

Commentary

A Newsletter for the Residents of the Westlake City School District

Westlake school facilities: Planning begins, community input sought

To sustain our *Mission of Excellence* in Westlake and to protect our taxpayers' investment, the Westlake City School District has begun a 25-year facility planning process. To frame the issues, Superintendent Dr. Daniel J. Keenan Jr. recently convened a nine-person focus group of local experts and citizens to address and review the district's facility needs.

The group toured schools, compared Westlake with like districts, reviewed needs identified by the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC) and studied a physical plant audit of our buildings by Westlake-based Lesko Architecture, which specializes in

school facilities.

The citizen focus group met six times throughout March and April and reached several conclusions: they felt

Become part of the process in shaping the future of the Westlake City Schools' facilities by answering a few questions in an online community survey at www.wlake.org/survey

strongly that facility needs exist, the appropriate next step is seeking opinions and input from the community, and a 25-year master facilities plan must be completed in a timely fashion so the

district can arrive at a comprehensive and cost-effective approach.

Westlake is not alone. Many school systems face issues related to maintenance, repair and replacement. A 2002 OSFC study revealed many areas needing attention. While some issues noted in the study have been addressed, many replacement cycles never materialized due to multiple emergency replacements and repairs, such as heating coil deterioration and pipe breaks that caused Dover Elementary School to close in each of the last two years. In Westlake, facility needs now include roof repairs, HVAC replacement, plumbing systems,

Continued on page 3

Activities highlight \$549,000 grant implementation

The Westlake City School District is moving forward with implementing a variety of programming under the STEM state grant for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

In May, Lee Burneson Middle School staff attended professional development workshops at Lorain County Community College to focus on math and science curriculum. This summer these same teachers will attend a STEM Summer Institute to learn about inquiry-based scientific teaching methods, project-based learning and writing curriculum to the content standards. In August the entire LBMS staff will participate in a Technology Camp to learn about the new technologies bought to support STEM classrooms.

Some of that technology includes an interactive video distance learning lab, overhead projectors, wireless keyboard and mouse systems, Promethean Board slates, hand-held response systems, mobile laptop computer labs, digital webcams and cameras, GPS hand-held devices, digital microscopes, LEGO Robotics kits, science CSI building sets and SharePoint software.

Inside

- Westlake High School plans bell schedule change for 2009-10
- District to re-evaluate K-12 math course of study this fall
- CIP continues to drive district goals
- New building, district leadership
- WCSD summer projects

Proactive planning for 2009 WHS schedule change

In spring 2007, a committee of high school faculty members came together to consider changing the Westlake High School bell schedule. The result is the hybrid, or composite, schedule that the high school is planning for at the beginning of the 2009-10 school year.

The district realizes the importance of staff development and will spend the 2008-09 school year looking at how the new schedule impacts all programming. It also will be a time to communicate to students and parents and to fine tune the concept.

The high school scheduling committee looked at more than 100 high school schedules, along with 20 in an Ohio Department of Education comparison

group, and came up with four goals to meet in designing a new schedule:

1. Increase instructional time
2. Schedule flexibility
3. Teacher access to extended instructional time blocks
4. Address lunch issues

The resulting schedule is a blend of block and traditional schedule concepts.

A traditional schedule has nine periods in a day (eight classes plus a lunch). The hybrid schedule incorporates a traditional schedule three days per week and a block schedule (four classes plus a lunch) two days a week. The block days take classes from the traditional 42 to 46 minutes and create blocks of classes of about 90 minutes. WHS Principal Tim

Freeman said the new schedule provides an additional 22 minutes of student contact time per week.

“The faculty wants more time in the classroom,” Freeman said. “This is like adding another month of school in the same amount of time. It adds up to 25 additional days of instruction.”

Research shows the block scheduling concept increases achievement, planning time, active teaching strategies, and student and school productivity.

WHS faculty will undergo professional development on the new schedule during the 2008-09 school year. The high school also will work with teachers, students and parents to prepare for the schedule change in 2009-10.

Calendar Addition

Please note the addition of two staff development days for the 2008-09 school year. These days were recently approved by the Ohio Department of Education. School will be closed on Wednesday, Sept. 10 and Oct. 1, to provide our staff additional days to work on curriculum initiatives.

District to re-evaluate K-12 math course of study this fall

This fall, curricular improvement efforts will include a review of the K-12 mathematics course of study. A committee of staff members will spend the 2008-09 school year collaborating on best practices for math and coordinating curriculum across grade levels and from year to year.

The main goals are to balance the elementary curriculum, continue to support the process that created a strong math program based on basic facts and research-supported programs, evaluate the potential of incorporating Algebra on a broader level, seeking ways to make connections with math and other content areas through real-world problems, and continuing to make Westlake a leader in math curriculum.

Director of Academic Services Pam Griebel said a cross-section of faculty will strive to establish a math program that provides students with a balanced program of processing and basic fluency skills.

The ultimate goal is to create a math program with the skills and rigor necessary to prepare students for math programs at all levels -- primary school through college -- through a well-rounded program.

CIP continues driving district goals

This summer a team of community members, staff and administrators is busy writing a new two-year Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) to guide the district's priorities, goals and action plans over the next two years.

The CIP serves as the district's guiding principles for student achievement, curriculum programs and how we utilize technology. Through the CIP, the district uses data to monitor progress.

The plan has proven to be an effective way to organize the district's time and resources to ensure the focus remains on pressing needs, according to Parkside Principal Mark Bregar, who has led the committee's effort for several years.

The revamped CIP will be ready to roll out as the 2008-09 school year opens.

The first plan was adopted by the Board of Education in 2000. A monitoring committee annually measures the district's compliance with the plan and measures whether goals were achieved.

