

# Oberlin schools are succeeding

In my last column I outlined Issues 21 and 22, and some of the cost containment strategies the board has put in place prior to putting those issues on the ballot. In this column I promised to share some of the success stories in the schools — the kind that Issues 21 and 22 will help to sustain and further improve.

One topic that comes up frequently is test scores. Late this summer the state released test results, including district SAT and ACT scores. Oberlin's SAT scores rose to be the highest in Lorain County last year. Higher than Avon Lake, Midview, Avon, Amherst, Vermilion, Firelands, Wellington, Elyria, North Ridgeville, Sheffield/Sheffield Lake, Columbia, Keystone, and Lorain (in that order).

We also had a higher participation rate than all of those districts (53 percent, with another 42 percent taking the ACT, on which we also scored highest in the county). Thus our top score was not due to a few bright students skewing the results, but a large group of strong students.

In addition to having the highest scores in the county, Oberlin's ACT and SAT results were equal to or higher than every district in northeast Ohio that was rated "Effective" on the district report card, and higher than 85 percent of those rated "Excellent." This is indeed a substantial piece of data, which leads to the second piece of good news — others are noticing.

This year, even though the school board tightened the admission requirements substantially this spring, nearly 50 percent more students are open enrolling into Oberlin than two years ago. Likewise, nearly 50 percent fewer

## Superintendent's Standpoint

By Geoff Andrews



*Geoff Andrews, a 1979 graduate of Oberlin High School, is superintendent of the Oberlin schools. He will use this space to write of school issues.*

students are open enrolling out of Oberlin than two years ago. The drop from 85 to 46 going out, coupled with the rise from 39 to 57 coming in is a result of improved schools and an improved perception of the Oberlin schools. It also saves the district about a quarter million dollars a year.

A third piece of good news to share is the district's progress toward becoming the first fully authorized International Baccalaureate district in Ohio. The board is committed to providing this top shelf education to every K-10 student in the district, and providing it as an option to all juniors and seniors. An IB education will give Oberlin students the best possible preparation for future endeavors, be they academic or employment.

There are 10 characteristics that make up the IB learner profile and that are developed in IB students. The IB profile consists of students who are Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Critical Thinkers,

Communicators, Risk-takers, Principled, Caring, Open-minded, Well-balanced and Reflective. We will be developing these 10 characteristics in all of our students. Already, I am pleased to report that discipline referrals are down nearly 40 percent year to year for the month of September from a year ago.

More good news about our schools — last year our arts programs were highly decorated and recognized. The orchestra received high honors in its Chicago competition; the band received acclaim in Florida (the trips were paid for through fundraisers, not by tax dollars). And while the rest of the high schools submitting artwork to the Northern Ohio Art competition had less than one in 10 of their works accepted (250 of 2600), Oberlin artwork was accepted at a better than nine in 10 rate (68 of 75).

Additional good news includes offering several new courses at the

high school this year, as a result of our partnerships with the city and the college. Resident Angela Wu (OHS '97, Harvard and Harvard Law) has led the development of a Street Law class that nearly half the junior and senior classes selected this year. I encourage you all to watch or attend the board meeting this evening, when students and teachers from this class will be presenting to the board.

Two other classes have been developed with the support of the college — a Shakespeare course that carries OC and OHS credit, and an Environmental Science course focused on sustainability. And speaking of sustainability, we have converted to using all "green" cleaning products at Eastwood, hoping to expand that across the district after we analyze our results.

This is a short list of the good news in our schools — there are more good stories to tell, including successes on the athletic fields. There is a lot of positive momentum in the district. The two school levies on the ballot will help to sustain and institutionalize that momentum. Please come to one of the many evening information sessions to learn more — I'll be at Mount Zion on Sunday, Pittsfield Township Hall on Monday, Russia Township Hall on Tuesday, Oberlin High School on Wednesday, and at many of the evening coffees being hosted in private homes. Check the web site [sustaintheprogress.org](http://sustaintheprogress.org) for more details, and to submit questions. I have also posted a streaming video about the levy on the superintendent's page at the district web site. As always, feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.