

OUR SCHOOL REPORT



Olmsted Falls School District

Summer 2025

LEARNING, LEADING, AND LOOKING AHEAD

By Superintendent Jim Lloyd, Ed.D.



With the 2024-2025 school year behind us and a new one on the horizon, I want to take a moment to reflect—not just on what we accomplished together this past year, but on the ongoing journey we share as a school community.

In our last newsletter, I shared how Olmsted Falls City Schools is committed to growing as a learning organization—one that continuously listens, reflects, and evolves to better serve students. That

message has only deepened this spring, as I've seen firsthand the meaningful ways our schools are embracing that mindset.

An example of this is the Action Research (AR) projects that elevated student engagement and collaboration. This marks the second year of AR projects. From the ECC's globally themed design lesson to Falls-Lenox's curiosity-driven learning days... from OFIS's focus on

foundational skills and belonging to OFMS's cross-grade Sandbox Sessions... to OFHS's deep dives into reflection and redesign—our district continues to show what it means to grow through learning, together.

We also saw community partnerships come to life in ways that enriched the student experience: from Progressive's hands-on STEM programs at OFIS to Career Day at OFMS, and visits from volunteers and alumni who modeled Bulldog excellence and generosity.

We celebrated our 2025 retirees and Employees of the Year, and cheered on the Class of 2025 as they crossed the stage—ready to take the next step in their journeys.

This district shines because of the people who pour into it each day—from staff and students to parents and community partners. Thank you for your trust, your support, and for walking alongside us as we pursue what's best for every Bulldog.

LEGISLATION THAT COULD RESHAPE PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING



BRETT ROBSON
Treasurer & CFO

As June came to a close, Ohio's biennium budget process entered its final and most critical phase. The state budget for Fiscal Years 2026–2027 was signed into law July 1. Our focus throughout the various school-related proposals and budget process remained steady: advocating for funding that supports Olmsted Falls City Schools, monitoring developments, analyzing implications, and preparing to adapt—always with our students' best interests in mind.

In our last newsletter, we shared key concerns under discussion in House Bill 96, including the potential pause in the Fair School Funding Plan, proposed caps on district cash balances, and the ongoing expansion of private school voucher programs. We will share more about the implications of the final budget bill on Olmsted Falls City Schools in upcoming communications.

One of the most notable updates since our last communication is the introduction of House Bill 335—a new piece of legislation that could have serious consequences for public schools statewide, including ours.

If enacted, HB 335 would eliminate a school district's ability to collect inside millage—property tax revenue that districts are permitted to collect without voter approval, up to 10 mills total as established by

the Ohio Constitution. For Olmsted Falls City Schools, this would result in the loss of 5 mills, equating to an immediate and ongoing revenue reduction of approximately \$4.5 million annually. These dollars are part of our operating funds—used to support the day-to-day functions that keep our schools running smoothly.

Such a loss could affect staffing, increase class sizes, and reduce flexibility in student supports and programs—key elements of the Triple A experience in Olmsted Falls.

Public schools in Ohio rely on property taxes because that is how the state's funding system is designed. Removing a foundational element of that system—without a sustainable alternative in place—undermines the ability of districts to plan responsibly and fulfill their mission. If HB 335 becomes law, Olmsted Falls would likely be forced to return to the ballot more frequently, just to maintain the services and staffing we have today.

As always, we are committed to transparency and stewardship, and to ensuring that every dollar is used wisely in service of student learning.

Thank you for your continued trust and support.

Brett Robson
Treasurer

HOW OFCS STAFF ARE DRIVING GROWTH THROUGH DESIGN

As a Learning Organization, OFCS continually seeks ways to enhance and improve student engagement and learning. One way in which we examine areas where we may be able to further impact teaching and learning in a positive way is through focused Action Research (AR) projects at the building level. Did you know that each of our five school buildings conducted its own Action Research Project during this past school year? In May, buildings came together to present their projects and results to one another furthering the impact of what each building had learned.

FALLS-LENOX EMPOWERS STUDENTS THROUGH CURIOSITY

At Falls-Lenox Primary School, curiosity is more than a learning tool—it's a pathway to deeper engagement and critical thinking. This year's Action Research project focused on one powerful question: If we engage teachers in designing and redesigning three building-wide curiosity days, will they intentionally incorporate student interests and Design Qualities into other work?

