

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Parents and families are often bombarded with information. Schools distribute or request information required by state or federal law. We try to keep parents and families informed regarding events and resources. We need information to promote safety and health in the public schools.

At the beginning of each school year, new enrollment forms and other required information is requested. When parents receive these requests annually, I know that it is “information overload,” but I also know that this is information that must be readily on-hand and updated. We certainly appreciate the prompt cooperation of families in completing the enrollment, lunch, and health information requests as that allows the schools to operate more smoothly and to comply with state and federal mandates.

Sometimes parents and families get other information requests by mail that do not come from your local school. At the present time, I am aware that a for-profit group has sent mailings to families regarding a trip to Europe. In most cases, these requests are money-making ventures. They may provide an educational opportunity for your child, but just remember that it is an opportunity that you pay for and is a private undertaking not associated with your local schools.

Some families in our school district have received informational mailings from at least one of the internet-based charter schools in Ohio. The purpose of the mailing was to

recruit students to enroll in their internet school rather than the local public schools. I will provide you some information regarding the community school law and concept as it applies in Ohio.

Ohio law provides that there may be public charter schools formed and that public funds may support these schools to offer parents choice and flexibility in educational options. I believe the intent of the law was just that, to provide parents more options. There are two basic types of charter schools, those that operate in a building are called classroom-based and those that are electronic or internet-based are called “virtual” schools. There is currently no classroom-based charter school operating within the boundaries of the Adams County/Ohio Valley School District, so I will direct the remainder of my comments to giving more details on the virtual charter schools and the impact on your local school district.

According to the Ohio Department of Education, there are forty-five virtual charter schools in Ohio. If you enroll your child in a virtual charter school, then the public per-pupil funding for that child is deducted from the AC/OVSD and is sent to the virtual school. As you can see, this results in a loss of enrollment to your local public school as well as a loss in funding. It appears that many of the virtual charter schools are “for-profit” enterprises. There is wide variation in educational offerings and in quality of service.

As with any program there may be intended and unintended consequences. I believe the legislative intent in providing for the formation of charter schools in Ohio was to provide parents and families with more educational options and flexibility. In a sense, this has brought “competition” to the public school arena. This is certainly not all bad. In the case of the AC/OVSD in the last four years, we have made some changes to expand our own educational options. We now provide American School as an option for eligible and qualifying students in grades 9-12. The Board has also revised its home schooling policy to allow part-time enrollment. Beginning last school year, the Board entered into an agreement with Virtual Learning Academy and a few elementary students enrolled and completed the requirements. We see these options as allowing families some flexibility, and also in many cases, these options may better fit the needs and situation of an individual student and allow them to progress and earn a high school diploma.

One consequence that appears to have been unintended and yet negatively impacts local districts is funding. For students that reside in the AC/OVSD and opt to enroll in a virtual charter schools, the AC/OVSD must transfer funds to the virtual school. The funds transferred include a state contribution as well as a local share, on a per-pupil basis. Loss of these state and local dollars impacts the AC/OVSD budget by approximately \$200,000 annually. The unfortunate part is that local taxpayers do not have a voice in directing funds to these virtual charter schools.

In closing, just let me say that if you are considering a virtual charter school as an option for your child, I would ask that you first contact me at 544-5586 or Richard Shoemaker at

544-4431. I request this because I would like for you to have all the information available to you regarding the options that our school district may be able to provide. If after reviewing those options, you decide that a virtual charter school can better meet your child's needs, that is fine, but as we within the school district have had experiences dealing with many of them, we can give you our opinion as to educational programming and service which may assist you in meeting your child's needs. Personally, I highly recommend Virtual Learning Academy (VLA) for anyone considering a virtual charter school. VLA's curriculum is based entirely upon the same state standards that a child is taught in any of our classrooms. I would think that learning Ohio's state content standards would be a high priority for any parent interested in pursuing any virtual curriculum for their child.

#### P.A.S.S. MEMBERS BUSY

September has proven to be a very busy month for People Advocating Superior Schools. With the May Bond Issue campaign still several months in the future, PASS has been taking advantage of the area festivals to promote the idea of our much-needed new elementary schools, and to raise money for the campaign that lies ahead. PASS manned a booth at the Winchester Caramel Festival, Peebles Old Timers' Days, Seaman Fall Festival, and also participated in each festival parade.

October looks to be a busy month as well, as PASS hopes to have a presence at the Lewis Mountain Olde Tyme Herb Festival, as well as the various school/community fall carnivals within the district. I am so proud and thankful for those who have willingly

given of their time and energy to promote and support this worthy cause. I hope to give you an update on the fundraising project in a future article. If you would like to help with the fundraising project, please contact Joy Bauman at 587-5279. Thank you.

#### CORRECTION

In my previous article, I shared with you an appropriate “chain of command” if you have a question about a particular topic. One of those topics was special education, with the idea that your child did not have an IEP, but that you, as a parent, might be seeking more information. However, if your child currently has an IEP and you have a question about any of the services, you should certainly begin your chain of command with your child’s special needs teacher or intervention specialist at the building where they attend school. My apologies for any confusion regarding this. If you have any questions requiring further explanation, please feel free to contact me.

Charles P. Kimble

Superintendent