

OUR SCHOOL REPORT



Olmsted Falls School District

Fall 2023

THE BULLDOG WAY

By Superintendent Jim Lloyd, Ed.D.

DISTRICT FOCUSES ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT THROUGH NEW ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM, MASTER FACILITIES PLANNING



As we inch closer to the midway point of this school year, I'm excited to share that after two years of work by our District Leadership Team, we are finally ready to unveil our new benefits-based accountability system. This is a project I'm very passionate about and here's why.

The State of Ohio has a longstanding practice of assessing schools using standardized test scores. In Olmsted

Falls, families often tell us that they moved here because we focus on providing a Triple-A experience, and that we don't "teach to the test" at the expense of that experience. Our new accountability system hones in on the benefits our local community looks for in an education system and how our district currently provides them. It will share meaningful data about our education programs and progress with our community. Most importantly, it will share the information in easy-to-understand language, not educator-speak. Learn more about this new methodology on page 4.

Our buildings are an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to providing experiences that empower our future graduates. We recently completed a comprehensive audit of our facilities and are embarking on a Master Facilities Planning Project to help guide facilities decisions into the future and ensure our schools meet the goals of our community and the district's vision. Learn more about this important community engagement endeavor on page 3.

Throughout this newsletter, you will also find information on focused curriculum efforts, powerful partnerships, and examples of how our students are mastering new skills inside and outside of the classroom thanks to our dedicated teachers and staff.

Our district would not be what it is without the support of our community, so thank you for continuing to make our students' future a top priority.

Dr. James Lloyd
Superintendent



PARTNERSHIP BRINGS ADAPTIVE MUSIC LESSONS TO OLMSTED FALLS

Thanks to the district's ongoing partnership with Music on a Mission, students at both the Early Childhood Center and Falls-Lenox enjoy opportunities to participate in adaptive music therapy once a month. This fall, students in Mr. Voelker's and Ms. Russo's classrooms at Falls-Lenox were excited for their visit from Music on a Mission. Miss Susan sings seasonal songs with the students, using drums and teddy bears to add to the fun, while her partner, Mr. Paul, strums along on his guitar. The songs have catchy tunes, allowing all students to join in at their own pace. It is the highlight of the month for many of our students!



BRETT ROBSON
Treasurer & CFO

TREASURER'S UPDATE: ADAPTING TO THE EVOLVING EDUCATIONAL FUNDING LANDSCAPE

The first quarter of FY24 is under our belts and Olmsted Falls City Schools is performing in line with our latest five-year financial forecast. The district will see a minimal increase in funding from the state for the current year, but there are several unknowns on the horizon.

STATE FUNDING

House Bill 33, the state's budget bill, was signed into law on July 4. It continues the phase-in of the Fair School Funding Plan, introduced in the last state budget, which determines state aid based on local property values and household income.

Olmsted Falls City Schools is receiving an additional \$46,000 in state funding this year. However, there is a projected decrease of \$200,000 in state funding for FY25. This is a result of the anticipated increase in property values within the OFCS community. As property values increase, the state aid formula may reduce the amount of funding to the district.

PROPERTY REAPPRAISALS

Our district includes students who reside in both Cuyahoga and Lorain Counties. Both counties will undergo property reappraisals in 2024. Most, if not all, counties that have undergone recent reappraisals have seen unprecedented increases in property values. However, this does not mean Olmsted Falls City Schools will see an influx in funding. House Bill 920 was passed in 1976 and prevents districts from collecting increased taxes even as property values rise.

House Bill 187 and Senate Bill 153 were recently introduced, however, and would modify the method for valuing real property for tax purposes. We are keeping a close eye on this legislation and what it could mean for our residents' reappraisal process.

STRETCHING OUR DOLLARS

We are ever mindful of the downward trend in funding from the state. We are constantly assessing our budget for cost-saving measures and seeking grants and alternative sources of funding to ensure we are properly staffed, and our facilities and assets are maintained.

Speaking of assets, two new school buses were delivered in October! Four additional new school buses are scheduled for delivery this spring 2024, and two more new buses are scheduled to arrive this summer 2024.

