

## A word about testing and report cards

*Changes are coming -- yet again -- to student assessments mandated by the state of Ohio*

When this publication last appeared in mailboxes around the Little Miami district in February of 2015, the state of Ohio had just released its new annual report card on school performance.

The state now has issued a full version of its latest report card after numerous delays. The most significant: Delays in receiving results from last spring's Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test.

Ohio's school districts were required to administer the PARCC assessment to students in grades 3-8 in reading and math. Portions of the state's report card will be based on PARCC results.

Problems with deploying the new online tests — plus outcry from school districts and the public over the amount of class time taken up by the tests — prompted Ohio Gov. John Kasich to scrap the PARCC assessment in his biennial budget in June 2015.

In addition to problems with the test roll-out, a large number of Ohio parents chose to not have their students take state assessments, including about 200 such cases at Little Miami. All of these factors together resulted in an incomplete

representation of students' performance, both locally and across the state.

Because of this, Sen. Peggy Lehner, R-Kettering, chairwoman of the Ohio Senate Education Committee, recently said that parents and communities should



disregard the portions of the report card that are based on PARCC results.

"The scores will drop. They will drop precipitously," Lehner said. "It is not to be taken as a sign that anything bad is happening in your school. Any data that was derived from the test last year, no one should really pay any attention to it."

Mildly put, this situation has been frustrating for Little Miami educators. State assessments are considered "high

stakes" tests: Not only is a student's academic achievement profile tied to these assessments, but so is the district's report card and a portion of teachers' professional evaluations. All test results — not just those mandated by law-makers in Columbus — need to offer reliable data to help us inform instruction, and should not be arbitrary in their quality or their timetable. State testing data that comes to us in the middle of the school year is nearly useless.

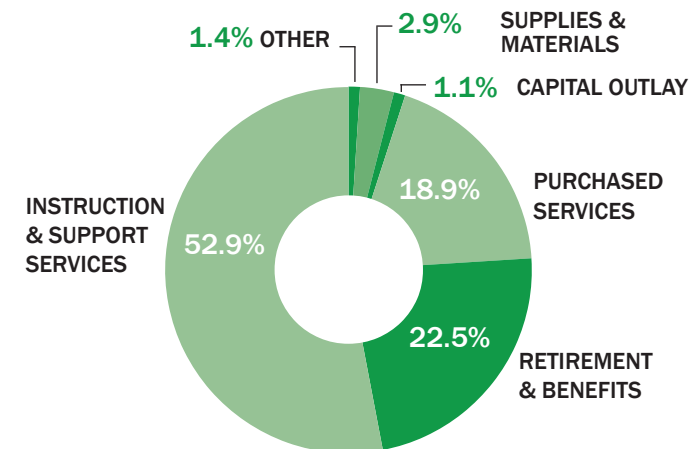
Educators at Little Miami use several assessment tools outside of state-mandated testing throughout the year to gauge student achievement and to identify where students may need help. We have always done this and will continue to do so, to provide the best quality education that we can for each student.

"While we believe strongly in accountability, we question the nature of state-mandated assessments," Little Miami Superintendent Greg Power said. "I think our lawmakers may be using state assessments for something they were never intended: To be used as a political instrument."

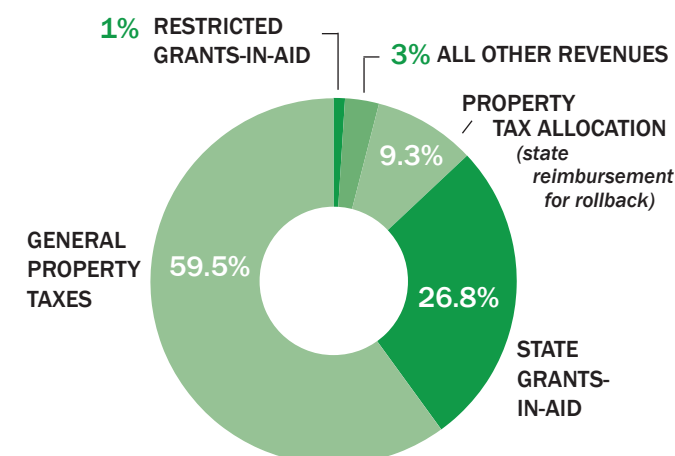
\*"New evaluations to drop Ohio schools' report card scores," *The Columbus Dispatch*, Jan. 10, 2016.

## Little Miami - By the numbers

General Fund Expenditures — Fiscal Year 2015  
TOTAL: \$35,194,952



General Fund Revenues — Fiscal Year 2015  
TOTAL: \$41,843,009



Little Miami Schools Treasurer Terry Gonda was recently notified that his office earned the Auditor of State award for the district's most recent audit. Pictured here are (from left) Roxanna Burdine, payroll; Assistant Treasurer Susan Murray, Gonda and Katrina Hillard, accounts payable.

## Auditor of State Award given to Little Miami Local Schools

Little Miami Local Schools was recently notified that the district had won the Auditor of State Award for clean and accurate record keeping in the treasurer's office, adding a third recognition for the department in the space of a few months.

Auditor of State Dave Yost notified Little Miami Treasurer Terry Gonda of the award, which is presented for "exemplary financial reporting accordance with Generally Accepted Account Principles (GAAP) for the year 2015."

The Auditor of State Award is given to those governmental entities that file timely financial reports in accordance with GAAP, as well as receive a "clean" audit report. A clean report means that the district's audit did not contain findings for recovery, material citations, material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, single audit findings or questioned costs.

