

Prepared Notes for Board Meeting

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I think it's fair to say that the last month of the school year is one of smiles and sadness as projects are completed, seasons wrap up, tests are taken and students move on to the next grade, the next school or the next phase in their lives. From the outside looking in, it is nothing short of an whirlwind of activity which pretty breathtaking. Here are some updates from the goings on in our district.

A few weeks back, most of us attended the facility task force meeting and you really have to hand it to the dedication of task force members as that meeting went deep into the night. The task force is putting in some long hours trying to solve the trifecta of puzzles (enrollment growth, aging facilities, high school balance) in a manner that is cost efficient yet educationally sound and "thank you" seems hardly sufficient for their efforts on this important project. Honestly, the entire Facilities Project is starting to take on the aura of the old Rubics Cube – where you get one or two sides exactly the way you want them only to find that another side is completely out of whack.

I attended Worthington Kilbourne's senior recognition night where I learned a little something about many of our graduates – where they are going in the fall, what did they excel at during their time at Kilbourne and so forth. My one observation from that event is that the number of students planning on majoring in Psychology, Sociology and History seemed down while the number of students planning on going into STEM related fields seemed to be up – perhaps a testimony to the success of Project Lead the Way and out engineering programming or perhaps just a sign of the times.

A week or so ago, I attended our health insurance committee meeting. The takeawaysw from that meeting was that our health care costs, our second biggest expense, can vary widely from year to year, that we need to do a better job at employee wellness participation, that we need to encourage both our employees and our providers to provide a much higher level of price transparency and that in general, we are far better off being self-insured than the alternative. I thought the topic was interesting enough for both us and our constituents that I've requested a presentation on the subject in the months to come.

I attended a Worthington City Council meeting where Council honored our national merit finalists so I wanted to thank them for dedicating a portion of their agenda for that.

Also last week, a bunch of us went to the WKHS Senior Projects exhibit. I spoke to perhaps a dozen students about their internships. We do, in my opinion, an outstanding job at finding placements for an ever increasing number of students. This year, I spoke to students who interned for medicine, physical therapy, athletic training, theatre, finance and the Ohio Democratic Party. There can be no doubt that these experiences change lives, at least in the short

term and possibly thereafter. I know there is a lot of choice in our district for high school juniors and seniors and the allure of college credit is high, but these projects provide an experience that you won't get sitting in a high school or college classroom and are an outstanding example of education innovation right here in Worthington. I'd also point out that even for this accountability hawk, there is nothing about senior projects or the Linworth walkabouts for that matter that show up on a standardized test or the state report card yet, if one is trying to do an apples to apples comparison between two schools, how would you not take those opportunities into account.

Speaking of innovation, I absolutely love when principals take the opportunity to host open houses to demonstrate student work. Last week, Liberty hosted such an open house and I really enjoyed wondering through the various exhibits. The highlight for me was randomly sampling student essays on whether Ohio's Pit Bull law was fair. There were animal exhibits, the increasingly popular wax museum where one kid memorized a 5 minute speech on Madam Curie and numerous other examples of student success at Liberty.

A big shout out to Nathan Kellenberger for inviting us all to Worthingway Honors Night and to Mark Hill for inviting us, well, informally anyway, to the WEA retirement gala and while I'm at, a shout out for our Superintendent who is becoming quite the prolific speechwriter. It must be tempting to reuse speeches but I think I heard 5 originals over the last few weeks.

On Friday, I attended a number of Linworth Walkabout presentations. As with Senior Projects, but more so, these opportunities change lives as students have the chance to sample many different choices and learn as much about what they don't like as what they do. I enjoyed listening to one student's first hand account of life in an immigration support office in Washington as well as another student who learned about fair trade in foreign countries and its possible impact on US prices for everyday goods.

All of this culminates in graduation and as always, both of our schools conducted Commencement Exercises with the grace and dignity they deserve. Today, around 600 students are dealing with the "day after" syndrome while a thousand staff members are finishing up another school year and preparing to do it all over again in the summer and fall.

The last few weeks were exhausting and exhilarating to watch, I can only imagine what it must be like to do the actual work.

Finally, she thought she would escape. She was wrong.