

Well, we've made it! We have survived another month known as March, where there are always so many things crammed into thirty-one days. Most of the federal and state testing has been completed for the school year. That task in itself, with all of the constant changes incorporated within the assessment program, is a huge undertaking for any school district. Beginning next year, the lion's share of the achievement testing will be moved to the month of May.

I hope that you enjoyed this year's version of our All-County Arts Festival held at West Union High School on March 29, 2006. This is a big event for students, staff, parents, and community. I always look forward to this evening as one of the highlights of the school year. Each year, the Tim Lewis Memorial Scholarship is presented by members of the Adams County Arts Council, along with Judy Lewis. This year's deserving recipient is Adam Roades, a senior attending the Ohio Valley Career & Technical Center from West Union High School. Congratulations to Adam, and best wishes from all of us as you pursue your career in Media Communications at Ohio University. I would like to thank all of our staff members and students who had any part at all in making the 2006 edition of the All-County Arts Festival a successful event. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

As we begin to think about winding down another school year with Proms, final exams, graduation ceremonies, and so forth, I have to pause to reflect on what, if anything, we have learned from this school year that will help us do a better job next year. When I speak of "we," I am not just referring to our school district, but to school districts across

the United States. We, as a nation, talk a great line about the importance of education to not only our future graduates, but our nation as a whole. But, are we as a nation really walking the talk? Sure, we now operate under the mandates of the federal law known as “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB). It’s a great concept, but unfortunately it’s a few years late and many dollars short of addressing the problem. We, as a local school district, as a state, and as a nation, are already behind and are desperately treading water in an attempt to catch up with other nations.

The United States is no longer the single greatest economic power in the world. Keep up with what is going on in the world today, and you will discover this to be the case. American companies are outsourcing work to Mexico, China, India, and other countries. It is shocking how many items we thought were made in the USA that we use, wear, and eat, that are actually manufactured in other countries such as Mexico and China. Even the calls that you receive at home from telemarketers are actually being made from India. When US companies were interviewed as to why they are outsourcing work to foreign countries, the answer may surprise many. They are doing this not just because the workforce there is cheaper. They are doing this because the workforce in many of those countries practices a much better work ethic. This comes as no surprise to me. As a lifelong educator, I have observed this fact in the classroom for years. And, when students are pushed or encouraged by their teachers and administrators to work harder and produce better work, the normal result is that some students and parents become upset with the school. Some students often avoid the more advanced or rigorous courses in order to enhance their chances of being a Valedictorian or Salutatorian; thus, earning a

“free ride” to college, only to find themselves needing to take remedial coursework once they get there. Whatever happened to learning for the sake of gaining knowledge? Knowledge is what will make one more marketable in a flat world, not titles and weighted grades that may or may not mean anything beyond the walls of the high school. A few of our students take the most challenging courses that we offer, but not enough of them do this. Still, a few others exercise the opportunity to earn high school and college credit at the same time through the Post Secondary Education Option (PSEO). I have mixed emotions about this program, but that’s another article for some other time.

Wake up, America! The world really is flat in terms of economic opportunities. In my opinion, we are behind, and this may become a national crisis. It may very well mean that our children, grandchildren, and future generations will not enjoy the same lifestyle to which we have become accustomed. Could it be that in an effort to be supportive and give our children a better lifestyle, we have become lax in teaching our children the basics? Being present, on time, willingly and with pride, exchanging one’s knowledge/skills for money and benefits is not a new concept. A student’s acceptance of responsibility for being present, on time, with a desire and expectation to obtain knowledge and skills in school is a measurable predictor of their successful performance in the future. We cannot stress enough the importance of not only completing high school, but of the need to pursue additional training through technical school or college. Only 20 percent of the future jobs in this country are going to be available to persons with a high school diploma or less. The Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) Project at West Union High School is specifically designed to spread the news to all students and

parents that a high school diploma is not enough. A college or technical school education is not only within grasp of any student wanting it, it is also a must as they look toward and plan their futures. Lack of financial resources to pay for this additional education doesn't have to be the deciding factor. OCAN helps students and parents find the financial aide to pursue a college education. OCAN recently held a "Gear-Up" meeting at WUHS for students and parents. Among the featured speakers were Dr. Lawrence Dukes, President of Southern State Community College, Brenda Martin, Director of Southern State Center of Excellence, and State Representative Danny Bulp. I am very excited about all of the positive implications for the students at WUHS and West Union Elementary as a result of being selected as an OCAN site. I hope to see facets of this program expanded to North Adams and Peebles over time. If you are a WUHS parent, I would strongly suggest that you contact Marge Paeltz at WUHS with any questions or concerns regarding OCAN.

I don't mean to cause panic with this article, but from where I sit, I see not only an education gap in this country, but also an ambition gap. If these two partners continue, it will mean more doom and gloom for this nation, its economy, its overall way of life, and its national security. It is our jobs as parents, teachers, and administrators to push students towards accountability for tardiness, absence, knowledge, and skills. To do less would make us accountable for the outcome of having our children compete in a worldwide economy without resources. Something for each of us to think about!

Charles P. Kimble, Superintendent