

YOUR SCHOOLS

2011

Aurora City School District

From the Superintendent

By **RUSS BENNETT**
Superintendent of Schools

As a part of our continuing effort to constantly improve our schools and move our district forward, the Aurora School District recently conducted a community survey. The purpose of this survey was to gauge how our community views its schools as well as to give us guidance for future direction. I worked in collaboration with the Research and Evaluation Bureau, a part of the College of Education, Health and Human Services, at Kent State University, to develop the questions that were asked. As we begin to develop a new 5-year strategic plan next year, this information will prove to be immensely helpful in guiding us through the process.

I'm pleased to say that we received great reviews from respondents! We were extremely happy with the perceptions that were being conveyed. I am confident that the survey is representative of the community as a whole. It was conducted with a high of level of accuracy. This was achieved by calculating that with 300 community members participating in the survey, it would reflect with 95% accuracy the responses and opinions of the Aurora City School District voter population, as if the entire population were interviewed.

The questions were created in a variety of formats, which required yes/no, grade ranking, and open-ended responses. The extended comment responses were especially helpful in giving us insight into

See Superintendent p. 4

Aurora City School District Community Survey

The Aurora City School District recently completed a community survey. This random-sample telephone survey was conducted by the Research

and Evaluation Bureau at Kent State University's College of Education, Health and Human Services. Community members were contacted between November 22, 2010 and December 20, 2010. The survey targeted the 12,174 registered voters living in Aurora, as identified in the most recent Portage County Board of Elections database. The survey included various questions asking for grade rankings, yes/no responses and some open-ended questions to allow respondents the opportunity to elaborate.

In total, 322 community members, including parents and non-parents, provided feedback to the 33 questions that took approximately five minutes to complete. Respondents represented both parents and non-parents equally at 50% each.

To the right you will find several charts that provide results from several pertinent questions that were asked during the survey.

Communication (All Residents)	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do you access the district's website?			
Parents	94.2%	5.8%	0.0%
Non-Parents	26.5%	72.7%	1.3%
Does the district website keep you up-to-date?			
Parents	80.4%	15.9%	3.6%
Non-Parents	24.3%	16.7%	59.0%
Does the district's mailings keep you up-to-date?			
Parents	76.8%	18.8%	4.3%
Non-Parents	73.2%	4.7%	22.1%
Do the athletic programs meet community expectations?			
Parents	84.8%	8.0%	7.2%
Non-Parents	78.8%	4.6%	16.6%

Instruction (Parents Only)	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do teachers communicate effectively with parents?	86.1%	11.4%	2.5%
Is the teacher-to-student ratio appropriate?	84.2%	13.9%	1.9%
Do the elementary school students have adequate access to technology?	85.9%	10.6%	3.5%
Do the middle school students have adequate access to technology?	84.6%	11.4%	4.1%

District Report Card (All Residents)	Grades		
	A	B	C or Less
Academic programming adequate	70.8%	24.8%	4.4%
District facilities	57.4%	33.8%	8.9%
Landscaping and building appearance	50.5%	38.4%	11.1%
Transportation	55.0%	36.2%	8.8%
Superintendent	58.7%	30.1%	11.2%
Principals	51.3%	37.5%	11.2%

District Renovation (All Residents)	Very Aware	Some-what	Not Aware
How aware are you that the district completed renovations under budget & will pay back the bonds 3 years early?	24.7%	22.7%	52.6%

Strategic Plan (All Residents)	Very Important	Some-what	Not Important
Increase academic programs	78.9%	16.1%	5.0%
Increase communication with the community	53.0%	39.3%	7.7%
Implement programs for senior citizens	28.1%	34.8%	37.1%
District financial stability	87.6%	11.4%	1.0%

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Who's Who & What's New

Craddock/Miller Principal **PATRICIA MINROVIC** was featured as a reviewer in the Winter 2011 edition of the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators (OAESA) *Principal Navigator* magazine. She reviewed the book *Giving Wings to Children's Dreams: Making Our Schools Worthy of Our Children*, by Paul D. Houston.

