshocton Tribune, Coshocton City
- **Ray Horner**, Rubber City Radio Group/WAKR Radio, Green Local (Summit)
- **Tara Jabour**, WTOV-TV, Toronto City
- **Caylee Kirby**, WTOL-TV, Maumee City
- **Kyle Knight**, BAS Broadcasting/WFRO Radio, Fremont City
- **Marla Kuhlman**, ThisWeek Community News, Westerville City
- **Stephanie Kuzydym**, WKRC-TV, Lockland Local (Hamilton)
- **Lake County Tribune**, Auburn Career Center
- **Tony Lange**, Chagrin Valley Times, Kenston Local (Geauga)
- **Scott Lendak**, Morning Journal, East Palestine City
- **Maria Lindsay**, South Side Leader, Springfield Local (Summit)
- **Mandy Loehr**, Bellefontaine Examiner, Riverside Local (Logan)
- **Megan Malone**, The Telegram, Jackson City
- **Megan Malone**, The Telegram, Wellston City
- **Tim McCoy**, Sinclair Broadcast Group, Jefferson County ESC
- **Christina McCune**, The Dalton Gazette, Wayne County Schools Career Center
- **Tim McDonough**, The Crescent-News, Ayersville Local (Defiance)
- **Tim McDonough**, The Crescent-News, Defiance City



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- **Andrea Medina**, WXIX-TV Fox 19, Princeton City
- **Katelynn Mejia**, OrrViews, Wayne County Schools Career Center
- **Brett Milam**, The Clermont Sun, Goshen Local (Clermont)
- **Sherry Missler**, The Times Bulletin, Crestview Local (Van Wert)
- **David Mosier**, The Van Wert Independent, Lincolnview Local (Van Wert)
- **Carolynn Mostyn**, The Suburbanite, Springfield Local (Summit)
- **Alissa Widman Neese**, The Columbus Dispatch, Pickerington Local (Fairfield)
- **Jim Otte**, WHIO-TV/Cox Media Group, Montgomery County ESC
- **Melissa Patrick**, WKLM Radio, West Holmes Local (Holmes)
- **Ryan Piper**, Union County Daily Digital, Marysville EV
- **Mike Plant**, Bargain Hunter and Wooster Weekly News, Wayne County Schools Career Center
- **Eric Poston**, South Side Leader, Green Local (Summit)
- **Eric Poston**, South Side Leader, Manchester Local (Summit)
- **Dan Robinson**, Kenton Times, Hardin Northern Local (Hardin)
- **Valerie Royzman**, The Daily Record, Wayne County Schools Career Center
- **Warren Scott**, Herald-Star, Toronto City
- **Josie Sellers**, The Coshocton County Beacon, Coshocton City
- **Jeremiah Shaver**, The Courier, Jackson City
- **Jeremiah Shaver**, The Courier, Wellston City
- **Sherryl Sheets**, The Richwood Gazette, North Union Local (Union)
- **Craig Shoup**, Fremont News Messenger, Fremont City
- **Don Sloan**, WTOV-TV, Jefferson County ESC
- **Sarah Sole**, ThisWeek Community News, New Albany-Plain Local (Franklin)
- **Nancy Spencer**, Delphos Herald, Ottoville Local (Putnam)
- **Neal Spencer**, Fort Recovery Radio, Fort Recovery Local (Mercer)
- **Carl Sullenberger**, GLW Broadband, Midview Local (Lorain)
- **Alex Taylor**, WTOV-TV, Toronto City
- **Red Thompson**, The Telegram, Jackson City
- **Red Thompson**, The Telegram, Vinton County Local (Vinton)
- **Lindsay Titus**, Union County Daily Digital, Marysville EV
- **Helen Tracey-Noren**, WCPO-TV, Springboro Community City
- **Michael B. Trogdon**, The Post Newspapers, Wayne County Schools Career Center
- **Scott Truxell**, The Van Wert Independent, Crestview Local (Van Wert)
- **Scott Truxell**, The Van Wert Independent, Lincolnview Local (Van Wert)
- **Scott Truxell**, The Van Wert Independent, Vantage Career Center
- **Steve Vesey**, WFMJ-TV, Mahoning County ESC
- **John Wasytko**, The BEAT, Brunswick City
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