

State of the Schools Address

November 2018

The state of the Cuyahoga Falls City School District is best described through the four focus areas of our five-year strategic plan: Cuyahoga Falls Vision 20/20.

The first focus area is College and Career Readiness. Developing our students to become college and career ready is our core business; thus, it is our largest department. The CCR Department is comprised of: Teaching and Learning Pk-6, Teaching and Learning 7-12+, Exceptional Children (Gifted, Special Education and English Learners), Instructional Technology, and Student Services. I would like to highlight three of our goals to be achieved in this area by the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

Firstly, the district will help close the achievement gap for all students, by increasing the performance index for students with disabilities by 5% in ELA and math as reflected on the 2019 LRC. This is necessary to improve the academic performance of all students. As we are making the transition to requirements associated with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the rigor of assessments have increased as have the expectations.

We focused on our students with disabilities because they have been underperforming for many years although we have seen progress recently, many of these students cross into other subgroups as well. By focusing our attention in this area and providing professional development on research-driven instructional strategies, we anticipate higher levels of achievement for all students.

Another goal in this area requires each elementary school to implement two new strategies to increase kindergarten readiness experiences. This is necessary as we participate along with Woodridge and the other school districts in Summit County to focus on access to high-quality early

childhood education programs. The effort is being spearheaded by the Summit Education Initiative and has resulted in 42 early childhood coalitions across the county. The Summit County United Way effort is focused on this initiative and both gubernatorial candidates touted the importance of early childhood education especially for students in economically disadvantaged situations. The community should be highly interested in this effort as studies have connected increased access to these high quality programs to longitudinal increases in economic development.

A third goal in this area, has 15% of CFHS Cohort 2019 graduates enrolled in a two-year degree program. Data from the National Clearinghouse suggest that over the last 13 years on average 57% of CFHS graduates enroll in 2- or 4-year institutions of higher education within one year. And, only 7% of graduates enroll in two-year programs within one year. These data also suggest that approximately 32% of our graduates earn a two- or four-year degree within six years of graduation. Often these percentages are impacted by two factors: preparedness and finances.

Typically, two-year institutions of higher learning are more cost effective and credits transfer to public institutions of higher education. Thus, we will be attempting to remove the financial barrier to college access. Additionally, by creating college-credit plus partnerships we hope to eliminate some of the barriers to college entrance.

That said, let's review the performance of Cohort 2018. The graduating class of 2018 was one of the smallest graduating classes we have had in years. There were only 308 graduates. However, they were collectively highly successful. Collectively, they earned \$1.3M in scholarships, took 254 AP exams, earned 614 college credits, and there were 5 Eagle Scouts along with one Gold Award the Girl Scouts' equivalent. Further, the class of 2018 had a strong graduation rate under the new requirements, which consist of end of course exams, Remediation Free ACT, and Industry Credential.

As we transitioned to this new system, many students took advantage of the two alternative pathways which amongst other things included a capstone project or success on career-technical exams for students in our career-tech programs. Unfortunately, the two alternative pathways were not renewed for the Cohort 2019. As a result, approximately 25% of our seniors are in danger of not graduating. Therefore, we urge you to contact elected officials to support HB 630 which would extend the alternative pathways for the classes of 2019, 2020 and 2021. In doing so, districts across the state will have the opportunity to better prepare students for the increased rigor of these new requirement.

The second focus area of the strategic plan is Culture of Excellence. Our goals to be reached by the end of the 2018-2019 school year in this focus area include the following.

One, the Black Tiger Pride, PBIS program, will be implemented in every building and department district-wide. While we have been using PBIS system for years, we took last year to develop a systemic approach to the system. A comprehensive team from across the district established a matrix.

The impact of the matrix and protocols established in the district are expected to manifest in academic and behavioral improvements. We are using our Public School Works system to warehouse behavioral data. We are routinely reviewing these data and making adjustments to produce the intended improvements in suspension, expulsion and attendance rates.

Two, our faculty, staff and BOE will participate in PBIS (BTP) training. The intention of this training is to truly make the use of PBIS systemic. Thus, we expect the protocols to be followed by custodians, drivers, food service workers, and the BOE.

