Improving our academics, maintaining strong fiscal stewardship and addressing our facility needs are the foundation of the Plan for Progress. The most urgent challenge we need to address is the age of some of our school buildings. That plan could include building a K-6th or even 8th grade learning center, a community field house, and potentially closing the Alexandria Primary School.

In order to move forward on our plan, your participation is vital to the process. We are planning opportunities for community members to offer feedback through community coffees. The schedule is detailed below.

Through careful planning and collaboration with our communities, I am confident that we can enhance our student success. We hope you can join in on the conversation.

Thank you for your support of Northridge Schools. It is a great day to be a Viking!

Sincerely,

Chris M. Briggs, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Northridge Residents,

The 2015-2016 school year is well underway and we are off to a great start. Our students and teachers are busy with their classroom work, and our fall sports and activities are going strong.

We are fortunate to be a part of a community that values a good education, and we have been working together to ensure we remain on a path of educational progress and financial stability. We offer programs and opportunities for students to succeed in today’s world, but at the same time, we know there is always room for improvement.

Last year, we unveiled our Plan for Progress process that will provide a road map for our schools and communities on where we want to go in the future. It is truly a community-led endeavor and within the pages of this newsletter, we have provided an update on our work.

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**Upcoming Meet & Greets with Dr. Briggs**

**October 30** – Coffee and Doughnuts with Hartford Fire Department/Meet & Greet with Public • 180 Smith St., 8:30 am – 9:30 am

**November 20** – Coffee and Doughnuts with Johnstown Fire Department/Meet & Greet with Public • 24 S. Oregon St., Johnstown, 8:30 am – 9:30 am

**December 18** – Coffee and Muffins with the Superintendent at Ragamuffins • 9 W. Main St., Alexandria, 8:30 am – 9:30 am
A
fter months of work, the community-led Plan for Progress is making headway on important work for our school district. The group has developed a roadmap for our future that can ensure our schools offer a high quality education while operating in an efficient manner.

The three committees that developed the Northridge Plan for Progress provided an update of their work to the Northridge board of education in June of 2015. This community-led process focused on three key areas:

- Maintaining lean and efficient operations;
- Academic achievement; and,
- Modern facilities.

**Academics Committee Findings**

The group did extensive research and went on local school site visits to help develop an academic plan that includes programs and services that not only reflect the value of the community, such as VoAg, but also identify what is needed to get our kids career and college ready.

Committee members agreed that making sure Northridge students have an adequate classroom environment is critical to their success in school.

From our research and expertise, we know that facilities play an important role in academic achievement and a school that was built nearly 100 years ago, like Alexandria, makes it difficult to provide modern educational needs, such as technology and the need for flexible classroom space.

**Facilities Committee Findings**

- Extensively researched the school building process.
- They reviewed the cost and challenges of renovating old school buildings.

- Recommended to the board of education the possibility of a K-6 or K-8 building with flexible learning spaces that can adapt with the district.
- Renovation of middle school and a possible multipurpose community field house to be used by the entire community for sports, community activities, and classrooms.
- Committee members recommended closing Alexandria Primary:
  - Research showed that Alexandria would be costly to renovate.
  - Safety must also be considered. Alexandria has been identified by state facilities experts at the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission as part of the Exceptional Needs Program – a building replacement program that provides school districts with the ability to protect the health and safety of their students with a new facility.

**Finance Committee Findings**

The group, mindful of taxpayer dollars, wants to keep any building initiative as lean as possible.

It’s about needs, not wants:
- Recommend a facility plan that will get us to a place that’s fair to taxpayers
- Also provides our students with the space they need – not unlike our neighboring districts’ students and communities (Johnstown and Northfork in Utica) enjoy.

**Next Steps**

Over the next few months, the Committees will continue to meet with residents to gather additional feedback. We must address our need for modern classroom space and doing nothing is not an option. The goal is to have a final building plan later this fall for a possible November ballot issue in 2016.