Falls-Lenox, our 1st through 3rd grade building with over 750 students, is intentionally structured to feel small and connected with three designated learning communities. That same focus on connection guided this year's project, which placed student voice and ownership at the center. Through building-wide events like Winter Wonderland, Curiosity Camp, and Deep Dive, students had the opportunity to ask big questions, explore their interests, and communicate their findings in creative ways.

Teachers designed these experiences using design qualities such as choice, authenticity, and protection from adverse consequences—intentionally tailoring work to student motives and needs. Students researched questions like “Why are hurricanes dangerous?” or “Can fish use sign language?” and shared their learning through posters, slideshows, and even handmade books.

The impact was clear. Post-project data showed growth in student skills at every grade level—from posing original questions to synthesizing information from multiple sources. Teachers also reported greater collaboration, more intentional lesson planning, and deeper student engagement across subjects. “My students were drastically more independent throughout the research process,” one teacher shared. “They showed they now have a clear understanding of how to ask questions and find resources.”

Over 80% of teachers reported applying the same approach in other areas of instruction, from science and writing to classroom discussions and unit design. The emphasis on student interests, paired with structured inquiry, has helped unlock authentic learning opportunities across the building.



OFMS BUILDS CONFIDENCE THROUGH COLLABORATION

This year at Olmsted Falls Middle School, the focus of Action Research wasn't just on students—it was on teachers. The guiding question asked: If teachers are given structured opportunities to collaborate across grades and subjects, will they feel more confident in designing engaging work and supporting one another?

The answer, based on powerful feedback and data, was yes.

Known as Sandbox Sessions, this initiative brought together 12 cohorts of teachers in groups that intentionally included teachers of different grade levels and subject areas to share lessons, ask targeted questions, and offer constructive feedback. Each teacher brought a lesson to the table, received peer input, and returned with refinements to try out in the classroom. Later, they reported back to the group, closing the loop on collaborative growth.

The goal was clear: to shift teachers from working in isolation to functioning as co-designers—leaders in shaping the learning experience. Survey data revealed significant gains in teacher confidence. By the end of the year, nearly 94% of staff said they felt confident or extremely confident using Design Qualities to engage students, up from 78% in the fall. Also noteworthy is that 93.8% said they had gained valuable ideas from colleagues.

The positive effects extended beyond confidence. Teachers described authentic conversations, new perspectives, and renewed energy. “It was fun listening to others' stories, struggles, and successes,” one teacher shared.

From board games to real-world math applications and animated vocabulary lessons, the ideas generated were as creative as they were practical. The project also strengthened alignment with the district's “Benefits Based Accountability” model—particularly in meeting students' individual needs and fostering meaningful learning environments.

Looking ahead, the middle school team is eager to take the next step: integrating student voice into the design process. The success of this year's staff collaboration proves that when teachers learn from each other, students benefit most.

OFIS STRENGTHENS LEARNING THROUGH FOUNDATIONS AND BELONGING

At Olmsted Falls Intermediate School, this year's Action Research project focused on a foundational but essential question: Will using an engaging instructional approach to teach recurring foundational skills lead to improved student success surrounding those skills?

Shaped by parent feedback that emphasized academic growth, friendships, and whole-child development, the project blended academic rigor with a strong emphasis on relationships. Teachers worked to ensure students not only built critical skills in reading, writing, and math, but also felt seen, supported, and connected in the classroom.

To launch the initiative, staff identified key foundational skills and developed common assessments. Lessons were intentionally designed to be both academically rigorous and personally meaningful. Progress was monitored using multiple data points throughout the year, with early results showing promising gains.

At the same time, the school measured student belonging and connection—recognizing that academic success is closely tied to emotional safety and engagement. Relationship audit data, classroom feedback, and student reflections confirmed a trend: when students feel connected, they put in more effort and persist longer with challenging tasks.

“Students who feel like they belong and have opportunities to build relationships while learning are more likely to stay engaged and master foundational skills,” the design team noted. This insight became a guiding principle behind lesson design and classroom culture at OFIS throughout the year.

The team plans to continue this work next year with refinements to assessments, a potential focus on math skills, and expanded inclusion of special area classes. As the presentation concluded: “By creating a strong environment for learning and maintaining a consistent focus on reinforcing foundational skills, students are better able to engage in deeper learning.”

ECC STRENGTHENS STAFF AND STUDENT CONNECTIONS

At the Early Childhood Center, this year's Action Research project centered on a single, purposeful question: If we provide explicit instruction in Schlechty's Design Qualities, will staff show increased knowledge, use, and collaboration around the framework? With several new team members on board, the ECC Design Team saw an opportunity to rebuild a shared understanding of the district's instructional design approach and strengthen consistency across classrooms.