January was **SCHOOL BOARD APPRECIATION MONTH**. A big thank you to the **AURORA CITY SCHOOL BOARD** members comprised of President, **GERALD KOHANSKI**, Vice President, **PAM MEHALLIS**, **BEVERLY KUCH**, **ANN MORRISON** and **JOHN SLOE**, for their tireless dedication and the countless hours of service that they give to our school system.

A group of Aurora High School students and parents combined to make **TeamHOPE** of Aurora. They helped NAMI Portage County, a chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), raise more than \$4,000 at the annual NAMI Walks fundraiser. Members of TEAMHope of Aurora included **KANDI MURAWSKI**, **EMMA CHURCH**, **KATIE CLARK**, **NICKY DAVIS**, **SOPHIE CHURCH**, **BECKY CLARK**, **SAMANTHA MEREDITH**, **NOAH HIBBARD**, **TORI HORVATH**, **JAN HORVATH**, **ALEXIS VOJTUSH** and **CAROLYN VOJTUSH**.

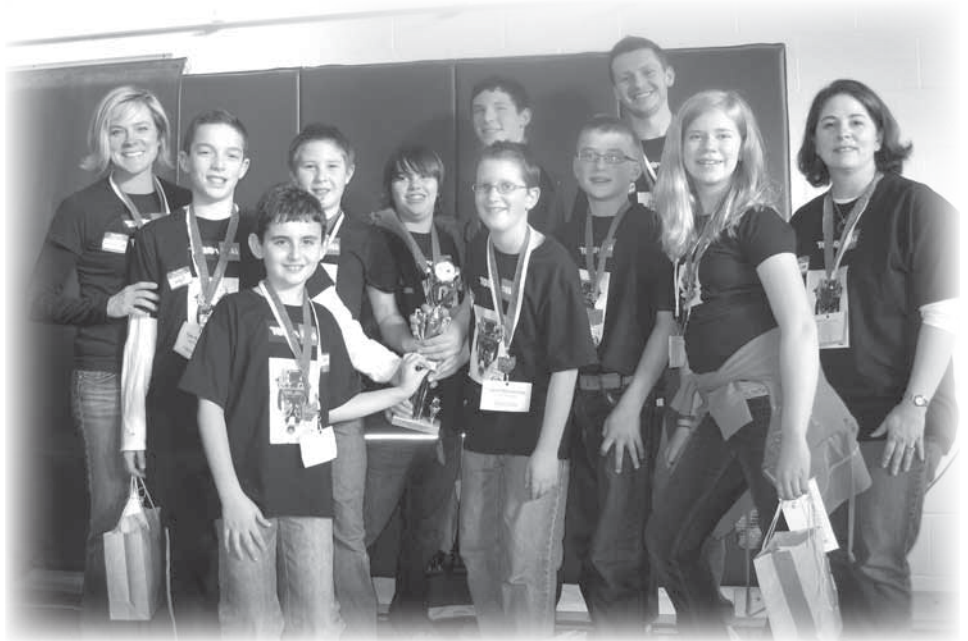
The Aurora Schools' first Lego League robotics team, **ToboRogel**, recently participated in their first robotic competition on January 9, 2011 at Hudson Middle School. The team named itself ToboRogel, which is Lego

Robot spelled backward. They earned the "Innovation and Strategy" award, currently housed at Harmon School, which recognizes the team that uses solid engineering practices and a well developed strategy to design and build an innovative, high performing robot. Team members include 6th grade students: **IAN DOEMLING**, **JAMES KRISTELL**, **CARLY REITZ**, **ALEX KOHN**, **JARED RUEHR**, **SCOTT CARLSON**, **JARET SKONIECZNY**, **TYLER THIEDING** and coaches **MICHELLE GERBRICK**, **TERRY PHILLIPS** and **SHANNON GAGEL**.

NICK SIVILO competed against four other high school football players for the **U.S. ARMY IRON MAN OF THE YEAR**

AWARD for Ohio. The Iron Man honors the state's best high school football players. He received over 2,600 votes!

