



Message from the Superintendent

2013 Marks Another Successful Year for Worthington Schools

What a great year it's been for Worthington Schools. As 2013 comes to a close and as we are headed to the mid point for the school year, I would like to share with our residents some of the highlights.

First, we are pleased to report that our students are continuing to succeed. This is evident in our latest test scores on the state report card. In fact, Worthington Schools received its highest ever performance index score of 104.1. That means more of our students are achieving at higher levels. Worthington was also the only school district in Central Ohio to receive all "As" for value added growth. All students, including our gifted students, our students with disabilities, and our students in the lowest 20% of achievement, exceeded their projected growth.

We are proud to celebrate this success but we also recognize there are areas in need of improvement. Our administrators and teachers are busy implementing specific plans to raise achievement in those areas.

While standardized tests are an important part of measuring student achievement and help keep us accountable, at the same time, we are more than just tests. There are many innovative things happening in our schools – kindergarten through 12th grade – that impact student achievement and focus on the needs of the whole child. For example, our middle and high school students have access to special STEM (Science,

Technology, Engineering and Math) programs through Project Lead the Way that will prepare students for 21st century careers.

Our elementary students have access to wellness and fitness programs that we know have a positive impact on how our kids do in the classroom. All students also can count on support for tough issues such as bullying as our school buildings implement anti-bullying programs so that students get the help they need.

We are focused on improving and maintaining a positive culture and climate in our schools and have asked parents, staff and students what we can do to make it better. We've analyzed the feedback and are working on implementing strategies and programs that will help us create a positive educational experience for our students. We want to ensure that when they leave Worthington Schools, our young people are ready for careers, college and life.

We have a lot to celebrate in our Worthington schools and community. Not only are we succeeding academically, we are also focused on proactively addressing challenges and needs as they continue to arise. In the end, all of our success is made possible by the collective support of our community and the hard work of our staff and students. Together we can all look forward to a strong future. ♦

Sincerely,

Thomas Tucker, Ph.D., Superintendent



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Operational Efficiency Saves Taxpayer Dollars

Just as families monitor their monthly expenses to stay on track, Worthington Schools does the same by analyzing current operational expenses and making strategic decisions to be as financially efficient as possible.

One area of major focus is energy supply management. Worthington has joined together with surrounding districts to cooperatively purchase both electricity and natural gas. These are cost-avoidance measures that will continue to result in significant savings.

Since starting the cooperative program in 2002, we have saved almost \$2 million in electricity costs that would have otherwise gone to the utility provider. In fact, in the first seven months of 2013, we saved \$351,929. In addition, we are saving approximately 25% in natural gas costs through our

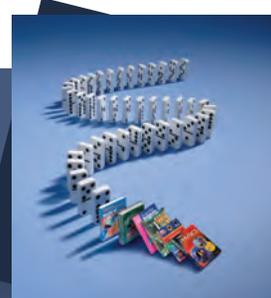
cooperative program participation. These savings translate to lower operational costs and savings for taxpayers. By streamlining utility expenses, we can focus on directing our funds where it counts most – the classroom.

Residents should expect their taxpayer funds are being spent wisely. The Worthington Schools community can be confident that our school leaders are constantly seeking ways to be as efficient as possible. A focus on operational energy efficiency is one example of how our schools are committed to maintaining the leanest budget for our taxpayers. ♦

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Absolute Excellence | Exponential Impact



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Teachers Reach Out to College Professors



After hours of work on the Worthington Science Curriculum rewriting Chemistry courses, the five high school Chemistry teachers began to reference their own experiences in college.

“It’s not like this in college!” one emphatically stated. “Colleges expected students to be able to do this on their own.”

These types of statements prompted the question: When was the last time any of us were college freshmen taking chemistry? The solution was simple, we will go to local universities and meet with college chemistry professors to better understand what it takes to be college ready for chemistry students – for both science and non-science majors.



Our investigation took us to three campuses around Columbus. We met with Dr. Bob Tatz and Dr. Robert Zellmer at Ohio State University, Dr. Dinty Musk at Ohio Dominican University, and Dr. Kim Lance at Ohio Wesleyan University. All four of these college chemistry professors remarkably shared similar viewpoints on the preparedness of their freshmen students which we have distilled down to these five items:

1. Algebra – The single most emphasized skill which was lacking in the freshmen chemistry students regardless of the university was algebra skills. Dr. Musk clearly stated that he could help anyone learn the chemistry but students who lacked the basic algebra skills were significantly behind to the point where their math deficiencies inhibited learning chemistry. This same sentiment was echoed loudly at all of the universities we visited. The professors even gave some algebra examples such as solving equations and isolating single variables, understanding and using base ten logarithms, as well as natural logs and variables in the exponent.