Through targeted professional development and collaborative planning, staff explored key tools like SPEC sheets that provide guiding questions for reflection, planning and designing of engaging work for each class of students. Staff also explored Design Playlist resources which provide a wide range of instructional strategies to engage learners. The initiative culminated in a co-created lesson titled “Let's Take a Winter Holiday!”—a globally themed experience that invited our preschool and kindergarten students to learn about cultural celebrations around the world. This hands-on lesson became a building-wide moment of engagement and curiosity. As principal Jennifer Jackson shared, “It was exciting to see how we could connect Design Qualities to student interests. The project sparked so much curiosity and joy.”

Post-project surveys showed clear progress. Teachers reported increased confidence using the design framework, more collaboration with colleagues, and noticeable gains in student engagement during the shared lesson. The effort reminded staff that small, intentional steps can lead to meaningful improvements in teaching and learning.

Looking ahead, the ECC team plans to build on this momentum by incorporating more student voice into lesson design and exploring ways to connect families with the process. As one team member reflected, “This was just the beginning. We're excited to keep growing—together.”

OFHS REDESIGNS LEARNING THROUGH REFLECTION AND COLLABORATION

At Olmsted Falls High School, this year's Action Research focused on a question that speaks directly to staff culture and student engagement: If we continue using our design work structures and focus on reflecting on our work, will staff feel inspired, empowered, and supported to create engaging learning experiences?

The answer, according to staff feedback and participation, was a clear yes.

Throughout the year, the high school's design team facilitated a series of collaborative structures including WeDesign Wednesdays, Deep Dive sessions, and reflection tools that helped teachers refine their instruction across subject areas. These sessions weren't just about brainstorming—they were rooted in real lessons, real challenges, and real redesigns. Teachers brought in lessons on topics ranging from historical debates to board-game simulations and used team feedback to make their work more engaging, student-centered, and aligned with district learning goals.

Reflection was a critical component. Staff used unit reflection templates to assess the effectiveness of their lessons and identify ways to improve. These tools encouraged teachers to consider student needs, cognitive complexity, and how well their work supported key Design Qualities like authenticity, choice, and affirmation.

Survey data throughout the year supported the impact: nearly 88% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that participation in Deep Dives inspired and empowered them to create new work. By May, nearly 90% said that having time to reflect on their year made them feel more supported in planning future engaging instruction.

Teachers shared that the design work has now become part of their planning mindset. “The power of our consistent focus on design is that it's become second nature,” one teacher shared. “Even when I'm not consciously thinking about it, I find that my lessons always revolve around one or more of the Design Qualities.”

Looking ahead, the OFHS team plans to expand participation in Deep Dives, build a shared archive of redesigned lessons, and explore how these practices influence long-term student outcomes. Their journey is a clear example of how reflective practice and collaboration can elevate teaching and help every student experience more meaningful learning.



COMMUNITY VOICES AT THE CENTER OF FACILITIES PLANNING

Olmsted Falls City Schools continues to make meaningful progress in its Facilities Master Planning process—with community input helping shape the path forward.

Since launching in fall 2023, the committee has held four formal meetings and participated in more than a dozen tours, presentations, and outreach events across the district. These include comprehensive building tours at all school facilities, the bus garage, and Board Office—ensuring a firsthand understanding of the district’s physical spaces and needs. Committee members also visited neighboring school districts to explore innovative ideas in facility design and gather inspiration for future planning.

To expand feedback beyond regularly engaged stakeholders, the district conducted a randomized community survey—providing a platform for residents who may be less directly involved with the district to share their perspectives.

To gather deeper input, the committee held focus group presentations with the PTA Council, Key Communicators, and Columbia Park residents. These conversations are helping shape the district’s long-term vision for facilities that support student learning and reflect community priorities.

To learn more, visit: ofcs.net/facilities.



NEW ADMINISTRATION BUILDING PROJECT BREAKS GROUND

Olmsted Falls City Schools will break ground this month on a new District Administration Building. The Board of Education approved the lowest responsible bid in May, allowing construction to begin behind the current district offices, located in the small white ranch house at the front of the high school campus on Bagley Road.

The current building, which is outdated, overcrowded, and not ADA-compliant, will remain in use during construction. All 17 staff members currently housed in the building will continue working there throughout the project.

The new facility will provide a more efficient, accessible space and bring together additional district administrative staff currently spread across multiple locations. It is expected to be complete by January 2027.