The **POWER OF THE PEN** team had all twelve of their writers qualify for the regional competition to be held at Kent State University. Their coach, **LAQUITA TIMBERLAKE**, said this is considered a "rare occurrence" according to the state office. Seventh grade team members are **MCKENNA RITTER**, **CAROLINE LUKEHART**, **SARAH MOST**, **OLIVIA CALDER**, **CARA CUSTODIO** and **EMMA POLLOCK**. Eighth grade team members are **AMANDA SANDSTROM**, **ELISE HOLMAN**, **DASHA RYABOGIN**, **EMILIE RETTON**, **SARAH DRODER**, and **MADISON PROCTOR**.



YOUR SCHOOLS

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Your Schools is a publication of the Aurora City School District. Its purpose is to keep residents of Aurora informed of current events and progress in the Aurora City Schools and to foster pride and a continuous communication link between the schools and the community.

Your Schools has been awarded the "Mark of Excellence" and "Best of the Best" Awards by the Ohio Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association for service as a school district newsletter. *Your Schools* is a quarterly publication, mailed to all residents of Aurora. For information, comments, or story ideas, e-mail Editor Stacey DeAnna at: yourschools@aurora-schools.org.

DR. ALICIA LOPEZ WINS OUTSTANDING ADMINISTRATOR AWARD!

The Aurora City School District is honored to announce that Dr. Alicia Lopez has been chosen as the Ohio School Counselor Association's Outstanding Administrator Award for 2010. Dr. Lopez, Academic Director at Aurora Schools, was recognized at an awards ceremony in Columbus, Ohio.



heart." Superintendent Russ Bennett also recommended her stating that, "she is admired and trusted by all...Dr. Lopez embodies what great educators do to help students."

She was notified in October that she would be receiving the honor at a luncheon in Columbus on November 4, 2010. When announcing Dr. Lopez's award recognition to the Aurora Schools' staff, Bennett said, "I know you join me in congratulating her for her countless achievements and efforts on behalf of our district. Alicia is the consummate professional and such a great advocate for you and your work. Congratulations Alicia, you certainly are most deserving."

She has spent countless hours and untold sacrifices to help our school district achieve the academic excellence that we enjoy today and to help the district continue to move forward. Dr. Lopez was nominated by Miller/Craddock School Counselor, Tammy Mazzella, who wrote that while Dr. Lopez was deserving of this award for several different reasons, "probably the most important is her support and devotion to our school counseling department," here at Aurora Schools. Mazzella also stated that "the passion she has towards education and life, in general, is something to be admired."

Aurora School Counseling Director, Janice Biales, also wrote in her recommendation that, "Dr. Lopez is a genuine individual who always has the best interest of students, colleagues and the community at

After receiving this prestigious award, Dr. Lopez explained that, "I am deeply grateful to have been nominated by members of the Aurora City School District for the 2010 OSCA Administrator Award. Receiving this award is certainly an unexpected honor. The Administrator Award recognizes an administrator, school or district that has contributed to the growth and understanding of counseling. I consider this recognition a team award. This award could not have been possible without the outstanding support, talents and deep dedication of our Board of Education members, teachers, parents and administrators, who wholeheartedly support the work we do for students. I accept this award on behalf of all of us."

AURORA SCHOOL DISTRICT SEEKS HELP IN REPORTING BULLYING INCIDENTS

The Aurora City School District would like to encourage community awareness and help in reporting bullying incidences. Several high profile bullying incidents and their aftermath have taken place throughout the country and have received a great amount of public attention. In light of these events, we are encouraging Aurora community members to please bring bullying situations to the attention of school administrators.

With the help of parents and the community, it is the district's goal to be instrumental in dealing with these situations. By being pro-active in implementing new education programs dealing with this issue, we hope to discourage this type of behavior among students. If these issues do arise, the district will continue to strive to implement solutions with the expectation of achieving positive outcomes.

