

THE Drum • Beat

OF THE PIQUA CITY SCHOOLS

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION SYSTEM

'The Indian Way' Teaches Good Manners

Hallway noise has been reduced, classroom clutter has diminished and the words 'please' and 'thank you' are commonplace. So what's going on? PCS has adopted a Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS), changing the way students learn good manners.

Superintendent Dwayne Thompson says the tenets are to teach children to be kind, responsible and respectful. "We quit thinking kids know how to behave. Instead, we are teaching, modeling and reinforcing positive behaviors throughout our schools at all ages."

Piqua Central Intermediate School Principal Josh Kauffman introduced grades 4-6 to a unique program, The Indian Way, by drafting students into four Indian tribes representing Pawnee, Cherokee, Iroquois and Shawnee. Each tribe has a symbol, crest and flag. Students are encouraged to earn points for their tribe with random acts of kindness. .

Signage reinforces The Indian Way theme with 25 rules such as "make eye contact with adults

and one another", "always say 'please' and 'thank you' when given something" or "take pride in your school by cleaning up your space".

PBIS students dress up monthly for a formal lunch as part of PBIS. By demonstrating their etiquette prowess they can get recognition as "Indian of the Month" or get invited to the principal's Breakfast of Champions.

Kauffman suggests the program provides "energy, enthusiasm and engagement" as students excel academically and impact their community.

PBIS is also blossoming at Springcreek Primary where Principal Connie Strehle was a manner advocate even before PBIS became fashionable. The Dayton Philharmonic Brass Quartet, who recently performed there

Piqua Central Principal Josh Kauffman is pleased with students' behavior, The Indian Way.

for third graders, complimented Strehle afterwards for the students' good manners.

At the onset students were taught rules as they apply in the bathroom, cafeteria and hallways. "Our expectations are being met," she said.

"Piqua Pride Community Wide" signage has appeared at PJHS, where Elly Snapp, math teacher, is a PBIS team member. Students were taught the expectations the first day of school. Snapp explained, "The expectations are



that students should feel school is a safe place to be, that they are responsible for others, that their opinion counts and that a little kindness goes a long way."

Chatter in hallways has been reduced and "old school" manners are reinforced on a daily basis.



Familiar Faces in New Leadership Roles

They are a "homegrown" variety — two Piqua High School alumni who are proud to return to their "roots" as the top PCS administrators. Superintendent Dwayne Thompson and Assistant Superintendent Tony Lyons represent Piqua's newest leadership and complement each other with only one "small" difference. Thompson smiled, "In high school I played in the band and Tony played football."

Thompson (PHS '87) grew up through the ranks of PCS and candidly admits, "I never had a teacher I didn't like or who didn't inspire me in a different way." He recited a litany of favorites, including Larry Hamilton and Barb Davis. "I had a great experience and want that to be the same for our present

students and teachers." During a recent visit at Washington Primary the new superintendent reminisced over his years as a PCS educator/principal, former curriculum coordinator, and brief tenure as assistant superintendent prior accepting this new role. Queried by the Board of Education regarding his interest in the top post, Thompson replied, "I've had lots of experience which could translate to this job. I would like the opportunity to impact the district."

Both he and Lyons (PHS '91) hit the ground running, surrounding themselves with a new



Tony Lyons, assistant superintendent (left) and Dwayne Thompson, superintendent, greet Washington students and staff.

administrative team, engaging with staff, and "empowering principals to lead".

Lyons, former PHS principal, is in charge of the district's human resources and oversees the 270-member staff. Like Thompson, he grew up in Piqua describing his school years as "phenomenal".

Board President Frank Patrizio (PHS '84) noted, "The district was fortunate to have two very qualified internal candidates interested in these positions. I am pleased to have two former PHS graduates and I'm proud that the board recognized that Dwayne and Tony were the best persons to lead our district."