This project will be funded through the district’s permanent improvement fund, which is comprised of money received for facility maintenance, repairs, and improvements. The yearly cost will be similar to past projects that are now paid off, so there will be no additional cost to taxpayers.

Once the new building opens, the old office will be removed. Residents interested in learning more or touring the current facility are encouraged to contact Superintendent Dr. Jim Lloyd at (440) 427-6000 or jlloyd@ofcs.net.

A TRIBUTE OF PRIDE AND PARTNERSHIP

The Bulldog Marching Band proudly led Columbia Park’s first-ever Memorial Day Parade, joining residents in a meaningful celebration of service and community. With decorated golf carts, bikes, and scooters—and support from the Olmsted Township Police Department—the parade was a vibrant show of hometown pride.

It was a shining example of the strong bond between our schools and community. Thank you to the residents of Columbia Park and to staff members Ms. Roberts, Mr. Spagnola, Mr. Misick, and all who helped make it possible.



BULLDOG RETIREES LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY

Olmsted Falls City Schools proudly celebrates the 2025 staff members retiring this year, who together have contributed 290 years of dedicated service to our district. This year's honored retirees include JoAnna Ventimiglia, Suzanne Gross, Gina Pilko, Mark Kurz, Catherine Samuel, and Lidia Soto-Kacik. Not pictured: Sandra Cherry, John Gaba, Donna Livingston, Teresa Tantanella, and Lisa Topolski.

We thank each of them for their lasting impact on our schools and wish them all the best in retirement.



CHALLENGE COIN HONORS EXEMPLARY BULLDOGS

The Olmsted Falls Board of Education Challenge Coin recognizes individuals who demonstrate exceptional service and commitment to our school community.

This spring, three remarkable Bulldogs were honored. Jessica Connelly received her coin from Board Member Bob Perez for her outstanding contributions to the district, community, and athletics program. Her leadership of the Night at the Races fundraiser and tireless volunteer work reflect the spirit of The Bulldog Way.

Board Member Justin Funk awarded a virtual coin to Olmsted Falls High School alum and Columbus Crew player Sean Zawadzki during a Career Day video chat for inspiring middle school students with his journey. That same day, Funk presented a coin to fellow OFHS alum and Olympic medalist Katie Moon (formerly Nageotte), recognizing her continued support of Bulldog Nation and motivational message to students.

Congratulations to all three recipients for embodying excellence in action.



Jessica Connelly and Bob Perez



Justin Funk awards Sean Zawadzki



Katie Moon and Justin Funk

CELEBRATING OUR 2025 EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

At the close of each school year, Olmsted Falls City Schools staff members have the opportunity to recognize exceptional colleagues through the annual Employee of the Year awards. A special thank you goes to the Olmsted Falls Kiwanis Club for reviewing nominations and selecting this year's honorees.

Congratulations to Kim Krock, Library Media Aide and long-term substitute in the ECC's moderate/intensive classroom; retiring Olmsted Falls Middle School Principal Mark Kurz; and Falls-Lenox second-grade teacher Anne Statz. They received multiple nominations and exemplify the values and dedication that define our school community.

We're proud to celebrate these outstanding employees and grateful for their continued commitment to students and staff.

ANNE STATZ



KIM KROCK



MARK KURZ



OFMS LEADERSHIP TRANSITION: HONORING MR. KURZ AND WELCOMING NEW ADMINISTRATORS

Olmsted Falls City Schools extends heartfelt thanks to Mr. Mark Kurz, who retires this summer after 24 years as Principal of Olmsted Falls Middle School and 42 years in education. His steady leadership and deep commitment to students have left a lasting mark. We wish him all the best in retirement.

Succeeding Mr. Kurz is Mr. Mike Sislowksi, who brings 20 years of experience to the role—including the past decade as Assistant Principal at OFMS. A longtime resident, parent, and educator in Olmsted Falls, Mr. Sislowksi shared:

“I am truly honored and excited to step into the role of Principal at Olmsted Falls Middle School. As someone who has lived, worked, and raised a family in Olmsted Falls, I deeply understand and value the vital role our schools play in helping students reach their full potential. I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of a community that is so strongly supported by dedicated families, engaged community members, and committed civic leaders. I look forward to collaborating with the exceptional staff at OFMS as we continue our shared mission of engaging and inspiring our amazing students.”

Joining Mr. Sislowksi as the new Assistant Principal is Mr. Mitch Heffron, a 19-year education veteran who most recently served as Principal for grades 7–8 at North Ridgeville Academic Center.

