

# **Hilliard City School District**

## *State of the Schools*

**October 10, 2006**

**Dale A. McVey**

Welcome to the third annual “State of the Schools” address. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to be with us tonight to learn more about your school district.

First, I would like to thank Stephanie Augenstein of BMW Financial Services for joining us this evening. Our relationship with BMW is indicative of the many business partnerships our students benefit from in the district. Currently, we have over 100 separate business partners who participate in our schools through a variety of projects, from one-on-one mentorships and tutoring to donations and sponsorships of special projects. We are extremely pleased and excited to enter into this new High School 2020 partnership and look forward to working with BMW as we prepare our students for the future.

I also must recognize both the Hilliard Darby High School String Quartet and the Hilliard Davidson High School Boys in Blue and Blue Ladies for their wonderful entertainment this evening. Thank you to both Carol Bundy and John Riegel for arranging for their participation. As you can see, we have many talented students in our schools, and we are fortunate to have such impressive music programs. Also, thank you to the Hilliard Darby High School Ambassadors for serving as our gracious greeters this evening.

Hilliard City Schools is now the ninth largest school district in the state of Ohio serving more than 15,000 students. As the largest employer in the city of Hilliard, we employ nearly 1,800 people throughout our 23 school buildings and offices.

The schools play a vital role in this community. Thus, it is important that we come together one night a year to focus solely on our school system and education. The education of our children is truly a community responsibility, and we are fortunate to have the ongoing support of our

residents, businesses and elected officials. Your attendance this evening is indicative of that commitment to community that makes Hilliard City Schools so special.

Tonight is an opportunity to share with you our school district's successes and challenges. We also will look ahead to what is in store for the future of our schools.

One of our most notable recent successes is the district's performance on the 2006 Local Report Card. Our district received a perfect score, meeting all 25 of the 25 performance indicators measured by the state last year! Each year, we have shown significant overall improvement on our report cards. However, this is the first time since the rating system was created in 1998 that the Hilliard City Schools have met every single indicator.

Furthermore, our Performance Index Score increased from 97.2 to 101 on this report card -- our best performance index score yet. This significantly improved score means more and more of our students are passing the tests at the higher performance levels of either accelerated or advanced.

Finally, each of our buildings, individually, performed at outstanding levels as well. All of our 20 schools received either an excellent or effective rating.

A perfect score is no small feat for any school system, but it is especially impressive for a growing district like ours. To give you a little perspective, I came to the district in the fall of 1998, just when the accountability model was beginning to look very different with the advent of the Local Report Card. Since the Local Report Card's inception, accountability has looked different each year.

During the same time period, we have grown by 3,000 students and gone from 16 to 20 buildings. While meeting the needs of a growing, changing system, our performance has improved each year leading to our perfect score this year. In light of all this, our performance is truly a significant accomplishment.

However, as I have said before, it is important to remember the report card is only one measurement of our achievement. Our success is best measured by the well-rounded education we offer our students in and outside of the classroom. We are surrounded tonight by student artwork and musical talent that are great evidence of successfully educating the “whole” child.

Last spring, we also experienced a great victory for our students, thanks to the ongoing support of our community. I can’t overemphasize the importance of the passage of the bond issue and permanent improvement levy. With that success, we can now plan for future growth and for the future of our students, not only in bricks and mortar, but through programming and curriculum that can only be delivered with appropriate space and learning conditions. Thank you once again to all who supported Issue 2.

Before I turn our sights to the future, I would like to touch on two initiatives that kicked off during the past school year and are being met with great success as well.

First, we began offering in January a new communication tool to parents and residents of our district. We implemented a district eNews mailing list service that allows us to electronically communicate with our community through mass distribution e-mails.

The response to e-News has been tremendous with over 4,000 subscribers to one or more of the lists. I encourage anyone who hasn’t already done so, to pick up a form at the door tonight and sign up for this informative service.

Another successful communication effort kicked off last year is our regularly scheduled “Community Conversations” – public meetings with our residents to discuss current issues concerning the district. We plan to continue the Community Conversations this year, with our first scheduled for November 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the cafetorium of Hilliard Heritage Middle School.

The topic of conversation will be the upcoming construction of our new elementary and high school buildings. The architects for each building will be on hand to answer questions and share the schools' renderings and floor plans.

School construction will be just one of the key areas of focus over the next year and beyond. As in the past, the district has identified three goals or areas of concentration that will lead our work into the future. They include Student Housing, School Finance and Student Achievement.

**Student Housing: We must continue to work diligently to address our overcrowded conditions and plan for the future growth of our district.**

Providing adequate space for our growing numbers remains a challenge for our school system. Growth projections for our district predict we will continue to see an increase of students each year into the foreseeable future.

However, thanks to the passage of the bond issue last spring, we are facing a much brighter outlook. We can now move forward with the construction of both a new elementary school and a third high school to ease our crowded conditions.

In fact, the groundbreaking ceremony for the new elementary is scheduled for this Thursday at 5:30 p.m., and the school is expected to open in the fall of 2007.

Permitting and environmental work is underway for the high school, with its groundbreaking scheduled for this coming spring. The new high school will open its doors in the fall of 2009.

With the new buildings on their way, we must also turn our attention to realigning the attendance boundaries for each of our schools, grades K through 12. As we know, in our district, the redistricting process is a community process.

Under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent Tim Hamilton, we have formed a redistricting committee consisting of approximately 90 district residents and staff members. These committee

members are charged with the task of creating several redistricting options for the Board of Education to consider.