Finances are Steady, so Far

Ask PCS Treasurer Jeremie Hittle about the school district's finances and he will produce a five-year forecast with a headline that reads "Budget Designed to Finish Another Year in the Black."

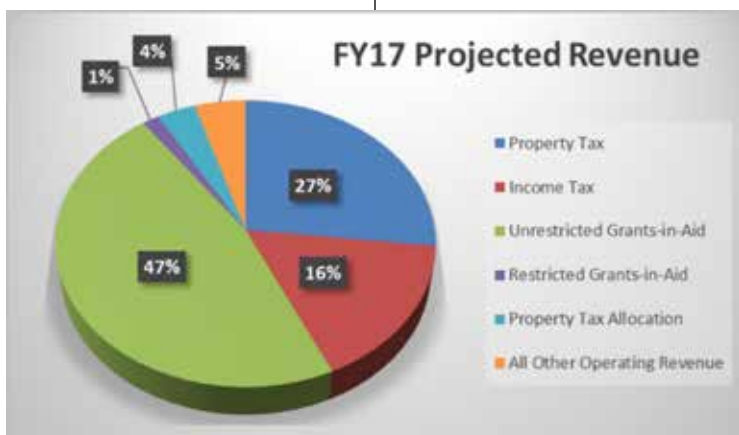
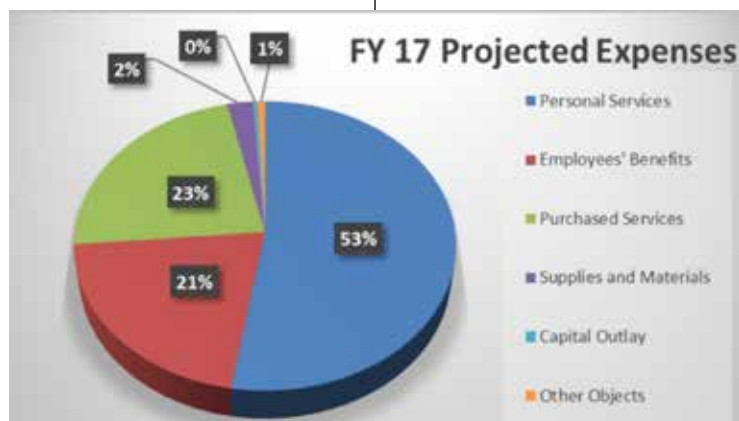
As overseer of a \$47.9 million approved budget (including a \$35 million general fund), Hittle explains, "\$1.5 million is reserved in 2016-17 for safety and security upgrades in both the junior and senior high schools, [the latter now 36 years old].

"It's time for replacement of fire alarm systems, clocks, public announcement systems, cameras, HVAC controls, window replacements and security vestibules in both schools' entrances," Hittle said.

Charts show expenses and revenue in the General Fund.

The district is in a good position with contract negotiations in February. A big concern, however, is the state share index where every community is ranked statewide as to what it can afford. "Valuations have gone up so we don't know when those rankings will be released. It could sway our budget by \$1 million," he warned. "A continued decline in student population, from 3,551 [2013] to 3,238 [present], could also impact the state reimbursement rate."

"The index and student enrollment are my major concerns. Financially, we're doing great but everything could change if things go the wrong way," Hittle said. He remains cautiously optimistic about the district's financial health with minor adjustments.



PCS Welcomes New Staff Members



New high school principal is Rob Messick, pictured with Carolyn Pearson, secretary.



Kaitlyn Flory, Sarah Bensman, Karen Bensman, Amy Todd, Michele Bonifas, Ashleigh Buehrer, Kelty Inman, Jessica Sizemore, Nicole Whiteman, Janea Mitchell, Jordan Drake, Laura Condon, Keila Crump, Danielle Dillion, Elizabeth Sides, Amanda Ferneze, Jennifer Monnin, Ross Loudenback, Leslie Mitchell, Jon Dolph, Ryan Scott, and Tony Lyons.

