

NEW AND OLD NEWS

By the time that you read this, you will undoubtedly be aware of the fact that the State Board of Education, by a 16-1 vote on Tuesday, April 12, 2005, authorized the feasibility study by the Ohio Department of Education prior to creating the Peebles Local School District. This came on the heels of the recommendation of the Subcommittee on Territorial Transfers, in which this committee voted by a 5-1 margin, to refer the Citizens to Create the Peebles Local School District's (CCPLSD) proposal on to the full State Board of Education for their consideration. In casting these two respective votes, the Subcommittee, as well as the full State Board of Education have sent me a very clear message. That message is that small school districts are preferred, no matter the cost or whether it is affordable to the local taxpayer or the State of Ohio.

To say that I have learned a lot in the past three years is an understatement, for I have definitely learned a lot. I have learned that the legislature and the ODE are definitely not on the same page. You see, our legislators would have us all believe that when it comes to financial matters, Ohio is in dire straits. I have shared with you before that Ohio has a funding shortfall of some four to five billion dollars. This problem has been well documented through various media sources. However, the ODE, and particularly the State Board, are evidently not buying it. How else can you explain their approval to create a new low wealth school district out of a larger low wealth school district, where there will be duplication of jobs and services that lead to overall increased costs, not decreased costs? Did you know that one of the provisions of House Bill 66 provides for a feasibility study into further consolidation of school districts, not deconsolidation?

I have learned that you cannot help people who don't want to be helped. Along those same lines, I have also learned that you can't provide answers to questions when the people asking those questions are really not interested in answers to their questions. It's only a "smokescreen" for something else.

I have learned to be very watchful of those who are supposedly working in concert with you. This isn't always the case. People aren't always what they appear to be.

I have learned that just because someone gladly accepts a job with our district, receives a fair wage with excellent benefits, this doesn't mean that they are loyal to our district. I don't understand this practice, and I suppose that this has been the hardest thing for me to fully comprehend. It's okay to disagree with your employer or to have a difference in philosophy. It is quite another thing to be actively involved as an employee in an issue, such as deconsolidation, that has the potential to negatively impact your employer, the same employer who helps to put a roof over your head, food on your table, and clothes on your back.

Yes, it has been a long, hard three years. Where does this latest action of the State Board leave us? Well, most certainly I think it means that our goal to construct new elementary facilities in Adams County must be put on hold again. You can't work on a project such as this if you don't know exactly who you are as a school district. I am quite certain that at some point somebody will be able to accomplish this desperately needed goal for our

youngest learners. They are so deserving of much, much better in terms of facilities, than what they are housed in now. I am going to make a huge assumption here that there are going to be folks who will be disappointed to hear that this project will have to wait again. The People Advocating Superior Schools (P.A.S.S.) will go ahead with the scheduled meeting on May 5, 2005, at 7:00 p.m. at North Adams Elementary. It is hoped that we will know something about our state/local match for the project by then.

Our school district prepared and presented a report to the Subcommittee on Territorial Transfers in opposition to further deconsolidation of the school district. This occurred on Sunday, April 10, 2005, in Columbus, Ohio. In making preparations for this presentation, there was a series of questions regarding various school-related considerations that had to be answered by the AC/OVSD as well as the CCPLSD. I have checked with our technology department about putting this information on our district website. It is there as one of our links. The public can view this document until the May meeting of the State Board of Education by simply clicking on the appropriate link.

In closing, the State Board may vote to create the PLSD, effective July 1, 2005, at its May meeting. If this occurs, those opposing this decision will have thirty days to circulate petitions to put a referendum on the ballot. I have heard for three years that there is plenty of opposition to creating the PLSD. This would give the people final say on this hotly debated issue. However, this opportunity to be heard will occur only if enough signatures are secured on the petitions for a referendum, assuming that those petitions are indeed circulated.

In the end, once all of the dust has settled and whatever is going to happen has happened, let's hope that somehow or another it will be the students who will realize something positive from all of this turmoil. After all, they are the bargaining chip in this whole process. They are the future. It is an unfortunate observation, but it will likely take a long time to mend fences within the Peebles school community over this issue. If you have any questions about this article, please give me a call. And, remember you can access all of my 2005 articles from our district website at www.ohiovalley.k12.oh.us.

TULLY SELECTED FOR FRANKLIN B. WALTER AWARD

I received word a few days ago that **Thomas Tully**, a senior at West Union High School, has been selected as Adams County's 2005 recipient of the *Franklin B. Walter Award*. This is a scholastic award that is named for one of Ohio's former State Superintendents of Public Instruction. It is presented annually to a deserving senior from each of Ohio's 88 counties. Thomas, along with the other 87 recipients, will be formally recognized at a luncheon in Columbus on May 4, 2005. Congratulations to Thomas for earning and receiving this honor.

Charles P. Kimble

Superintendent