As always, we are grateful for our community's support of our Triple-A experience.



NEW TRACK PROJECT CROSSES FINISH LINE

A new track surface was installed in the Olmsted Falls High School stadium over the summer and opened for use at the start of the fall athletic season.

The project included the resurfacing of the track surrounding Vitamix Field inside Charles Harding Memorial Stadium as well as the high jump and pole vault pads and long jump runways.

The long-awaited project cost approximately \$600,000. Thank you to the Olmsted Falls Athletic Boosters for their donation of \$50,000 toward the project.



DISTRICT ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITY ON MASTER FACILITIES PLANNING

Over the past several decades, Olmsted Falls Schools has seen upgrades and additions to its facilities, including:

1992 - Unification of Falls-Lenox Primary School

1996 - Original construction of Olmsted Falls Middle School

2009 - Original Construction of Olmsted Falls Intermediate School

2009 - Establishment of Olmsted Falls Schools Early Childhood Center

2010 - Expansion of Olmsted Falls Middle School

2019 - Expansion and renovation to Olmsted Falls High School including removal of classroom trailers

Each of these events was part of a long-range facilities plan, established decades ago. Now, with the previous long-range plan completed, it is time for us to engage with our community once again on the topic of district facilities and planning for the future.

To help kick off this new phase of facilities master planning, the district worked with our longstanding architect, Architectural Visual Group, at the end of last school year to conduct a comprehensive audit of district facilities. Detailed assessments look at building conditions, including site features and limitations, maintenance, functionality, and utility systems such as mechanical, electrical and plumbing. All school buildings were assessed with the exception of Olmsted Falls Intermediate School, which was newly constructed in 2009 and not yet in need of significant improvements beyond regular building maintenance. These results were shared with the Board of Education in May of 2023.

Throughout the next 15-18 months, the district will be actively engaging with the community to share information on the recent facilities assessments and determine the future priorities of all district facilities. The district has identified a core group of community stakeholders to serve on a Master Facilities Planning Committee that will help lead efforts to engage the broader community in this important conversation. This committee held its first meeting in late October. We look forward to sharing plans for future engagement opportunities, and to working with our community to gather your thoughts and visions for the future of Olmsted Falls City Schools.

BENEFITS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY: OUR TRUTH-TELLING, TRUST-BUILDING MACHINE

Two questions help guide the decision-making process in Olmsted Falls City Schools. First, how do we inspire and empower students to contribute to society and second, what are our hopes and dreams for Olmsted Falls City School District students? The first question serves as the district's vision for the educational experience we provide to students, and the second assists us in accounting for how well we're doing along that journey.

As we thought about how we would be in a better position to actively live out our vision of "Inspiring and Empowering all students to achieve their full potential and become meaningful contributors in a global society," we recognized the primary method for communicating our district's success to the community falls short using traditional state-mandated means. The Ohio School Report Cards reporting system uses standardized achievement tests to weigh in on the quality of a school and tell its story. We believe this method uses a very small portion of the student experience to make a broad judgment on the quality of that experience; something that we believe is very inaccurate and lacking depth. While test scores will likely be with us for the foreseeable future and they do play a part in determining student achievement, in Olmsted Falls Schools we believe that we can and should provide our community with a more accurate and robust representation of what we're working on and how we're doing.

Over the past two years our District Leadership Team, which consists of administrators and teachers, has learned a new methodology to relay to our primary stakeholders what we're working on and the progress that we're making. While we are the first district in Ohio to undergo this transformation, other school districts in Georgia, Texas, Kentucky and Pennsylvania have also been engaging in this work.

WHY USE THIS APPROACH?

As previously mentioned, standardized achievement tests sample a very small portion of a student's knowledge and do so in a single sitting. The information that is obtained is very technical. We needed to find a way to account for our efforts in a far different manner than what happens in our test-obsessed world. Moreover, when we talked to parents, teachers, students, community members and businesses about the kinds of skills and dispositions they desire for students in K-12 education, their responses were very comprehensive. In Olmsted Falls

we've begun asking this question—What are your hopes and dreams for your students? The responses included the following:

- "I need them to show up."
- "A solid foundation in reading, math, history and science."
- "I want my child challenged."
- "They need to develop their thinking skills."
- "Intellectually curious."
- "Find their passion and purpose."
- "Have friends, be happy and feel a sense of belonging."
- "Learn to be communicative, collaborative, creative, and self-directed."

