



Where Opportunity Matters

November 2015

# THE Drum • Beat

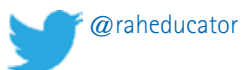
OF THE PIQUA CITY SCHOOLS

## Piqua Opportunities Create Value

At Piqua City Schools we are committed to excellence and because of the amazing opportunities that we provide both in and outside of the classroom, we are able to ensure that our students are college and career ready. As you will see from this edition of "The Drum Beat" we provide better opportunities than many neighboring school districts and other educational options while still being mindful of our precious resources. This is all part of the good value that our residents receive in a Piqua City Schools education.

During this season of giving, I am thankful for the many caring staff members we have here at Piqua City Schools. They work on a daily basis to ensure that our students are receiving an excellent quality education that provides a strong value to our community. It is because of our supportive community and strong school system that I can truly say Piqua City Schools is a place where opportunities matter.

Rick Hanes, Superintendent



## 100 MEMBERS The Pride of Piqua

Anyone privileged to hear the Piqua High School Pride of Piqua Marching Band knows they play both loud and proud. The 100-member band has amassed numerous "I" ratings in seasonal invitationals and, most recently, an "Excellent" rating in the OMEA state competition.

The Pride of Piqua, under the direction of Mitch Mahaney, is among the premier area high school bands. This season, the band has been awarded straight "I" ratings at the New Bremen Cardinal Invitational, Northwestern High School Invitational and the first annual OMEA Invitational held at Alexander Stadium.

Mahaney, a 10-year director at PHS, described this year's program "Machine" as "steam punk" where the Old West comes alive fueled by steam and power with eight-foot gears forming the backdrop. "It's a very well designed show", explained Mahaney, crediting Carl Philpot, assistant director, for drill coordination.



**The Pride of Piqua Marching Band has earned numerous awards.**

The personable band director has catapulted the Pride of Piqua from 47 members to its current size noting it required a "change in attitude and work ethic" to turn things around. "They (students) know I genuinely care about them. I'm fairly laid back and have a sense of humor and dumb jokes," laughed Philpot.

Unlike decades ago when instrumentals and marching drills were the norm, today's band utilizes more bodywork, such as turning movements to represent "Machine" gears along with electronic keyboards, wireless microphones and other technology. Both Mahaney and Philpot complement one another

both on and off the field. Several years ago they organized a campaign to collect instruments for students who couldn't afford one. They also purchased a set of marching brass instruments "at a huge discount" and, most recently, new band uniforms.

Mahaney applauds band parents, who help students organize fundraisers, work concessions, park cars, sell T-shirts and other duties required throughout the season.

Junior Greg Reyes, one of three field commanders, said, "Band (to me) is a home away from home, a place where I can express myself through the fine arts."

# Learning by Doing

If the United States is expected to compete as a leader in the global marketplace, it's vital that today's students become equipped with skills such as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) to solve problems and execute information learned in the classroom. Piqua Junior High School (PJHS) has become a "pioneer" in the STEM movement enabling students to assimilate subject matter into practical applications well before they enter the world of work.

Principal Jeff Clark is enthusiastic about the semester-long STEM classes which began a year ago and are currently being taught in both seventh and eighth grades. Clark was approached by Upper Valley Career Center to work collaboratively on an exploratory course to introduce junior high age students to project-based learning techniques where they'd learn about teamwork, independent study and pursue projects associated with various career fields. Clark noted an industrial tech room was redesigned and students have access to basic tools and technology such as computers.

"The kids are excited and it has become a hands-on

environment," noted Clark, who's served as PJHS principal the past seven years. Steve Stamper and Gregory Koth serve as UVCC satellite instructors at the school. "This program illustrates how real world applications become more apparent." Students are literally applying what they've learned in the classroom.

By the time they enter eighth grade, PJHS students acquire knowledge and skills in problem solving, teamwork and innovation. Together, teams design and test their ideas using modeling, automation robotics, mechanical and computer control systems, while also exploring energy and the environment. Most recently, Stamper, a mechanical design and process engineer, challenged seventh grade students to incorporate studies of mechanisms, pneumatics and hydraulics into a seasonal activity entitled "Spooky, Scary and Creepy Scene."

