



KENT CITY SCHOOLS

UPDATE

News for Kent parents from Superintendent Joe Giancola

April, 2013

Dear Kent Parents, Guardians, Students, and Friends,

This month I write you about two very important items: school safety and school levies in Ohio. First, school safety is the most important priority in Kent Schools. Student achievement and growth are possible only if our students are safe and feel comfortable in their school environments.

As I wrote you last month, we recently reviewed our district policies and procedures to ensure maximum school safety and security. As a result, we now are making more parent broadcasts when staff members report any information concerning threats, devices, or look-alike devices that have the potential for causing harm. I recently called parents at the beginning of this month when a first-grade student announced that another student in the class had a knife. As you now know from my parent broadcast, there was not a knife at school. The students were confused and thought a black computer “flash drive” or “jump drive” was a knife. The first grade teacher explained to her students what a jump drive was. She also assured the students that it was not a knife after all. As we seek a balance between *under-informing* and *over-informing* you, please feel free to contact me with your thoughts on this topic. The Board of Education and I would like to know what you are thinking with regard to the safe climate of our schools.

Second, school levies are necessary in Ohio due to a 1976 law called House Bill (HB) 920, which limits new property tax levies to an original dollar amount voted by the public. So, as housing values rise, the County Auditor changes the original millage to ensure no inflationary increase on our property taxes as houses may grow in value. In short, levy millage is “rolled back” on each home as its fair market value increases.

Without any provision for inflation, and in light of cuts in state funding, public schools have no choice but to ask the public to approve a school tax levy. Inflation and state cuts constantly threaten our “flat line” revenue from both property taxes and the state-funding program.

On another note, I am asking the Board and Strategic-Planning Committee to consider retaining a School Resource Officer (SRO). However, this item would be an increase to our budget. With flat local and state funding, and with inflation eroding our ability to maintain current budget items, the addition of an SRO would require an additional financial commitment affordable with a new levy. This example is only one example of the impact of HB 920 on our decisions. Another example is maintaining the budget necessary to ensure all of our excellent and diverse programs for students, in spite of HB 920.

In closing, we focus our efforts on high standards of safety for Kent children. Our high expectations should ensure a better learning environment as well. Do you have questions or comments? Please feel free to call me at the Kent Board of Education Offices, 330-676-7610.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph M. Giancola".

Dr. Joe Giancola
Superintendent