When you ask people what they want from their school district they speak in the language of benefits. You buy a car for several reasons, but one reason is the benefits that it will provide you. You do the same with a phone, the hospital you choose to use, and so on. As we continued to explore the hopes and dreams question with stakeholders, we found the answers we were given focused on the comprehensive benefits people expect the school district to provide. Families have told us they moved here for the Bulldog Triple-A Experience we provide students, not for the test scores.

We believe that creating a new accountability system that is grounded in the benefits that people want and that the district provides will lead to a more accurate and much more robust accounting of what we do compared to the method that currently exists. The reporting system that we're developing will provide progress in language that parents and community members understand rather than "educator-speak."

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT NEXT?

While we will be required to continue to live within the test-based model our state requires, our community can expect to see reporting on benefits that each school will select from seven main categories: Student Learning, Student Readiness, Student Engagement and Well-Roundedness, Student Well-Being, the Effectiveness of our Staff, Community Connections, and an Effective System.



Each of our five schools has been working to engage its primary stakeholders - parents, guardians, and students - to answer the “what are your hopes and dreams” question in order to help determine the benefits that families expect. In general, there are about 30 common benefits that families identify within each of the seven categories. Including families in the conversation of

what their hopes and dreams are for their children helped our schools identify those areas that they will prioritize and focus on because gathering data on all the benefits at once would be too much. In the coming months, look for each of our schools to provide a report to their primary stakeholders on the progress that is being made for those benefits that have been prioritized.

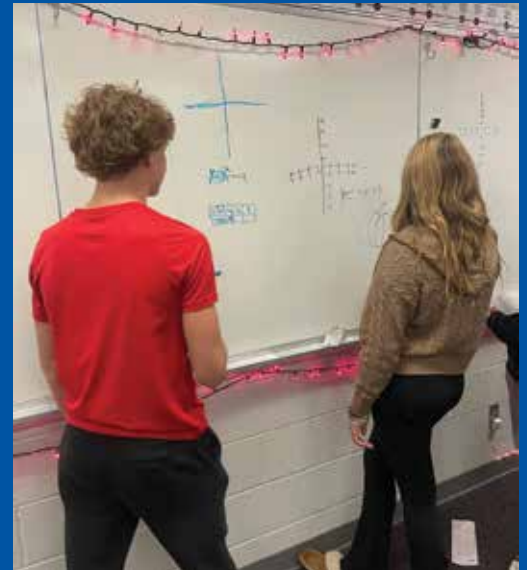
MASTERING WORDS THROUGH STUDY STATIONS

Fifth graders in Mrs. Atkins' class at Olmsted Falls Intermediate School are mastering the English language - and their spelling skills - through engaging word study stations. Students move around the room to experience each of the stations which include cursive writing, spelling with tiles, a matching/concentration card game, and even jumping jack spelling!



$$Y = X + 5$$

Eighth graders in Mrs. Kho's pre-algebra class are off the charts in their efforts to learn new concepts this year. Their teamwork solving problems truly makes them shine.



ITTY BITTY BULLDOGS LEARNING LEADERSHIP THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE

Our Itty Bitty Bulldogs at the Early Childhood Center are learning the importance of giving back at a young age thanks to our Kinder Council. Students meet with School Counselor Andrea Hays monthly and help lead community service projects in the building.



In October, they helped collect three large bags of socks to donate to a local shelter and talked about the upcoming food drive and how we practice being good leaders. Thanks to everyone who participated and who continually helps to teach our children that you're never too little to make a big difference.

BULLDOG BUDDIES HELP STUDENTS CONNECT

Our high school students love meeting and getting to know our Early Childhood Center students through our Bulldog Buddies program!