The junior high students were instructed to incorporate

pneumatics "enabling their project to move in some fashion." In order for classes to complete a project, Stamper acted as chief executive officer

**A junior high student in a STEM class.**



**Sophomores in Computer Integrated Manufacturing, a hands-on class taught by Jeremy Kettering, work in teams to build a robot.**

and challenged each class to "mimic" its own company. A manager and assistant manager were elected to maintain focus and productivity of each division (engineering and design, manufacturing and marketing and advertising). Each division also had a team leader and assistant.

"The manager answered directly to myself and led each team by disseminating directions to each leader," he explained. The engineering and design team were responsible for creating prints, material lists and process sheets to be used for manufacturing. The manufacturing department constructed the actual object while advertisement and marketing was asked to produce a logo, progressive PowerPoint showing the project from start to finish and a poster to market their company."

Stamper explained that the project was developed to try and give the students an industry standard structure of

a manufacturing company. Students, in turn, dealt with the pressure of deadlines and personal issues and were exposed to the thrill of achievements and the lessons learned from failure. Once they complete their two-year STEM program at PJHS, students are transitioned into PHS' STEM program. The high school program is reportedly so popular that the classroom is being outfitted with new equipment. Jeremy Kettering serves as its STEM instructor.

Dr. Nancy Luce, superintendent of UVCC, commented, "In today's world, it is critical that students become more aware of career and training options at an earlier age. Upper Valley Career Center is committed to partnering with Piqua City Schools to increase students' awareness of a broader range of careers by using hands-on, project-based activities that require the application of science, technology, engineering and math."





## STARTING IN KINDERGARTEN

# Learning with Technology

Over the past 34 years Tina Watts has shared a passion for teaching. A Title I teacher at Washington Primary School, she is especially excited about the early literacy program REACH and its ability to "bring families together to share language experiences through literature."

Every kindergartner and first grade student has access to Chromebooks to learn basic reading skills and reinforce what's taught at school. This is just one example of "where opportunities matter" in the Piqua City Schools.

"Think about it. When we were children our parents read books to us. We sat on their laps hearing our language come alive through stories. Our children

need these same experiences. However, this is a technology world and we needed to create a resource that would provide that key interaction between the child and his/her family." REACH is the resource which enables both children and families to "discuss, read and interact."

The popular program, created by ThinkTV/PBS, is lauded by Principals Mindy Gearhardt (Washington) and Connie Strehle (Springcreek).

"Students who have a Chromebook at home often talk about how they use it to practice skills or computer programs they've learned at school," explained Springcreek Title I Instructor Sara Watson.



**The REACH literacy program helps parents like Wendy Pierron and her daughter, Lily, a student at Washington, learn to use the Chromebooks.**

"The biggest benefit of REACH is the ability we now have to put technology in the hands of our young learners who may, or

may not, have this opportunity outside the program." Its success, she noted, will come after comparison data is analyzed.

## Innovative Scheduling

The Piqua City School District has adopted an innovative scheduling model which enables students time in regular class as well as periods set aside for intervention or enrichment activities.

Hallways and classrooms are bustling with activity at Washington and Springcreek primary schools as classroom teachers, intervention specialists and Title I reading instructors provide individualized and/or group support for students requiring extra assistance or independent learning opportunities. Gone is the compartmentalized mentality "one size fits all."

Director of Student Services Teresa Anderson explained

that Springcreek served as the pilot for the scheduling model introduced to PCS several years ago by Robert Canady, professor and noted author of numerous books on the topic of school scheduling.

"It makes perfect sense," noted

Anderson. "Small group settings provide targeted instruction for students who require support in areas such as language arts and math."

Students are not the only ones who benefit from one-on-one support. The new model provides teachers at each grade level common planning periods and

the ability to communicate with colleagues on students' progress or identify those "not on track."

"Piqua Central Intermediate School schedules flexible grouping in several periods of instruction per day," explained Principal Jake Amlin. "We are subscribing to the mantra of teaching kids...not content."