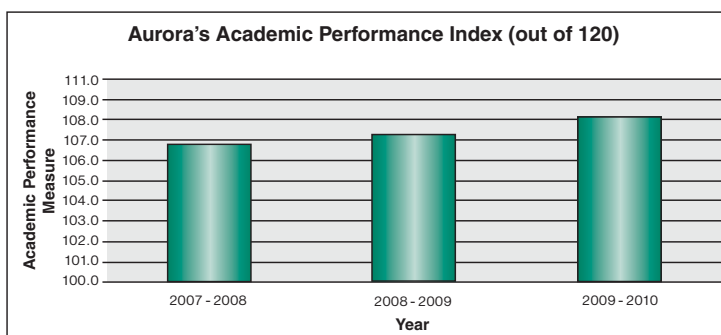
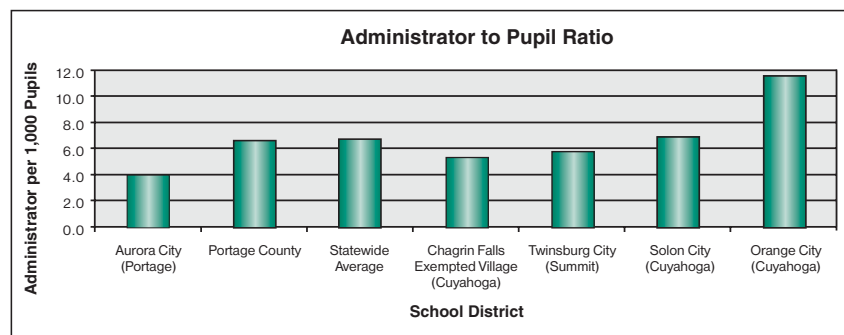
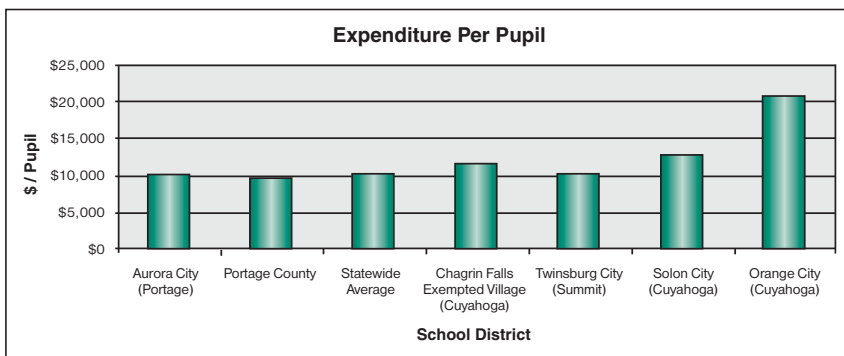
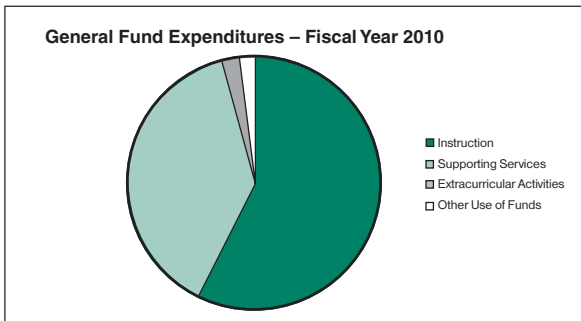


**"Change comes from
the questions we ask."**

~ Banach

Schools at a Glance

It is important that we as a school district strive to continually inform our community members about the many varied aspects of our schools. We have compared the Aurora City School District with other local area school districts in several key aspects and created the chart and graphs below. In summary, of the total general fund expenditures, the Aurora City Schools spend less per pupil while keeping the number of pupils per administrator high. In other words, we have fewer administrators than other districts. At the same time, our Academic Performance Index (API) has remained strong and has consistently increased.



Superintendent Continued from p. 1

specific opinions. Some of the more general positive responses included:

"Seriously, the Aurora system is the best school system in all of Ohio."

"I feel that they always do a great job and they improve every year."

"I have to say that I'm a happy tax payer, and I'm pleased with the academics."

