

**Prepared Notes for Board Meeting**  
**November 14, 2012**  
**Marc A. Schare**  
**614 791-0067**  
[marc9@aol.com](mailto:marc9@aol.com)

Tonight, I want to share a few thoughts on the levy and the two statewide conferences I attended since our last meeting.

Congratulations and thank you to all of the volunteers who worked tirelessly to pass the Worthington School District levy. I am proud of this effort for these reasons. Unlike many districts across the state, we didn't win because of emotional blackmail, we didn't win because of a big long scary cut list and we didn't win because of overdramatic statements about what would happen if we lost. We won because our levy volunteers, our Superintendent and our Treasurer explained, in literally a hundred different forums both formal and informal since the start of the year, the fiscal reality of what we face while at the same time, our employees, all of them, demonstrated shared sacrifice through their contracts starting at the top with the contracts of our Superintendent, our Treasurer and our administrators. Let me share some thoughts on what Issue 53 is not. Issue 53 is not a license to spend money frivolously. The incremental levy provides enough money to fund the existing education spending plan under current assumptions with an adequate margin of error. My hope is that we use it as such, and that we discuss any deviations from the plan with our constituents prior to implementation. We have the security of money that is in the bank, but the uncertainties of where funding is going in the state. We also have a lot of challenges. Common Core, Teacher Evaluations, increasing enrollment, unfunded mandates like the third grade reading guarantee and so forth. The bottom line for me is this. Worthington honored our district with their vote and the trust that we'll continue to do what we say we are going to do. Those are two things I hope we'll never take for granted.

I attended the Statewide Race to the Top conference two weeks ago and the capital conference this week. The buzz at the Race to the Top conference, centered on two topics, teacher evaluations and the third grade guarantee. With regard to teacher evaluations, this board is required to develop a policy for teacher evaluations by July 1, 2013. ODE is recommending a very detailed policy, full of information about student growth measures for dozens of different classes, observations of teachers and scores of other details that constitute an employee evaluation. OSBA is recommending a minimalist approach that simply references an administrative handbook type document. Various law firms opined on the subject anticipating contentious battles between districts and teachers. In Worthington, the Race to the Top committee should be putting together much of the detail of figuring out if students are learning, or at least figuring out if you can figure out if students are learning. OSBA, ODE and the law firms all agree on one point – this is the type of policy where the Board must be involved from its inception and shouldn't simply rubber stamp a document that is provided 4 days before the first reading. I agree with them.

With regard to the third grade reading guarantee, there were two sessions I attended that were on point. One was a public "conversation with Michael Sawyer", the acting state Superintendent and the other was specifically on the guarantee from Sasheen Phillips from ODE. The information given at both sessions was consistent, and it was also consistent with a private conversation I had with Superintendent Sawyer.

In a nutshell, there are no loopholes surrounding the guarantee. We must retain kids who fail and continue to fail the reading test. Any kid that is so retained is counted as a third grader for EMIS purposes and will take the appropriate third grade assessments during the year, however...

The law not only permits, it requires us to offer appropriate 4th grade instruction in all areas where the student has demonstrated proficiency, including math, science and social studies. I explicitly asked whether this instruction can be provided in a fourth grade classroom and the answer from both Sawyer and Phillips was an unqualified yes, it can be provided in a fourth grade classroom although it does not have to be. Such a student, while technically in third grade, would be "accelerated" into fourth grade for those subjects and treated like any other accelerated student.

Based on this, the following scenario is possible.

A student fails the third grade reading test but the parents, principal and teacher believe they are capable of fourth grade work in other areas. The student receives reading intervention but it otherwise allowed to participate in all fourth grade activities except for reading, where we can offer some kind of pull-out in much the same way that we used to offer Gifted-ELA. Hopefully, the intervention works and we can officially promote the student by the middle of the next year.

In my opinion, the above scenario honors the intent and letter of the law, but removes the social stigma associated with retention. It obviously would only apply if our team believes the student capable of fourth grade work, but I trust our principals and teachers enough to make that call.

That said, there is a disconnect between what ODE is saying and what the legislature is saying, but since the above is consistent with the plain language of the statute, I hope we can consider modifying our policy to reflect the possibility.

Finally, congratulations to the new inductees for our two chapters of the National Honor Society. I attended the induction event at Kilbourne and I thought the keynote address by David Freel, the former Executive Director of the Ohio Ethics Commission was an excellent choice to honor the traditions of NHS. I also attended the very important community conversation our district hosted from Drug-Safe Worthington. This session shines the light of day on drug abuse by so-called "good" kids from suburban houses and helps parents to detect early warning signs. This is such important work. In the recent

culture climate survey, a staggering 91% of teachers surveyed felt that Worthington Kilbourne has a substance abuse problem and 72% of parents surveyed agreed with them, as did 56% of the students. In the meeting I attended and the sessions that followed, you can literally see people's eyes being opened at the sheer ingenuity of how kids can get high. On my way out, I heard one parent say to her husband that they needed to empty the medicine cabinet as soon as they get home. Who knows how many lives were saved at this event. A big thank you to Drug-Safe Worthington and the Worthington faculty that helps them for this important work.