INTERVENTION SPECIALIST

Co-Teachers: A Little Extra Attention

During a recent half-marathon, teacher Kellee Wolters was pleasantly surprised when colleague Crystal Ayers joined her on the course. It's that supportive camaraderie that makes this dynamic duo a winning combination. Wolters is an intervention specialist at Piqua Central, whose day is spent alongside Ayers, sixth grade mathematics teacher.

Wolters is among a number of PCS intervention specialists who co-teach mathematics and language arts to students diagnosed with a disability or perhaps identified as gifted requiring greater critical thinking skills. Wolters and Ayers meet daily to review lesson plans for 90-plus students. Throughout the

day, Wolters provides extra help to those who need it, such as a "quick practice session to boost their confidence."

As a mentor, she believes it's her goal to help children grow academically and catch up in areas where they might be behind. "I want them to be closer to their grade level."

Jennifer Everett, a Springcreek Primary School intervention specialist, services classrooms with gifted students, many of whom are identified as early as kindergarten and first grade. Throughout the day, Everett

connects with students and teachers to establish a positive co-teaching relationship.

"On a regular day, you will find me in various classrooms teaching in tandem with the regular classroom teacher. This is a time when we pull our talents together and give the students the best of two teachers," Everett said. She is in a unique position

to supply teachers with tools to promote a higher order of thinking and to challenge the learning of students identified as gifted

Director of Student Services Amy Todd explained, "Co-teaching enables teachers and intervention specialists to work collaboratively to meet the needs of all students allowing them to succeed."



Co-teacher Kellee Wolters helps a student at Piqua Central Intermediate School.

Piqua City Schools
719 E. Ash Street
Piqua, OH 45356
937-773-4321
www.piqua.org

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719 East Ash Street
Piqua, OH 45356

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Fall Calendar

PHS Blood Drive

Tuesday, October 25

Piqua/Troy Football Game

Friday, October 28

Thanksgiving Break

November 23-25

**PHS Holiday Concert
and Cookie Walk**

Sunday, December 11
2:30 and 4:00

**PHS and PJHS
Winter Band
Concert**

Monday,
December 12
6:30

**PJHS Winter
Choir Concert**

Wednesday,
December 14
7:00

**Holiday Break
Begins**

Thursday,
December 22

New Sign Language Class Is Popular at PHS

The sounds of silence permeate throughout Sarah Bensman's classrooms at both PJHS and PHS. Bensman is a first-year teacher who challenges nearly 130 students to learn American Sign Language (ASL), offered the first time this year. It has replaced German as one of the languages offered at PCS.

A 2006 Russia High School graduate, Bensman's youthful

enthusiasm is well received by students who already demonstrate high proficiency signing in both vocabulary and sentences.

Bensman, whose mother Karen, incidently, is a new biology hire at PHS, earned her bachelor's degree from Kent State University and was formerly employed in Columbus before pursuing a master's degree.



Sarah Bensman teaches American Sign Language.

"I spent the last two years at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. — the only four-year university for deaf and hard-of-hearing people in the world," noted the affable teacher. "All the classes are taught in American Sign Language." She earned her master's degree in linguistics.

When asked about

her interest in ASL, Bensman replied, "My younger brother was born deaf. As a family we started learning how to sign before he was even a year old. As he grew up and learned how to speak and sign, alot of my signing skills slipped because I wasn't using it as much.

"I didn't realize I wanted to teach ASL until I was in my sophomore year of college. It was my 'aha' moment. I took ASL as a requirement for a degree in communications and it just hit me. After that I took the route I needed and I've never looked back." Her brother, 24, is a Gallaudet graduate. Sarah met her boyfriend, who is also deaf, at the school.

Bensman said that she has been impressed by her students' willingness to learn. She added, "I am so excited to start this program here and watch it grow. I want to be one of those teachers that everyone knows in 25 years saying 'look at what she did for Piqua!'"