

## STATE OF THE DISTRICT

There is no doubt about it. There is a climate of change in America's schools. West Holmes Local Schools are not exempt from the factors of change. However, West Holmes continues to provide educational opportunities in pace with the new accountability demands and our community needs. Our District's mission remains *to empower students to be productive citizens and learners for life.*

Here is a brief reflection of where our District stands at the end of school year 2003-04 and a glimpse of the course charted. As Oliver Wendell Holmes noted, "The great thing in life is not so much where we stand but the direction we are moving!"

### **INTERVENTION**

The West Holmes District enrollment was 2798 students, 1037 of these were identified as economically disadvantaged and 371 were students with disabilities. National and state statistics illustrate that the achievement level of these two subgroups is typically below the norm unless opportunities for individualized instruction and intervention are provided.

### **OPEN ENROLLMENT**

Our District participated in open enrollment opportunities with 109 students attending outside districts. Our District received 64 students. The primary reason that students choose the open enrollment option is proximity. Home schooling was an option selected by 226 of the District's students.

### **ATTENDANCE**

The average K-12 student attendance for the year was 95%. Parents and community are to be congratulated for the support they provide by encouraging students to attend and participate in obtaining the skills and knowledge that is the foundation for their future endeavors.

### **GRADUATION**

Our District graduation rate was 88.5% for last school year. The rate for 2003-04 will not be available until fall as some students may complete graduation requirements over the summer. The State Department of Education has set the standard graduation rate at 90%. The District's Report Card, which will be released by the state on August 24, 2004, will show that this standard was not met. The groundwork for initiatives to raise the graduation rate has been laid. These methods are outlined later in this report. Our graduating class of 2004 will have 57% furthering their education, 5% plan to enter the armed services and 38% have chosen employment or other avenues.

## **HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS**

If the West Holmes District were a train, its engine would be the teacher. The teacher is responsible for keeping students moving forward, on track with their learning. All but three of the District's teachers met the federal designation of highly qualified. These three who hold teaching certification, were teaching outside the specialized area in which they were certified. These teachers will either be assigned to the area in which they hold certification or obtain certification for their current area of placement. Approximately 54% of the District's teachers have ten or more years of experience and 44.3 % hold Master's Degrees.

## **NO NEW LOCAL FUNDING SINCE 1994**

Through the daily news, many of us are aware of the financial plight of schools across the nation. Our District has honored its pledge of not requesting new operating monies for at least five years following the February 2000 opening of the new West Holmes High School, which was made possible by the passage of the 1996 bond issue. The District continues to employ sound fiscal practices. However, continued demands on the District through the No Child Left Behind legislation, inflation, increased operational costs and decreased state foundation funds have made it more difficult to operate and meet the increased demands without coming back to our local voters. Our schools have not asked for increased local funding since 1994.

## **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT RATING EARNED**

Student achievement is monitored through the administration of tests. These tests compare our students with students across the nation. The District administered the nationally normed Stanford Achievement Test, in math to third and fifth graders and in reading to fifth graders. The 2004 results indicate that third graders performed slightly above the mean in math while fifth graders were slightly below the mean in reading and math. At the high school level, ACT results indicate that the composite score of West Holmes students was higher than the state composite score and national composite score.

Preliminary results from Ohio's third grade reading achievement test illustrate that our students did meet the state standard but had fewer students obtaining a passing score than the state average. Fourth grade state test results reveal that we achieved at least a 6% gain in each of the five areas tested. However, we failed to meet the state standard of a 75% passage rate in any of the subject areas. Sixth grade students displayed a 90% or above passage rate in the subject area of writing but did not meet the state standard in the other four areas; however, a 17% gain was made in mathematics. Sixth grade scores improved over the previous year in every subject area except science, which remained about the same. Preliminary results indicate that state standards were met in every subject area at tenth grade on the Ninth Grade Proficiency Tests. Math continues to be the subject area with which most students struggle.

It is projected that our District will again receive a rating of continuous improvement on the Report Card issued by the state in August. Districts earn ratings either through the

number of state standards met or through a performance index score. It will be the performance index score that will justify the designation.

Improving student achievement for all students is the number one priority of staff and administration of our District. Major initiatives addressing this priority were initiated this year. These programs include:

### **COLLABORATIVE LANGUAGE LITERACY PROJECT (CLLIP)**

CLLIP is a literacy initiative involving the training and coaching of teachers in best practice of literacy instruction. The project has proven to be successful in districts similar to West Holmes. Forty-five teachers and administrators in grades K-6 were involved in phase one of the two-year training project this year. Plans are to start the two-year training/coaching process with the remaining K-2 teachers in the 2004-05 school year. Early data show significant gains made by students in CLLIP classrooms.

### **YEARLY PROGRESS PRO**

This is a math progress monitoring software program that is on the District's server and is available to grades one through six. The software assesses progress of student mastery on the grade level indicators of Ohio's math content standards and provides skill-building opportunities. Students and teachers have the capability of knowing which standards students know or don't know. We believe this will provide the necessary intervention that will help students' math performance increase.

### **BATTELL FOR KIDS PROJECT SCHOOLS' ON-LINE ACHIEVEMENT REPORT (SOAR)**

West Holmes is one of sixty districts in the state participating in Project SOAR. The data of districts in SOAR is analyzed using a value-added approach. Data is provided which tells our District whether or not individual students, subgroups and grade levels are progressing at the rate of one year's growth in one year's time. Growth data will be part of the school designation criteria on state report cards in two years.

### **INTERVENTION PROGRAMING**

As a means of addressing the substandard math performance at the middle and high school, math intervention classes were held. These classes focused on small group remediation with increased one-on-one opportunities for students.

### **MATH AUDIT**

With the ultimate goal of improving student learning and achievement in mathematics, the District requested from the Educational Service Center a K-12 math audit. Specifically, this audit determines whether the District's math program prepares students for success on Ohio's elementary achievement tests, the Ohio Graduation Test and for college.

### **HOLMES DIGITAL ACADEMY**

The District is working to establish a virtual learning opportunity for students who have difficulty functioning within the constraints of the normal school environment. The

academy will provide one more avenue for a diploma to be earned and hopefully increase the number of graduates.

### **AVENUES OF COMMUNICATION**

In this time of transition to standards-based learning, instruction and assessment it is more important than ever to cultivate two-way avenues of communication. The West Holmes District initiated the following vehicles of communication this year:

- Progress Book – A software program with online parent access for reporting student grades, assignments and attendance.
- Standards Literature – Brochures and pamphlets distributed to students and parents outlining grade level expectations of Ohio’s content standards and ways in which parents can help students.
- Project Ease – This Kindergarten component of CLLIP provides for parent meetings with demonstration of activities that parents can do to enhance their child’s literacy skills.
- Literacy Nights – Each elementary hosted a Literacy Night during which parents learned about literacy expectations and activities to assist their child in meeting those expectations.
- District Web Page – The District has updated its web page. District and building information can be obtained from this website including the District Calendar, a student art gallery, lunch menus and links to helpful parent resource sites. ([www.westholmes.k12.oh.us](http://www.westholmes.k12.oh.us))
- Open Door Policy - Community input is valued. Community members are always welcome at the buildings and central office.

We have a great school and community. We will not allow the new standards set forth by the Federal and State Governments to defeat us. We are up for the challenge and will find ways to help our students to be more successful.

Clearly there is much to be proud of at West Holmes, but there are areas where improvement needs to be made and *together parents, teachers and West Holmes community make a difference.*