"I feel that the current administration does manage its money well. The student-to-cost ratio is best in the state."

"We raised four kids here, and we've been very happy with the schools."

More specifically, some positive responses were that:

"The district really collaborates with the city, and that's a positive thing."

"I really like the IB program. It's very good to offer that."

"I like it when they use the school facilities for community uses."

While completely positive responses are what we strive for, I found that those responses that gave constructive criticism were very helpful, also. Some of the things that were mentioned included:

"The teacher to student ratio should be brought down. I'm not sure that it's the best it can be."

"It would be nice to see the schools work with parks and recreation department to increase the activities for students."

"I'd like to suggest more volunteering opportunities for senior citizens."

"There needs to be a little bit more communication. They're pretty good about it, but we could use more."

"We need more foreign languages."

These survey results will be instrumental in helping our district place emphasis on the educational areas that the community finds important. For a more detailed breakdown of response percentages, please read the story in this issue titled, "Aurora City School District Community Survey."

I would like to thank all of the community members that took the time to participate in our survey. Their time and opinions are very much appreciated.

HARMON MIDDLE SCHOOL RECEIVES LETTER FROM AREA VETERAN COMMENDING STUDENTS

“You Should Be Proud Of Your Students”

Each year, students in the 8th grade at Harmon Middle School take a class trip in the fall to Washington, D.C as a part of their social studies curriculum. After this year's class returned, the Harmon Middle School Principal, Mark Abramovich, and the Assistant Principal, Paul Goodwin, received a letter from an area veteran expressing his thoughts on an encounter with our Aurora students. Reprinted to the right is the content of that letter that speaks volumes about how impressive our students are here in the Aurora Schools.

By the way, Paul Goodwin was Solon and the name on the Vietnam Memorial was not a relative of his.

“Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.”

~ Brian O'Driscoll

Dear Mr. Abramovich & Mr. Goodwin,

Allow me to introduce myself-my name is Anthony Camarato. I grew up near Geauga lake and graduated from Solon High School in 1984. I have spent the last 20 or so years in the United States Army and am currently stationed in Orlando, Florida. I was attending a conference in Washington DC last week which ended a bit early. I decided to take a walk back from the capitol to my hotel in Arlington and visit the sites. First let me mention that I have spent more than 30 months in the middle east, with my most recent tour ending at the end of 2009. It was a very humbling and emotional experience as I walked through the WWII, Vietnam and Korean War memorials and honestly, I was unable to keep the tears back. Guess that is what happens when you see the things that I have seen in combat.

But I wanted to share with you what really made my day-a young group of 8th grade kids from Harmon Middle School! As they saw me in uniform they asked if they could ask me questions about my military service; some even asked for pictures with them. I recognized the school name and stated that since we were practically neighbors I would help. Sometimes though I am always leery about kids with questions and combat, but your students surprised me and asked basic questions and didn't seem to pry into some things that are sometimes hurtful when I have to explain. They were extremely appreciative of me helping them with their project, but mostly of my service in the military. They were all well mannered, quiet and very respectful as I watched them walk from memorial to memorial. They seemed to have a sincere interest in learning about what they were seeing and what each memorial stood for. I did notice one of the students looking at the name «Goodwin» on the Vietnam Memorial and wondered if it was someone he knew, but after seeing the name of the Assistant Principal I bet they were asking each other if it was a relative of Mr. Goodwin. Did Mr. Goodwin ever work in Solon? I think we had a faculty member there with the last name.

Lastly, I shared this with some of your teachers how I thought your students were well mannered and respectful, not something you generally see from a large group of youth. You should be proud of your students!

Respectfully,
CPT Camarato



A League of Their Own

Jessica Baker ~

Standing at 5' 4" tall, Aurora High School Junior Jessica Baker set a new Aurora School and Chagrin Valley Conference (C.V.C.) high jump record after her jump of 5" 8" was recorded. After her impressive second place finish for a tie at the regional competition, Baker went on to represent Aurora



High School at the Division I State Track Meet at Jesse Owens Stadium in Columbus, Ohio last June.