STUDENTS HAVE GHOSTLY GOOD TIME AT RENAISSANCE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

On Halloween, 45 third grade Terrific Kids members from Falls-Lenox donned their costumes and boarded a bus for the Renaissance Retirement Community. They celebrated the holiday with a costume parade, a comedy show with Halloween-themed jokes, and a dance party. To top off the day, residents gave treat bags to students.

The Terrific Kids program is a partnership between Olmsted Falls Schools and the local Olmsted Kiwanis Club and focuses on community service and character building.



BALANCING THE EQUATION: THE VITAL SYNERGY OF THE SCIENCE OF READING AND THE LOVE OF READING

By Kelli Cogan, Assistant Superintendent

Reading is the cornerstone of education and personal growth, and it can be nurtured in two distinct yet equally important ways: the Science of Reading and the Readers and Writers Workshop model. While they may seem to belong to different realms, they are, in fact, two sides of the same coin, working together harmoniously to develop proficient readers and foster a lifelong love of reading. In Olmsted Falls Schools, the Science of Reading is just as important as the love of reading encouraged by the Workshop Model. Together, the two complement each other to create well-rounded readers.



outside the classroom. Key components of the Workshop model include Choice and Ownership, Authentic Reading Experiences, and cultivating a Community of Readers and Writers.

The Science of Reading and the Workshop Model are not opposing forces; they are complementary components of a holistic approach to literacy education. When combined effectively, they create a powerful synergy that builds competence and confidence, fosters a lifelong love of reading, and allows for individualized instruction to meet the unique needs and interests of each student.

The Science of Reading is rooted in evidence-based research and focuses on the foundational skills required for proficient reading including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These fundamental skills are akin to the building blocks of a sturdy house. Without a solid foundation, the structure may crumble. Our district utilizes two primary resources to build a solid reading foundation for students: Heggerty for phonemic awareness and Foundations for phonics and fluency. Vocabulary instruction and comprehension strategies are also central components of the district's literacy curriculum.



In the quest to cultivate strong, enthusiastic readers, both the Science of Reading and the Readers and Writers Workshop model play pivotal roles in Olmsted Falls City Schools. The Science of Reading provides the essential skills and knowledge needed to read proficiently, while the Workshop Model fosters a lifelong love of reading by creating an environment where reading is celebrated and cherished. In the end, it is not a matter of choosing one over the other but recognizing their interdependence and leveraging their combined strengths to create

The Readers and Writers Workshop model, on the other hand, focuses on the joy and excitement of reading. It creates a classroom environment that celebrates books, encourages personal connections with literature, and promotes active reading and writing. This model helps students develop a genuine love for reading, making them more likely to engage with books

well-rounded readers who are not only capable but passionate about the written word.

For additional information or questions about the comprehensive literacy curriculum in Olmsted Falls City Schools, please reach out to your student's building principal or contact Assistant Superintendent Kelli Cogan at kcogan@ofcs.net or (440) 427-6000.

A BEAUTIFUL WORLD

Our earliest learners are discovering the power of teamwork through art!



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NEWS AS IT HAPPENS: OLMSTED FALLS SCHOOLS ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM & X

There are great things happening **every day** across the Olmsted Falls City School District! Keep up with the news and information via the district's social media channels.

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ROX TAKES CENTER STAGE AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

A group of girls from Olmsted Falls High School recently took a national stage to talk about the positive impact of the ROX (Ruling Our Experiences) program - currently offered at Olmsted Falls Intermediate and Middle schools, and soon to be expanded to Olmsted Falls High School. The girls joined forces with ROX members from Huron City Schools ROX group to present at the National Association of Pupil Services Administrators annual conference held in Cleveland. Their presentation titled "ROX 'n Roles: How Schools Put ROX into Practice" was made in

conjunction with ROX Founder and Executive Director Dr. Lisa Hinkelman's own presentation on how ROX helps girls control their relationships, experiences, decisions and futures.

Sara Myers, school counselor for Olmsted Falls Middle School and advisor of the OFMS ROX program, also participated in the event with the girls. Way to go, ROX Bulldogs, for sharing your experiences and knowledge about this amazing program!