2. Reading your textbook – College students are also expected to read their college textbooks and understand the content they are reading. The professors all expected the students to be able to read the

dense and complex text structure associated with the college textbook. They also emphasized the homework assigned in these textbooks as crucial to better understanding the content. Although the homework does contribute a small impact upon the students’ final grade in the course, the knowledge gained by completing the assignments is far more influential in the student success.

3. Double your time outside of class – This is a basic rule of college life which also applies to chemistry. Students should double or even triple the amount of time spent in the lectures with quality study time on their own. Dr. Tatz from OSU stated if a student attends three hours of lecture a week, they should spend at least six to nine hours a week studying the textbook and notes before attempting the

homework assigned for the topics. Dr. Bob Zellmer added, “This is a full-time job, if not more than full-time, and (students) have to treat it that way.” All of the universities offered additional help to students outside of the lectures, recitation and lab classes. Ohio State University showed us a room staffed five days a week, eight hours a day, with five teaching assistants whose sole responsibility was to help students with chemistry questions.

4. Understanding of the process – Dr. Kim Lance from Ohio Wesleyan University brought together the algebra requirement as well as the ability to learn the processes as opposed to factual memorization. Dr. Lance cited the use of “techniques” which are limited to only certain scenarios and do not provide an understanding of the processes of chemistry as an impediment for student success. Such “techniques” train students for limited success rather than educate them for success in all scenarios.

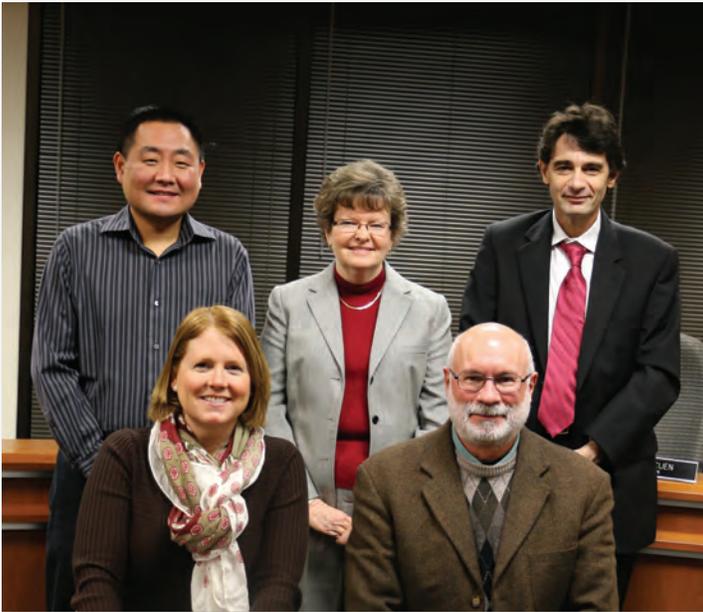
5. Communication skills – All three universities stress the importance of good communication skills in the written form as well as presentation and collaboration skills. Students at ODU first learn to write abstracts in their first semester freshmen chemistry course. This sets up the fundamental skill of summarizing the important aspects of an experiment in a concise and descriptive manner. Students then add to this skill in subsequent semesters until they are prepared to write for professional journals and submit research in a comprehensive and detailed manner.

This was such a positive experience, the Worthington Schools is now investigating and setting up an opportunity for additional teachers to participate in a similar opportunity over the summer.

*Brian Geniusz, K-12 Science/
Health Curriculum Leader
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Meet the 2014 Worthington Board of Education



*Seated: Julie Keegan, President; Charlie Wilson
Standing: Sam Shim, Jennifer Best, Marc Schare, Vice-President*

The Worthington City Schools Board of Education members are elected officials serving our school district. The board is a policymaking body and members are the chief advisers to the superintendent on community attitudes. Board members do not manage the day-to-day operations of a school district; they see to it that the system is managed well by professionals.



Residents of the Worthington Schools community are encouraged to attend Board of Education meetings.

School board members help build public support and understanding of public education, and lead the

public in demanding quality education. The school board serves as a link between schools and the public.