Hence, we are recognizing many more members of staff, more students, and more community members at our BOE meetings. For example, Friends of Education. Ron Hyre, Western Reserve Hospital, and Peoples Bank

Three, our faculty, staff and BOE will participate in social justice/diversity training. Like Woodridge, we have contracted with Summit ESC for days of service with Denise Ward, formerly of State Support Team 8, who is working with our staff at all levels to define diversity, recognize differences, put strategies into place such that all students and staff feel included and welcomed.

The third focus area of the strategic plan is Community Engagement. Our 2018-2019 goals associated with this focus area include:

Achieving a new Master Facilities Plan by April of 2019. We have engaged the services of ThenDesignArchitects (TDA) and representatives from the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC). We have invited a group of fifty members of the community to assist in the effort. We have been meeting on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month for the last couple of months. Our goal is to arrive at consensus on a new Master Facilities Plan by April 2019, such that we can be on the ballot with a combination levy in November 2019. To achieve this effort, we will increase the frequency of our meetings to weekly in January. As part of this effort, we engaged one hundred community members, staff members, and students in an educational visioning session.

A second goal, achieved by October 30, 2018, has each building or department establishing a community engagement committee which will plan and host a minimum of three community engagement events during the 2018-2019 school year.

For the last few years, each building has hosted community engagement events with mixed attendance results. Thus, each building has established a committee to expand the community engagement opportunities and to be purposefully invitational in their own areas of the community.

Of special note is the upcoming Culture Fair which will be held January 19 from 11-2 at Lincoln Elementary. The Culture Fair will highlight our English Learners and is designed to

introduce and familiarize our community with our students and families from other parts of the world.

Another highlight is the cooperative effort between CFHS and the City of Cuyahoga Falls regarding our radio station, WCFM 96.1; the radio station broadcasts events taking place at CFHS.

Lastly, the fourth focus area of the strategic plan is Buildings and Resource Leveraging. Our 2018-2019 goals associated with this focus area include:

Enrollment. The second FY19 School Foundation Payment Report (SFPR) of June will reflect a 5% reduction in the number of transfers out of the District (Open Enrollment, Community School and Special Needs Scholarships).

The table on page 7 of the 2018-2019 CF Vision 20/20 Goals Document identifies the average daily membership (ADM) from the second school foundation payment report of October from the Ohio Department of Education. Open Enrollment numbers (in and out) include students who participate in the Six-District Educational Compact and are not traditional Open Enrollment students who have applied for enrollment in CFCSD.

Given, funding is based, in part, on enrollment, our objective over the last few years has been to offset the number of students who have chosen to be educated outside of the district by increasing the number of students that we accept via open enrollment. The result of effort is increased revenue for the district. That said, we are alarmed by the number of residential student choosing to be educated elsewhere. Thus, we have set a goal (see below) to reduce the number of students who choose to exit the district.

Outside revenue. By the end of 2018-2019 CFCSD staff will strengthen partnerships in support of student achievement by way of increasing outside revenue (grants/donations) by 10%.

Over the last two years, our staff has been very successful in writing grant applications for GAR funds and Foundation/Alumni Association. In 2018 they have received 9 GAR grants and 9

Foundation/Alumni Association grants worth approximately \$114,758 and in 2017, there were 7 GAR grants and 15 Foundation/Alumni Association grants awarded in the amount of \$79,490. We look to expand training in the writing of grants and to successfully guide staff through crowdfunding strategies.

Financial Recover Plan. By the end of FY19, CFCSA Administration and the BOE will determine and implement a financial recovery plan based on the findings of the Performance Audit. Given our five-year forecast which suggests we will have a negative cash position during FY21. The objective of the performance audit commissioned through the Auditor of State's office is to determine suggestions and strategies to eliminate the deficits in the five-year forecast without imposing additional taxes.

The exit conference will occur November 20 and the document will become public shortly thereafter. We will be charged with implementation of some or all of the suggestions. This will work in conjunction with the Master Facilities Plan that aims toward a combination levy in November 2019.

Finally, in addition to all of this, we will be engaged in the development of a new five-year strategic plan very soon. I am in the process of collecting proposals. I hope to have each entity present their proposal to the BOE such that a selection can be made soon. The goal is to have a newly adopted five-year strategic plan adopted in May 2019.