

**STATE OF THE SCHOOLS ADDRESS**  
**The Village of Ottawa Hills Town Hall Meeting - October 29, 2009**

Good evening, Village residents. Thank you for coming to this important event.

It is with great pleasure that I deliver the annual State of the Schools Address tonight. As you already know, you live in a community in which education is valued as a **top priority**. Our goal in the Ottawa Hills School District is to **maximize learning for every child**. The members of the Board of Education, as well as the district's teachers and administrators, strive to promote a climate of **high expectations** and a culture of **continuous improvement**.

During the 2008-2009 school year and in the beginning of this school year, our schools have achieved many significant accomplishments.

Last fall, the entire Kindergarten -12<sup>th</sup> grade student body held a district-wide pep rally in the football stadium to celebrate the announcement that the Ottawa Hills School District was ranked **first in the state in student performance** by the Ohio Department of Education for the previous school year. "We're Number One!" could be heard throughout the neighborhood. The band played; the cheerleaders cheered; and everyone experienced a true sense of pride in the students' accomplishments. It was the first time in anyone's memory that we had ever gathered every member of the student body and every staff member together for such an event.

Our No. 1 ranking was based on the **Performance Index (PI)**, a weighted average that includes the level of achievement of every student on each state test taken in grades 3-8 and 10. This Performance Index is reported for all 614 districts in Ohio each school year on the Local Report Card. Our district is consistently ranked among the top districts in the state. Our district's PI was 109.7 out of 120. Solon City Schools near Cleveland was second; Wyoming City Schools near Cincinnati was third.

This fall, we learned that our ranking for the 2008-2009 school year is **second in the state**, even though our PI has continued to increase to 109.8. Wyoming near Cincinnati was first.

The District is also **consistently rated** as "**Excellent**." We have met all **30 out of 30 indicators** evaluated by the state. The indicators include performance on state tests, graduation rate, and attendance rate. We have a 100% graduation rate, and all of our teachers are rated as Highly Qualified according to state certification requirements. Dr. John Bender from the Ohio Board of Education attended our October 20, 2009, Board of Education meeting to present the district with a banner for being rated as "Excellent" for **nine years in a row**.

In addition, both this year and last year, the district achieved a new designation "**Excellent with Distinction**." The designation **recognizes high-performing school districts** that have earned the "Excellent" rating and have also exceeded value-added progress goals for two consecutive years. Students must display more than one year's growth for each year of schooling to receive this honor. Only 116 out of the 614 districts have achieved the "Excellent with Distinction" designation.

Ottawa Hills Junior/Senior High School was selected as one of the top public high schools in the nation according to *Newsweek* magazine's annual listing of "**America's Best High Schools.**" Schools were ranked on the basis of a Challenge Index, a measure of the **rigor** of the curriculum. It is based on participation in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests. *Newsweek's* list of over 1300 schools in the U.S. included only **26 schools in Ohio**. The list represents the top 5% of all high schools in the nation.

*U.S. News and World Report* also included OHHS in its list of best high schools in a similar study recognizing schools based on the level of achievement of all students, including at-risk populations, and on participation in curriculum that promotes college readiness. We were **95<sup>th</sup> on a list of 100 gold medal schools** in the country. There were only four schools from Ohio on this list.

The School Board operates under a **five-year strategic plan**. Each year the members of the Board of Education select goals from the plan. Progress is measured through the accomplishment of these goals. In response to a goal to explore the need for a third foreign language, the Board added Mandarin Chinese to the curriculum in the junior/senior high school. Last year, the district hosted a Guest Teacher from China through a program sponsored by The College Board and the Ohio Department of Education. Chinese I and Chinese II are being taught in 2009-2010 with a goal of adding more levels in the future.

We also added AP Chemistry to our course offerings for 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders. Currently the high school has 13 Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The College Board has recognized twenty-nine (29) students as **AP Scholars** due to their exceptional achievement on the college-level AP Examinations. Only 18% of the more than 1.7 million students who take these exams worldwide achieve this distinction.

This September, two seniors were named as semifinalists in the 2010 **National Merit** Scholarship Competition. Two additional students were named as Commended Students. Semifinalists, who represent less than 1% of U.S. high school seniors, are the highest scoring entrants in each state.

During the past year, our OH athletes demonstrated **pro prowess on the state level** in their respective sports. The OHHS boys' soccer team won the state championship and became the first team from NW Ohio to bring home this honor for soccer. Our boys' golf team placed sixth in the state tournament. Drew Fillis was a state qualifier in girls' tennis. In girls' gymnastics, Karla Dixon took second place in the vault. Katharine Jamieson was the state champion and set a new state record in 300 m hurdles. She took fourth place in the state track meet in 100 m and 200 m. Evan Bechtel, singles, and Chris Court and Jim Mackey, doubles, were state qualifiers in boys' tennis.

This fall, our girls' tennis team sent Drew Fillis, singles, and Arohi and Shivani Bhatt, doubles, to state-level competition. We are very proud of the accomplishments of our student athletes.

Last spring, we conducted a search for a **new junior/senior high school principal**. In July, the Board of Education named Mr. Benjamin McMurray, who is a village resident, as the next principal of Ottawa Hills Junior/Senior High School. Mr. McMurray was the assistant principal

of Pioneer Middle School in the Plymouth-Canton School District in Plymouth MI. He replaced Mrs. Katharine Hurst who retired after 34 years in education and 27 years with the district as a high school mathematics and computer science teacher, assistant principal, and principal.

Administrators and Board members worked collaboratively with the Ottawa Hills Village Council, our parent and community support organizations (such as PTO, MSG, Boosters, OH Foundation), and many individual citizens to provide the funds necessary to install an **artificial turf field at the OHHS stadium**. A committee, consisting of school, village, and community representatives, studied the issue for over a year before concluding that the installation of an artificial turf field was the best solution to the problems created by years of overuse of our grass fields by school and community groups.

The artificial turf field is a **community asset** that is the result of a total community effort and strong teamwork, led by the Athletic Boosters and members of a group called the Grass Roots Turf Project. OH children and adults of all ages, who participate in many school and village teams and a variety of other community activities, will benefit from the use of this facility for many years to come. Use of this field during all four seasons will also relieve the stress on scheduling our indoor school facilities by community groups. The village may now also attract regional and state athletic competitions because of this new, safer playing surface.

In the November 2008 election, the community supported a **1.5 mill replacement permanent improvement levy**. These funds are used to maintain, repair, and renovate the district's buildings and grounds; to purchase equipment with a useful life of at least five years; and to provide and upgrade all technology hardware.

We have made progress on providing a **safe, secure learning environment** for our students and staff. Through a federal COPS grant, the district has installed security cameras at building entrances, in parking lots, and in the stadium to improve safety and security for our students.

In an effort to improve **communication**, we launched a redesigned district website. Our goal was to make it more visually pleasing, easy to navigate, and information-rich. An emergency notification system, called *OH Connections*, is on the website. You can register to receive emergency notifications through this system. We also improved the ability of our parents to monitor their students' academic progress through the use of *Pinnacle*, an electronic grading and reporting system. The parent-viewer feature allows a student and his/her parents to see progress reports whenever they choose to do so.

In Ottawa Hills, we are fortunate to have all of the **ingredients of an excellent school district**: students who come to school ready to learn, involved parents, dedicated experienced teachers, and a supportive community. We hope to continue to earn your trust, your valued support, and your involvement in providing a quality education for this community's children.

Thank you.

C. Gary Wilson  
School Board President

