

March 3, 2016

Superintendents form advocacy group, launch public survey

Superintendents from nearly 40 school districts, career centers and educational service centers spanning 10-plus counties have formed a network to advocate for positive changes in public education that they believe will make for better schools.

The Northwest/West Central Ohio Public School Advocacy Network grew from concerns over a loss of local control in public education. The group believes there are many areas within public education where if local control was restored, it would improve education and benefit schools and students.

The group believes that locally-controlled public education with governmental support is valued over public education dominated by government regulations. School officials, board members, teachers, students and parents should have the most input about the direction of their own school districts.

The work and goals of the network go beyond just this issue. The superintendents strive to come together as a group to be better heard by state legislators and state decision makers and to ultimately have a positive impact on public education.

Members of the group hope to act as a support for each other, rallying and advocating when needed to get issues addressed and to make positive change. Members stress that they hope to work with legislators to better public education in Ohio, including addressing school funding inadequacies and other issues facing the state for many years.

The goal of the group is not only to advocate with legislators but to build strong two-way communication between school districts and communities. This will help ensure that school officials understand the needs and hopes of their communities while communicating the challenges facing schools. The superintendents want their communities involved and partnering with them to make change.

The first initiative of the network is to survey people about public education.

The goal of the survey is to find out the perception people have of their school districts, where they believe decisions about public schools should be made and to measure the general knowledge people have about public schools, decision making and how public tax dollars are spent.

Individual school districts will disseminate the survey through web sites, social media and other avenues.

The survey can also be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8F5K2W8>.

The network of superintendents will gather later in the spring to analyze the survey results. The results will help guide the group toward future communications and advocacy initiatives.

An initial goal is to create a public education communication piece/publication for residents. The network hopes to help better educate residents about public education, both the challenges it faces and the success stories and opportunities that abound.

Superintendents from the following school districts are part of the advocacy network: Bath Local Schools, Lima City Schools, Allen East Schools, Shawnee Schools, Apollo Career Center, Spencerville Local Schools, Allen County Educational Service Center, Wapakoneta City Schools, St. Marys Schools, Minster Schools, Waynesfield-Goshen Local Schools, Ottawa Glandorf Schools, Jennings Local Schools, Ottoville Schools, Columbus Grove Local Schools, Miller City-New Cleveland Schools.

Pandora-Gilboa Schools, Lincolnview Schools, Ada Schools, Kenton Schools, Hardin Northern Schools, Ridgemont Schools, Parkway Local Schools, Riverdale Schools, New Riegel Schools, Cory-Rawson Schools, Liberty-Benton Schools, McComb Schools, Hopewell-Loudon Schools, Mercer County Educational Service Center, Coldwater Exempted Village Schools, Celina City Schools, Marion Local Schools, St. Henry Schools, Indian Lake Local Schools, Archbold Schools, Gibsonburg Schools, Bellevue Schools, Seneca East Schools.

For further information, contact Bath Superintendent Dale Lewellen at 419-221-0807, ext. 21.