

## HERE WE GO AGAIN

It is with much frustration that I have composed this week's article. There is a simple reason for my frustration. I am weary of those in our communities who continually try to put down this school district. You see, in doing so these people are putting down everything about our district. This includes the employees, the educational programs, the curriculum, the materials to support the curriculum, vocational education, the District Professional Development Team, and on and on.

During the past three years, I have done my best to present the facts about any aspect of our school district to the public. I have done so in an open and honest manner, the only way that I know how to do this or will do this. I have never knowingly misled any of you about anything, whether it is the local report card, district finances, facilities, ESC governance, staffing needs, or anything else relative to providing services to our students in the best way that we can. When I haven't had an answer to a question or concern, I have been confident enough to admit that I don't know everything, and have sought out the needed answers.

Our school district now finds itself at a major fork in the road. Our viability and survival is being challenged again by the committee to create the Peebles local School District. (CCPLSD) For three years we have struggled with the upheaval this challenge has created. You may recall the initial effort by the PLSD was legally challenged and is on appeal in the district court. This initial proposal led to a similar proposal by Manchester and resulted in the creation of a new Manchester Local School District and a major loss of tax base for the Adams county/Ohio Valley School District. As the law has now changed the arena has been moved to the Department of Education.

These continued efforts by the PLSD are an attack on our present school district and if successful would result in the creation of another low wealth school district. It has much less to do with what kind of a district we are as it does with certain people wanting to be in charge. Try as they may, the proponents of the PLSD cannot guarantee that their school district would be one bit better. They also cannot guarantee that what is left of the AC/OVSD will not be negatively impacted by this further deconsolidation.

The people of this school district have a right to know how the education process is going to be improved for all students of the present AC/OVSD through further deconsolidation. I have grave concerns where our Career and Technical Center is concerned. We certainly won't be able to operate under the present guidelines. It may have to become a new Joint Vocational School District or a satellite of an existing JVSD. At any rate, taxes would go up even without a vote. Certainly there will be no guarantees where programs and staff are concerned. This isn't new information. I have shared this with you previously.

I have listened to accusations for three years about the inefficiencies of your school district and the alleged inadequacies of our overall education program. I have yet to hear any specifics as to how these inadequacies could be corrected. Most, if not all of the concerns raised in the PLSD proposal go back to a period of time prior to the 2002-2003 school years. Most of the concerns prior to the 2002-2003 school years have been addressed. Therefore, "where's the beef" behind this latest attempt?

Are board members and school personnel the only people in our district that can see where deconsolidation might not be the great cure-all for all ills? If

not, then I think it is time for those of you who are not in favor of this to start speaking up and be heard, or if you want information, contact me or our Treasurer, Eric Toole, to ask questions. The board members need to know if your community is supportive of continuing the AC/OVSD as we know it. This battle can no longer be waged by just the board members and some district personnel and a few community members at large. It's time for parents and community members, in general, to speak. This can be done by calling or sending E-mail to the board members, writing a letter to the editor, or writing letters to members of the Sub-committee of the Ohio Department of Education prior to April 10, 2005. I have mailing addresses and E-mail addresses that I will be happy to share with anyone who would like to have these. Simply contact me if you would like this information.

In closing I would encourage you to remember that it wasn't that long ago that your school district was rated as Academic Emergency on the "Local Report Card". Now, our rating is Continuous Improvement. This is a fact. We have been making overall improvements in all academic areas across the district—that's a fact. We have never attempted to say that we are satisfied with the status quo. We are striving to improve because we believe we can improve. This constant upheaval impedes our continuous improvement.

Just think where we could be if everyone would work together for the common good of all. We would already see the new elementary buildings going up in the district. We might even have a rating of Effective or Excellent. It can be done if we want it to occur. And finally, we are spending countless hours addressing deconsolidation concerns, preparing public records requests, and so forth. All of this is occurring at the expense of the taxpayers. It's time for this to stop so we focus all our efforts on the job we've been entrusted to do, that of providing the best education we can for all the students of the Adams County/Ohio Valley School District.

Thank you.