She came back from the state meet, after finishing in a three-way tie for fifth place, as the first track/field athlete from Aurora Schools to place in Division I at the state meet since moving into the Division I level in 2006. She was also the female C.V.C. MVP in the track and field category.

According to her coach, John Kudley, she also received an academic All-Ohio award, given by the Ohio Association of Track and Cross Country Coaches, for her classroom accomplishments and Grade Point Average of 3.818.

Dee Brizzolara ~ Aurora High School graduate Dee Brizzolara, sophomore wide-receiver at the University of Chicago, was named 2010 University Athletic Association Division I Player of the Year. He was also an All-Association First Team player for the offense and special teams.



Brizzolara excelled as an offensive team player throughout the season. During a 61-22 victory over Carnegie Mellon, Brizzolara scored five touchdowns and gained 432 yards, including an 86-yard punt return. He caught the game winning

touchdown that broke a 38 game winning streak for Case Western Reserve, earning him the website www.D3football.com's "play of the week." Brizzolara played on the Aurora High School's 2008 championship team.

Kahli Hale ~ Greenmen Senior Kahli Hale signed an NCAA National Letter of Intent at a celebration ceremony at Aurora High School on Thursday, February 3, 2011. Kahli signed the intent to play agreement to play soccer for Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where she will be majoring in Occupational Therapy.

During her high school soccer career, Kahli earned: Varsity letter 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010; Captain 2009, 2010; Chagrin Valley Conference First Team 2008, 2009, 2010; Chagrin Valley Conference Second Team 2007; Chagrin Valley Conference All Academic 2010; Greater Cleveland All District First Team 2010; Greater Cleveland All District Second Team 2008, 2009; Greater Cleveland All District Honorable Mention 2007; All Ohio All Academic 2010; Offensive MVP 2008, 2009, 2010.

She participated in the Senior All Star Game 2010 and had 57 career goals. She was also a 3-year varsity letter recipient in track. Kahli maintained a 3.9 Grade Point Average throughout high school and was recently inducted into the National Honor Society.

Along with these many achievements, she is also the first Aurora Girls Soccer player to receive a soccer scholarship to a Division I school.



• Holidays •



CLASS ACTS

The newly opened **Big Lots** retail store, located in Marketplace Square in Bainbridge Ohio, presented Craddock Elementary School with a generous \$2,500 donation as a part of its Grand Opening ceremony. On hand to accept the gift was Superintendent **Russ Bennett**, School Board Member **Beverly Kuch**, Treasurer **William Volosin**, Craddock/Miller School Principal **Patty Minrovic**, and Craddock/Miller School Counselor **Tammy Mazzella**.

The 5th grade science class taught by **Jackie Skeels** is utilizing **Glogster**, an on-line tool that helps students take information that they gather and create digital posters. They have created science posters to coincide with topics such as: ecosystems, heat and electricity.

Third grade teachers and tutors organized and facilitated a math night to help parents gain an understanding of math by thinking like mathematicians.

Miller/Craddock School Counselor, **Tammy Mazzella**, and Leighton School Counselor, **Cynthia Curry**, are holding **Coffee, Cookies and Conversation with the Counselors (C4)** meetings. They are being held throughout the year and deal with timely topics such as student anxiety, homework, organization and time management.

Emily Hiker, Intensive Needs Interventionist, and her **students** sold homemade dog treats for their annual class fundraiser. The students baked, packaged, advertised and practiced phone skills in order to raise money for field trips, PARTA ticket expenses, and student rewards and materials.

Craddock School student artwork can be found on **Artsonia**. The artwork can be found by going to www.artsonia.com. It is also a link on the Craddock School web page at aurora-schools.org.



org. By clicking on “View Past Exhibits,” 2nd grade students can still find their 1st grade artwork.

First grade teacher **Courtney Kohanski** arranged to have artists from **Young Audiences** visit the first grade classrooms. They taught the students movement and choreography to accompany vowel sounds. Each first grade class gave a final “Popcorn Popper” performance for the second grade classes. During the final performances the children used the choreography they had learned to help tell the story.

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