

POINTS OF PRIDE

Ontario Local Schools

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Dear Ontario School Families:

FIRST, THE BAD NEWS: The Fair School Funding Plan that we told you about in the Spring 2019 edition of this district newsletter has not been adopted by the state legislature. As I write this, we are still awaiting the final compromise budget bill that will be sent to the Governor's desk. I thank those who have reached out to our leaders and have continued to contact our local representatives and encouraged their support of the Fair School Funding Plan. Our local legislators have shared that they have heard from our Ontario community.

As you recall, the State has underfunded our district for a number of years. It is widely recognized that our current school-funding formula, forged in the last recession, is seriously flawed. Under the current formula, Ontario has been capped. We should be receiving an additional \$2.6 million annually from the

State; however, they have capped the amount of money to Ontario, and we have not received any of the monies owed to us. The proposed Fair School Funding Plan would have eliminated most of these caps over a four (4) year period. Unfortunately, the budget that was recently passed actually results in our district receiving less money from the State in fiscal year (FY) 2020 than we did in FY 2019.

As shared in the spring, without the passage of the Fair School Funding Plan, it would be necessary for our district to place a levy on the ballot. In order to avoid a deficit, we must proceed with a new levy request in November 2019. On November 5, 2019, our district will place a \$1,935,000 five (5) year emergency levy on the ballot, estimated at 6.9 mills. Funds from this new levy request will be used to maintain current educational programs. Please be reminded that our district has not passed a new revenue levy since 2006. The main reason our district has avoided the need for a levy is due to the implementation of open enrollment in the 2011-2012 school year. Open enrollment generated over \$2.4 million to our district in FY 2019. There are only a couple ways that a school district can generate new revenue. One is to increase enrollment, which we have done. The second is to pass a levy. Open enrollment has now reached its capacity, and we can no longer generate additional funds through this means. Our buildings are close to maximum student capacity; thus, we will need to place a levy on the ballot this November.

SECOND, A SMALL RAY OF LIGHT: The State House of Representatives has introduced an amended version of the Fair School Funding Plan. **IF** this school funding plan were to pass, it might eliminate our need for the November 5 levy. Since we do not know if the State is going to pass a new plan, we must continue to meet the required deadlines for placement of a levy on the fall ballot. If the State acts favorably prior to the November election, our intent could be to rescind the November levy request.

In the interim, our Board of Education will actively engage with our elected representatives in both the Ohio House and Senate. We will continue to ask them to get behind the Fair School Funding Plan, in hopes that our efforts will eliminate the need for a levy.

In summary, our district is at the mercy of the state legislature. We can only proceed with what we know at this moment. Our district is prepared to react whenever, or if ever, the State makes their decision.