Facilities are top priority for district

Continued from Page 1

modern code compliance and others.

The district's next step is obtaining input from community stakeholders, allowing the district to move forward in a manner consistent with the values of both the district and the community. This is necessary to define a set of values that will contribute to solutions best serving our students and representing the entire community. Westlake Schools began the outreach process and plans in-depth interviews, discussion groups, building tours, telephone and on-line

surveys, and extensive communications about the state of our facilities. That gives the whole community the opportunity to provide input and enable the district to analyze awareness of and opinions about how to address needs.

The district would like to recognize and thank the focus group members and their companies for volunteering time to review data, and for helping to frame the issues facing the district at this time. These members include: Mike Bilardo of Hyland Software Inc.,

Jim Connole of Westlake City Council, Nate Cross of the Westlake City Planning Commission, Mark Doran and Bill Rolff of Energizer Battery Company, Chris Milowicki of C.J. Tom Builders, Nancy and Steve Schill of Schill Architecture Inc. and Steve Steffas of CB Richard Ellis.

An online community survey is available at www.wlake.org/survey, or on the district web site at www.wlake.org. Please take a moment to provide us your feedback.

New administrative leaders at building, district level

Two new faces will greet elementary students, staff and parents at the opening of the new school year at Dover and Holly Lane elementary schools. Mimi Verdone, assistant principal at Parkside Intermediate School, was appointed as the new principal for Holly Lane Elementary School, and Timothy Barrett, principal at Kenston Intermediate School in Chagrin Falls, was appointed as the new principal for Dover Elementary School.

Verdone earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Miami University. She completed post-graduate work through Ashland University and Kent State University. A vacancy was created at Holly Lane after Principal Pam Griebel was appointed the new Director of Academic Services in January.

Barrett earned his bachelor's degree in education from Kent State University and a master's degree in elementary administration from Ashland University. Barrett has been principal at Kenston Intermediate School – a grades 4-5 building – since 2006. Prior to that he was principal at Kenston's Gardiner Elementary School and assistant principal at Timmons Elementary School. He also was an assistant principal in the Akron Public School District, where he also taught music.

At the district level, Dover Elementary Principal Mike Laub is moving into the role of Director of Human Resources, and Stephanie Morgan, special education coordinator for Barberton City Schools, was appointed as Director of Pupil Services.

Morgan earned a master's degrees in school psychology from Kent State University and is a Ph.D. candidate. She was an intervention psychologist/District OISM coach and a school psychologist with the Brecksville-Broadview Heights City Schools.

Verdone, Barrett, Laub and Morgan will assume their new duties Aug. 1.

Summer capital, technology projects

School may be out for the summer, but a flurry of activity will still be going on to improve the appearance and safety of our Westlake City Schools.

The district is undertaking a number of projects over the summer that include repairing sidewalks, curbs and parking lots; repairing exterior doors; replacing fire doors; refurbishing the Westlake High School locker room; repairing roofs; creating restrooms that comply with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements; replacing Parkside Intermediate School's A/C unit; and replacing the two-way radio atop the Administration Building.

Some WHS restrooms also will be receiving facelifts with new fixtures, sinks and partitions.

The district's technology department also will be busy installing 108 ceiling-mounted projectors -- 37 at Lee Burneson Middle School as part of the STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) \$549,000 grant and 71 at other school buildings.

Know your transportation needs

The Westlake Board of Education supports the district's provision of bus transportation to/from childcare facilities, provided it is cost effective and meets the needs of the school district and its families. Based on Board of Education policies, the following rules govern the district's provision of bus transportation to/from childcare facilities:

1. For service to start at the beginning of the school year, the completed Custodial Care Form must be received by the Transportation Department prior to July 31. Late forms will not go into effect until Sept. 8. Forms received after Sept. 2 will take a minimum of 5 working days to go into effect.

2. Service must be for 5 days per week. Service is for the entire school year or until changed in writing.

3. The location of the childcare provider to/from which the student is to be transported must be located in an area designated by the Board as eligible for bus transportation to the school of attendance. Should the Superintendent place a student at a building other than their home school, trans-

portation would be provided to childcare providers to/from either the school of attendance or home school area.

4. The provision of transportation must be cost effective and must not require the establishment of new bus routes. Transportation will be provided only if there is sufficient space on the appropriate bus after space has been made available for all other students qualified for transportation.

5. All students must have a Custodial Care Form on file prior to transportation service to begin.

Custodial Care forms are effective for the current school year only and must be completed annually. Forms can be obtained at the Westlake Board of Education, 27200 Hilliard Blvd., between 8 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Completed forms are to be returned to the Westlake City Schools Transportation Department, 1097 Bassett Road. If you have any transportation related questions, contact the Transportation Department at (440) 835-6313.

The Westlake City School District is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action agency and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, political affiliation or disability.

Westlake City Schools

27200 Hilliard Blvd.
Westlake, OH 44145

Non-Profit Organization

U.S. Postage Paid
Cleveland, Ohio
Permit No. 3411

Large-type edition of the
Commentary (text only) is
available. Call (440) 250-1258

Westlake City Schools Commentary is published six times per year by the Westlake City Schools.

The Board of Education:
Andrea Rocco, President
Timothy Sullivan, Vice President
Joseph Marinucci
Thomas Mays
Carol Winter

Dr. Daniel J. Keenan Jr., Superintendent
Mark C. Pepera, CFO/Treasurer

The Westlake City School District is a member of the Westlake Chamber of Commerce.

Please forward comments to Kim Bonvissuto, communications coordinator, 27200 Hilliard Blvd., or call (440) 250-1258. Or email bonvissuto@wlake.org

ECRWSS
POSTAL LOCAL PATRON
44145