Residents of the Worthington Schools community are encouraged to attend Board of Education meetings. Regular meetings are held the second and fourth Mondays of each month, at 7:30 p.m., in the Worthington Education Center, 200 E. Wilson Bridge Rd. The meeting schedule and agendas are posted on the district website at www.worthington.k12.oh.us. ♦

Students Gain Real World Experience through Business

Thomas Worthington High School means business... literally. A group of senior students have transformed the school store "The Aviary" into a fully operational retail business. It's an opportunity for students to gain experience that can carry into real life.

Members of the Entrepreneurship Business Academy, or the E.B.A., have been working throughout the year to supply the best in gear and supplies to the students and staff. These seniors have volunteered time to keep the store running throughout the day. All students have had the chance to work in different departments and gained experience in the areas of Finance, Marketing, Purchasing and Management.

Not only are students benefiting from this business venture, but the E.B.A. has



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also provided help financially to the community. The popular GussStrong apparel is sold in high demand at the store, with profits going to the beloved Gussler family. Also, Autism Awareness shirts, Breast Cancer awareness shirts, and Haiti bracelets have been sold with the profits going to the respected foundations.

Providing entrepreneurial experience to students in creative and innovative ways gives them real life tools they can take into college and careers. Students at Thomas Worthington High School have learned not only how businesses operate, but also what it means to be a strong community partner. It's another example of what Worthington Schools are doing to prepare students to be college and career ready. ♦

*Special thanks to Kegan Lanter
TWHS senior EBA student*

Worthington Schools on Path of Financial Stability



Excellence in the classroom at a good value to taxpayers: These priorities go hand in hand when it comes to a community and its schools. Here in Worthington, we are committed to

providing residents with information about school finances in a user-friendly way.

Here's an update:

This fall, the Board of Education reviewed a very stable five-year financial forecast for the district. Much of this stability can be attributed to Worthington Schools focus on conservative fiscal management and efficient budgeting, as well as the continual support of our generous voters and community. The latest forecast reflects the Worthington Board

District Financial News Highlighted in Latest PAFR

Make sure to check out our latest Worthington Schools financial report (known as the Popular Annual Financial Report or PAFR) included in this month's newsletter. It details many cost saving measures the district has implemented to stretch our dollars and be as efficient as possible. The PAFR also analyzes where revenues come from and how the money is spent to maintain excellence in the classroom.

Worthington residents will be glad to know that our school district provides excellent schools at a good value to taxpayers. In fact, our residential school tax rate is much lower than many of our peer districts in Central Ohio. That means Worthington residents are paying lower property taxes for high quality schools. What a great value! ♦

of Education's commitment to enacting a sensible and efficient budget for taxpayers, while still protecting the classroom and the high quality programs our community values.

The largest portion of our budget is designated for our teachers in the classroom and the increase on those costs have been extremely modest. Both salaries and insurance costs are increasing less than in previous years because of record numbers of retirements. In fact, fifty-two teachers retired last year alone.

Although the news was mostly positive, Worthington still faces some financial risks, especially regarding state funding. The new state budget reflects an increase in funds to Worthington for this year and next, but when compared to fiscal year 2011, the state has decreased funding by 17 million dollars over the last four years. The majority of this loss is due to the reductions in the reimbursement for tangible personal property tax. No other school district in Franklin County is impacted as much as Worthington when it comes to the loss of this local business tax. Our school district has avoided a financial cliff thanks to the state's stable reimbursement during this budget for the loss of this local funding. We can thank our local legislators for ensuring this state funding stream remains intact for

this biennium. However, these reimbursement payments are at risk of being eliminated each time the state of Ohio enacts a new budget. We will continue our work with our local state leaders to make sure this vital funding source is preserved.

This financial stability also comes at an important time as school districts increasingly face more state and federal mandates, including the Third-Grade Guarantee, the new teacher evaluation system and new testing and learning requirements. Recent legislative action has also increased vouchers and that has resulted in a loss of funding to our Worthington Schools.

The Worthington community has made it very clear that it wants a high quality education for students at a great value. We agree, and we have worked hard and in a very transparent way to communicate with our residents about both the good news as well as the challenges facing our district. We look forward to this continued dialogue and deciding what it takes to maintain and protect excellence in both our community and schools. ♦

Jeff McCuen, Treasurer

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Community members gather before a Board of Education meeting to celebrate the recent accomplishment of Brookside Elementary, a High Progress School of Honor as named by the Ohio Department of Education.