If you have any questions, please contact Superintendent Briggs through e-mail at chrisbriggs@laca.org or (740) 967-6631 at any time.
As we begin the 2015-2016 school year, The Teaching and Learning Department has undergone a few changes. Mrs. Heather Clark has changed district positions to become the new Director of Teaching and Learning. With a Masters in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, along with experience teaching English language arts, curriculum development, gifted and talented, Title I, and grant management, Mrs. Clark will continue to support teachers, students, and the teaching and learning at Northridge Schools. The Teaching and Learning Department is also excited to welcome Jaime Scott on board as the new Curriculum Coordinator, filling Heather’s previous position. Jaime comes to Northridge with 15 years’ experience in teaching, curriculum, and administration. It is evident already that she will be an asset to the department moving forward. The Department of Teaching and Learning continues to be supported by Nina Shoe who also plays a major role in keeping the website up to date for the Northridge families and community.

Meet our Department of Teaching and Learning Team

The Department of Teaching and Learning has four major goals this year to aid in the continuous improvement of the district.

**Improve Assessment Literacy**

This will be accomplished through ongoing professional development that the T&L department will provide the district’s teachers. The pre- and post-assessments that each district teacher uses will be audited for their connection to content standards in addition to the validity and composition of the questions. Teachers will also be supported in creating assignments and assessments that mirror the format that is seen on state assessments in order to familiarize students with the technology and expectations.

**Refine our TBT/BLT/DLT Framework**

Communication in any district is key to student success. The teacher based teams (TBT), building leadership teams (BLT), and district leadership teams (DLT) at Northridge will be using a more streamlined process to analyze data. The result of this refined framework will be that areas of academic concern get addressed more quickly and efficiently. In addition, these discussions should serve as a platform for continuing to improve instructional practices in classrooms across the district.

**Creation of Professional Development Cohorts**

In response to teacher requests to meet the needs of more students, the Department of Teaching and Learning with support of the Special Education Department have created three professional development cohorts. This school year, Northridge Local School teachers will be able to learn more about Response to Intervention (a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs), Differentiation (instructional and assessment techniques used to meet the different levels of students within the same classroom), or Advanced Learners (strategies for identifying, supporting, and challenging the high achieving and gifted students).

**Increase Community Awareness of Curriculum**

Teachers will be working with the Department of Teaching and Learning throughout the year to refine their courses of study or curriculum maps in order to post them on the district’s website over the summer of 2016. This will increase the transparency for parents and community members to see the exciting learning that is occurring on a daily basis at Northridge Local Schools.
Northridge Schools Remain on Stable Financial Path

Maintaining Facilities Remains a Significant Fiscal Risk

Northridge Schools continues to remain on a path of strong financial stability. This is due in part to our focus on conservative fiscal management and the support of our community through the 2014 May renewal levy. This is a considerable accomplishment considering our significant fiscal challenges in recent years. In fact, our constant dedication to cost control resulted in our district being removed from Fiscal Caution by the Ohio Department of Education. We have weathered our financial challenges steadily by maintaining the leanest budget for taxpayers, while still protecting programs and services our community values.

This past summer, the state of Ohio passed the state biennial budget, which ultimately provided modest increases for Northridge Schools. We plan to direct those resources to the classroom and in programs that will have the most impact on student achievement.

As we look to the future, one of our concerns is the age of some of our school buildings. Despite our efforts to maintain our facilities, we have reached a point where patching and repairing is no longer enough and is not cost effective. After all in Alexandria Primary, we still have 100-year-old pipes, as well as outdated plumbing, heating, and electrical systems that are costly to maintain.

Through our Plan for Progress, we are working with the community to find a solution to this issue. We encourage all residents to be a part of this important conversation for both our school district and our communities.

Thank you for your continued support of our schools. I look forward to what this school year has in store for all of us as we continue to best meet the needs of the students in our schools. If you have any questions, please contact me at 740-967-6631 or BLEWIS@laca.org.