Curriculum Director Dwayne Thompson added implementation of the scheduling model required analyzing student data to determine where students be placed. Intensive instruction is based upon those needs.

**The Canady scheduling model encourages learning in small groups outside of regular class time. Springcreek teacher Sara Watson is teaching language arts.**



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### TREASURER'S REPORT

Where Opportunity Matters

# Five-Year Financial Forecast Looks Optimistic

Projecting a five-year financial forecast is complicated. Numerous variables are examined and, according to Treasurer Jeremie Hittle, "There's no sure (long term) formula, although (the good news is) Piqua City Schools' revenues continue to outpace expenditures."

The five-year mandated plan which runs through FY 2020 has been submitted to the Ohio Department of Education. According to Hittle, the state's budget is only projected through 2016-2017 "so we are making assumptions the state will keep the same formula (for reimbursement based on average daily membership). There are currently 3,534 students enrolled in the Piqua district. Although that is 70 fewer students than one year ago, we expect enrollment numbers to be stable, not to climb over the next four years.

Three major factors are examined when putting together a five-year forecast

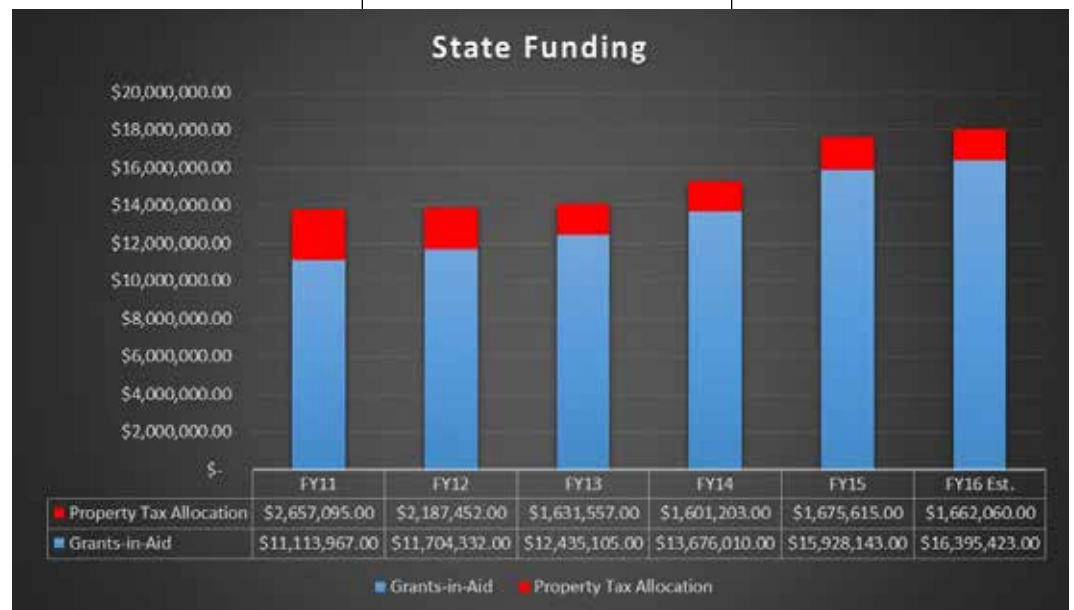
– 1) the new biennial budget HB 64, 2) district valuation reductions and 3) expenses, such as personnel, benefits and purchased services, supplies and materials. The state currently provides 53 percent of the district's funding while 47 percent is collected locally. Potentially, the state's share will climb to 58 percent by the end of the forecast.

"Local revenues remain flat," he lamented, noting the biggest issue is the decrease in property values (roughly \$27 million over the past four years).

According to Hittle, the PCS Board of Education annually adopts a Tax Payer Bill of Rights, in which they promise to make every effort possible to focus spending on classroom instruction.

Secondly, the district has lived "in the black" the past eight years and is committed to living within its means.

Hittle added, "The Piqua City School District has not asked for new operating money in over seven years and we are projected to be financially stable through the next State of Ohio budget."



The graph above shows factors involved in preparing the next five-year financial plan for the Piqua City School District.