

Dear East Knox Community



It has been an exciting first year as an East Knox Board Member. It was great to see the outstanding results in May of the previous year's State Report Card. East Knox students are excelling in other endeavors such as the F.F.A. where they placed in state and national events. I am proud of our students and how hard they work, but too many limitations exist in their educational experience. As I have met and talked with many of you about our goals for East Knox, I am impressed with the community's desire to address our problems head on. I thought it would be helpful to share with you some of the progress the school has made and offer a vision for our children's future.

Listening to the community and addressing their concerns is important to your School Board. In January we voted to simplify the process of addressing the School Board at our monthly meetings to give the community more access to us. In addition, Board Members are striving to attend many of our school events and be accessible to the community we serve. We are happy to speak or take questions at your civic organizations, churches, or meetings of local fire departments or townships. Our goal is to provide information, be transparent and listen to your thoughts about how, together, we can make East Knox all it can be.

Acquiring and retaining great talent is critical for the success of any organization. Knowing this, our Board placed extra scrutiny on the District's hiring practices and worked hand-in-hand with the Administration to hire the best talent available for your children. I am particularly excited about the leadership of our new high school principal, assistant principal/athletic director and guidance counselor. They are swiftly implementing measures that increase student accountability and ensure an enhanced learning environment is in place. Along with our elementary principal and superintendent, these professionals will help us meet our goal of creating excellence in every area of our student's educational experience.

We understand that the District needs to stabilize our teaching staff. Massive turnover has occurred due to the seven year freeze in salaries. The overall payroll had dropped 32% from the highest payroll that occurred during the 2008-2009 school year. Most of the decrease in payroll came from high turnover and staff reduction. The Board recently gave the staff one salary step in hopes of retaining quality teachers during the 2016-2017. This modest step increase cost less than 1% of the District's budget, but had no negative impact because the overall payroll dropped an additional 4% from the 2014-15 school year. This certainly helped us meet our goal of reduced staff turnover because it was less than half of previous years.

The Board along with Superintendent Steve Larcomb and Treasurer Jessica Busenburg are working hard to keep costs down by controlling expenses and pursuing advantageous contracts for the District. The fiscal oversight commission has repeatedly praised the Treasurer and Superintendent for implementation of cost control measures. However, with staffing already at state minimums and no foreseeable reduction in cost of our general expenses, further minor cost cutting measures are not enough for the long term sustainability of our school district. That is why the Board placed a levy on the November ballot. The school is cognizant of the impact to residents of an additional property tax. The Board is asking for the smallest mill levy of the last seven years. Of eight local school districts in Knox County, East Knox residents pay the lowest equivalent millage. After we pass the levy residents will still have the sixth lowest taxes of the eight local school districts. This levy will put the school on secure financial footing and show our 1,000 students that the community supports them. The Board will remove pay-to-participate sports and other extracurricular activity fees. Elementary art and music will be added back into our curriculum. Our goal is to restore programs that will enhance our students overall education and attract our open-enrolled students back.

Continued from previous page

East Knox is offering an unparalleled number of college courses at the school. State law requires schools to pay for the college credit plus program which allows high school students, meeting minimum standards, to attend college classes for free. Classes taken by students on the East Knox campus cost 75% less than those on the college campus. This allows more students to participate and reduces the District's cost. In addition, East Knox students can stay safely on our campus during the entire school day. Our goal is for East Knox students to have the opportunity to graduate with an associate's degree while being enrolled as a high school student.

I am proud to be an East Knox alumni. The reason I ran for the School Board was simply to help restore pride in the community of a school that afforded me so many opportunities. Open enrollment has changed the landscape of public schools. We must now compete for the students in our own District. Let me illustrate the importance of this by sharing that East Knox received \$1.3 million less in state funding last year due to open enrollment. In fact if all of our potential students attended East Knox we would not be in fiscal emergency. Having a great school system is not only good for students but tax payers also. Attracting more students to East Knox will bring extra state funding to the district.

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Let me close by offering a vision for the District. East Knox will make capital, educational and athletic improvements, thereby attracting more students. This will drive state funding up and will reduce future tax payer burden. We will continue to improve our assistance to special needs children to ensure they have the tools they need to be successful. The Board will invest in our facilities to keep them safe and improved for student use. Finally, East Knox will be emphasizing extracurricular activities for the student body. Athletics, band, art and drama are an important part of a student's high school experience and help build community pride. Our district will actively encourage participation in extracurricular activities and has just started a school loyalty program. You will see our students sporting loyalty gear throughout the district.

Thank you for your support as we work toward a common goal!

Sincerely,

Dustin Buckingham
East Knox School Board President

East Knox Local School District

STRATEGIC PLAN

Mission Statement
Honor the Past...
Nurture the Present...
Envision the Future...

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Goal: Establish high expectations for all students to maximize academic and social development.

- Encourage student development through curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities.
- Monitor Students' educational and social growth.
- Maintain highly effective and dedicated staff through continuous professional development.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Goal: Utilize available resources to provide a quality education for our students.

- Uphold the public's trust by prudently managing the District's funds.
- Maintain financial accountability through a balanced budget.
- Share financial information with the community.

FACILITIES

Goal: Provide facilities that convey pride in the community and that ensure a safe, healthy and effective learning environment.

- Continue to maintain and upgrade buildings and grounds.
- Proceed with necessary building projects.
- Enhance community involvement and interaction through the use of our facilities.

COMMUNICATION

Goal: Promote collaboration between community and school for enhanced student learning.

- Promote communication of the school's vision, mission and goals.
- Cultivate a professional (K-12) seamless environment where teaching and learning expectations are achieved.
- Participation of all staff members in shared decision-making and develop a sense of ownership of the school's mission.

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Board President Update