The process will include two public community forums to allow all residents the opportunity to see the different map options being considered and to offer their input. The Board of Education is expected to make a decision on the new attendance boundaries in early spring.

**School Finance: We will continue to create understanding among our community of school finance and its challenges.**

Keeping our residents informed of the district's financial health and the issues surrounding school funding in Ohio remains a priority for the coming year. District Treasurer, Brian Wilson, recently presented to the Board of Education the fiscal year 2007 budget for the Hilliard City Schools. The document represents a \$138 million General Fund budget and clearly reflects both the prudent financial management of our district as well as the challenges we face in the coming year and beyond.

Not surprisingly, we continue to see the burden of financing schools in Ohio shift more and more onto the shoulders of local taxpayers. We are now entering our second year of no increases in state basic aid funding for our district. But while our state revenues remain flat, our expenses continue to rise.

Over a three year period, the percentage of our General Fund revenues that comes from state basic aid will have dropped from 30 percent in 2005 to an expected 26 percent in 2007. It is also worth noting that since the 2005 school year, we are educating approximately 445 additional students – many with greater needs that require additional dollars.

Recently, I was elected as the Chairman of the Alliance for Adequate School Funding. It is an organization comprised of close to 60 Ohio school districts committed to working on these school funding issues in our state. Some of the districts involved from central Ohio include Upper Arlington, Dublin, Westerville and Gahanna. I have served on the executive committee of

this group for the past seven years and, just a few weeks ago, began serving as chairman of the organization.

My involvement with the Alliance continues to ensure that Hilliard City Schools is at the table during important discussions regarding school funding. I will remain committed to working with other superintendents, administrators and legislators to address the challenges of our state funding system.

Here in the district, ACT for Schools, our community-based state funding issues committee, continues to serve as strong advocates for our school system at the Statehouse and within our own community. Last spring, ACT led an effort to create a central Ohio collaboration of school districts focused on the issues surrounding school funding. A new partnership, ACT for Ohio Schools, is now underway.

Our own committee also has been busy planning an upcoming Candidates Meet and Greet for our community. Candidates for the two seats in the Ohio House of Representatives have been invited to share with our district residents their views on education. The event is planned for Tuesday, October 24 at 7:00 p.m. in this same room here at the Central Office Annex.

**Student Achievement: Finally, and most importantly, our focus on increasing student achievement:**

Meeting the needs of a changing student population and providing students with the individual attention and personalization they require is an ongoing challenge in our growing school system. This is where the bulk of our work lies in the coming year and beyond.

First, student literacy will remain a strong focus in our schools as we work not only to teach students how to read, but to ensure they can read to learn. Our focus will be reading across all content areas and all grade levels. We will emphasize not only reading to learn, but also ensuring they can apply the knowledge they are acquiring.

We also will continue our efforts to improve our success with the changing student population. As I have said many times, our diversity is cause for great celebration. It offers our students the opportunity for greater understanding of other cultures and an acceptance of differences, all leading to a more well-rounded education.

It is clear that our changing student population is simply a microcosm of the changes we are seeing in the world today. As Pulitzer Prize-winning author Thomas Friedman argues in his book **The World Is Flat**, society has entered a new era of globalization and amazing technological advances that is shrinking an already small world.

He further states that the playing field for businesses, as well as individuals, has been expanded to include the entire globe and leveled to include all walks of life. With today's ease of travel and the power of the Internet and e-mail, our next door neighbors are no longer just across the street, but across the globe in China, Australia and India.

This summer, I had the privilege of traveling to China with a group of 400 educators from all over the United States to learn about the Chinese culture and language. The experience left me even more resolute in my belief that the world is changing at light speed. I was no longer just reading about the world being flat, I was living it.

So, how does all this apply to us? As a district, we must ask ourselves: In 10 or 20 years, what will students need to know when they graduate from high school to be successful in this new climate? What does high school in the year 2020 need to look like? How do we ensure our students are well prepared?

Both Hilliard Darby and Hilliard Davidson High Schools currently provide outstanding opportunities to their students. But with a look to the future, they will now embark on an unprecedented journey of discovery to build upon their current successes and prepare students for tomorrow's challenges. This new initiative has been coined ***High School 2020***.

**High School 2020** is an exciting project that will help define not only our high schools of the future, but its impact will trickle down to all grade levels, as we work to prepare our students – PreK through 12 – for the challenges of tomorrow.

The driving force behind **High School 2020** is three-pronged: Rigor, Relevance and Relationships. First, the curriculum and programming of the future must be grounded in rigor and relevance – that is to say, there must be great depth to the quality and content of the knowledge we impart, while it also must be relevant or applicable to the world outside our classrooms.

However, above all else, success in schools as well as in the world depends on the strength of relationships. This may be even truer tomorrow than it is today.

Well-known author Gary Marx, cites in his article *Ten Trends: Educating Children for a Profoundly Different Future*, that in the new world economy, social capital – who you know – will be just as important as intellectual capital – what you know.

Success with the diversity in our classrooms is based on our ability to connect with a variety of students. Our recent success on the report card can be largely attributed to the strong relationships we build among teachers, students and parents. And, our students' future accomplishments through **High School 2020** and beyond will no doubt depend on their ability to build relations worldwide.

The “heart” of Hilliard City Schools lies in the relationships we foster everyday. It has always been the key ingredient to our success.

The inevitable reality is this: schools must be progressive, flexible and tolerant to prepare students to compete in today's ever-changing world.

With the continued support of our community and the strong commitment of our staff, we will continue to ensure that our students of tomorrow have the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the fast paced, global society of the new millennium and beyond.

###