This is the district's fourth clean audit in a row and was the first audit that the Auditor of State's office had done themselves in 11 years, instead of contracting the work to a third party.

Last fall, the treasurer's office also won a certificate of achievement for excellence in financial report from the Government Finance Officers Association and a certificate of excellence from the Association of School Business Officials International. Both awards were presented in recognition of the district's 2014 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), the first that the district had completed since 2009.

Little Miami Treasurer Terry Gonda said he was grateful for the awards and the recognition for his staff.

"These awards would not possible without the hard and dedicated work of my staff," he said. "They really do a fantastic job of keeping track of all the thousands of items that pass through our hands. We are hoping to obtain these awards again this year for our 2015 CAFR."







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## Charting a New Course for the Future

Little Miami is embarking upon yet another exciting chapter in its history. On Nov. 8, 2015, voters in our district approved a 13.86-mill operating levy, renewing a ballot issue that first passed in 2011.

This election victory was the first time a renewal passed on the first try in more than 18 years. Election results showed strong support for our schools in the face of organized opposition and other contentious issues on the ballot. We are grateful for our community's continued support and we feel energized to take on the work that lies before us.

Since our release from fiscal emergency in 2013, we have moved forward in a conservative manner. We

have done this recognizing that our recovery from our fiscal challenges is not a speedy process.

For instance, in the area of educational technology, we are taking a measured approach to bringing our resources for students and staff up to date. We have begun a small pilot of new digital curriculum in four classes at the high school, exploring what the word "textbook" may mean for a 21st-century education. This pilot is putting new technology into the hands of our students and staff, something that other districts consider a matter of course. The pilot, along with input from a curriculum committee made up of teachers, administrators and staff, will

help us to decide how we will do the business of classroom teaching in the coming years.

Another challenge: Enrollment growth. Since our release from fiscal emergency in May 2013, our enrollment has grown by more than 150 students per year. In fact, if current enrollment trends hold true, our buildings will reach their capacities by the 2017-2018 school year.

In light of this, during the final quarter of 2015, our administrative team entered into an intensive strategic planning process, considering staffing needs for the next three years should enrollment trends continue to track as they have. The first year of this plan, which includes a road map for the placement and/or hiring of classroom teachers where the need is greatest, was approved by the Little Miami Board of Education on Jan. 19, 2016.

As Little Miami embarks upon this new chapter, I am confident that we have the strength to persevere and to overcome these challenges. We will be turning to you, our community members and key stakeholders, to provide input into the kinds of schools you want Little Miami to be. We look forward to hearing from you.

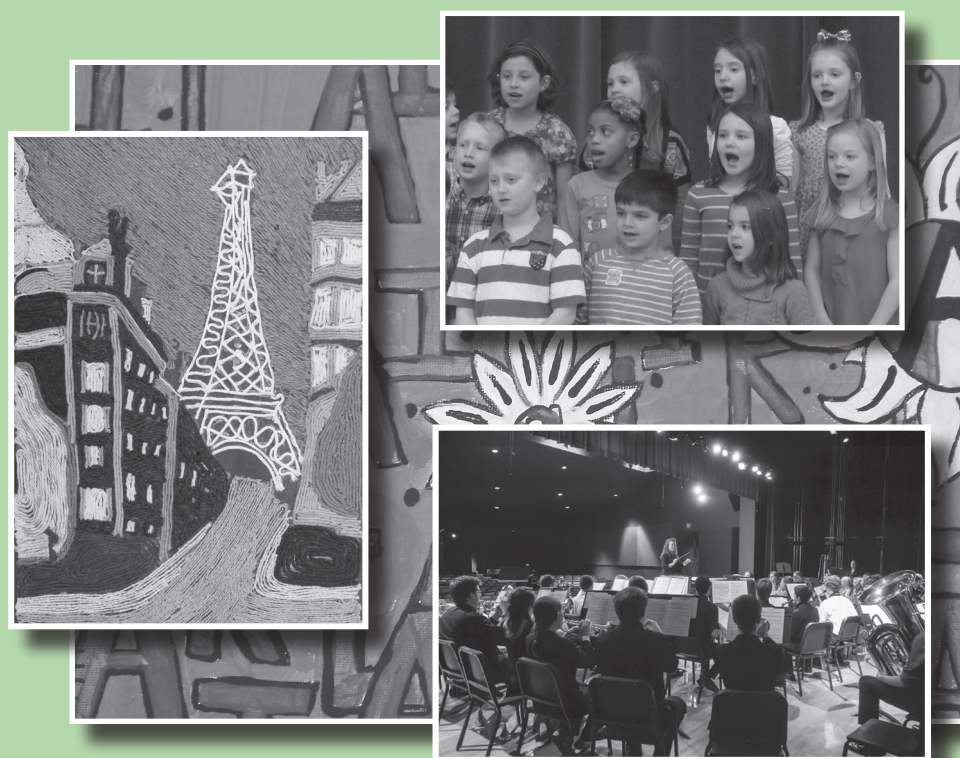
*Kris Power*

Superintendent  
Little Miami Local Schools



Visitors to Little Miami High School view a small section of the Wall of Honor, a community celebration of LMHS graduates who have served in the armed forces.

## Be our guest!



### Little Miami Fine Arts Festival

Saturday, April 23  
at Little Miami High School  
8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

*Little Miami Band Boosters  
Annual Pancake Breakfast  
begins at 8 a.m.*

Enjoy a sampling of art and  
performances from  
Little Miami students of all ages!

*Admission is free!*

Photos for this report provided by Neil Schmidt, Bill Box, Melinda Briggs