“Mr. Heffron brings valuable experience working with middle-level students and shares a strong vision for inspiring and empowering them to be their best—both in and out of the classroom,” said Mr. Sislowksi. “We are especially excited to see how he will support our staff in fostering student growth as he steps into a leadership role focused on creating a positive and safe learning environment.”

Please join us in celebrating Mr. Kurz’s incredible career and welcoming Mr. Sislowksi and Mr. Heffron to their new leadership roles at OFMS.



Mike Sislowksi



Mitch Heffron

FRIENDS OF EDUCATION AWARD

Congratulations to Donna Calalog, recipient of the 2025 Friends of Education Award. Presented by the Olmsted Falls Education Association, this annual honor recognizes individuals who go above and beyond in supporting our schools.

Donna has volunteered at the Early Childhood Center for more than a decade, sharing her love of reading with young learners and enriching their early education experience.

We’re grateful for her dedication and proud to celebrate her lasting impact on our students and school community.



OFMS CAREER DAY SPARKS BIG DREAMS

OFMS hosted its 2nd annual Career Day on April 30—and it was packed with possibility! Students explored over 35 career sessions and visited an open-forum Career Fair featuring 15 businesses and industries. From NASA and marine biology to therapy dogs, DJing, and the trades, students got a firsthand look at where their futures might lead.

A special highlight: OFHS alumni Katie Moon and Sean Zawadski returned to share their inspiring journeys. Thank you to all the incredible presenters and community partners who made this day such a success!



ECC VEHICLE DAY

The annual Vehicle Day at the Early Childhood Center gave students an up-close look at the many vehicles that serve our community—from school buses and fire trucks to police cruisers and more. This year’s highlight: a visit from a police horse!

Students also learned about the community members who operate these vehicles and the important roles they play.

Thank you to all our community partners who made this day possible. Your support helps create meaningful learning experiences for our youngest Bulldogs.



PROGRESSIVE BRINGS STEM TO LIFE AT OFIS

This spring, Olmsted Falls Intermediate School students experienced hands-on STEM learning thanks to an exciting partnership with Progressive Insurance and the support of dedicated OFCS parent volunteers.

In April, Progressive engineer and OFCS parent Mr. Steve Marshall visited Mr. Englehart’s class to share how engineers use energy and innovation to solve real-world problems.

In June, parent volunteers Mr. Chege, Mr. Monyak, and Mr. Davis returned with Progressive’s “Crash Courses.” Students in Mr. Englehart and Mr. Sunkle’s classes played Progressive Parkway, a board game that brought math, risk, and probability to life in a fun, engaging way. Mrs. Raines’ class explored Baseball by the Numbers, applying math skills through real sports statistics.

We are grateful for strong community partnerships like this one with Progressive, which make learning meaningful and memorable for our students.



ZOO WAX MUSEUM WOWS FAMILIES

Mrs. Patay’s first graders capped off their spring research with a wild and wonderful Zoo Wax Museum. Each student chose an animal to study and shared their learning through animated Google Slides, colorful tri-folds, and creative presentations.

Families explored the student-led exhibits and were wowed by the enthusiasm, effort, and knowledge on display.



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OUR SCHOOL REPORT



18th Consecutive Year

IS PUBLISHED TO MAINTAIN A REGULAR LINE OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE RESIDENTS OF THE OLMSTED FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMUNITY

NEWS AS IT HAPPENS: OLMSTED FALLS SCHOOLS ON FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM

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President: Phil Eckenrode **Vice President:** Kelly Walker
Members: Justin Funk, Bob Perez, Holly Neumann

CELEBRATING THE CLASS OF 2025

Cheers to the Olmsted Falls High School Class of 2025! On May 29, 293 proud graduates crossed the stage on Vitamix Field at Charles Harding Memorial Stadium—surrounded by packed stands of cheering family, friends, and school community members.

The OFHS band set the tone for the celebration with outstanding musical performances. Inspiring remarks were shared by Board of Education President Phil Eckenrode, Superintendent Dr. Jim Lloyd, Principal Leo Spagnola, Senior Class President Autumn Harwood, and Phi Beta Kappa honoree Quinn Gates.

We are incredibly proud of each and every graduate and can't wait to see where your journey leads next. Wherever you go, you'll always be Bulldogs!

This remarkable class leaves behind a legacy of leadership, service, and achievement—including a record-breaking 326 scholarships totaling \$178,300 awarded through this year's Local Scholarship Program. Thank you to our generous sponsors and community partners for investing in the future of the Class of 2025!

