

## **“The Salem City Schools Deliver Tremendous Value--Ranked Top in the State for Financial Stewardship”**

**A recent report released from the Ohio Smart School initiative, “*Benchmarking Ohio’s School Districts*,”** identified districts that get more for their money in non-instructional spending, and the Salem City Schools has been cited as a benchmark school in Ohio in two of the four categories—Maintenance and Operations, and Central Administration. The report was researched and written by Julie Brinker and Andrew Benson under the auspices of Ohio Education Matters, a subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks.

The study identifies 135 Ohio public school districts that are getting more for their money than their peers in non-instructional spending areas, meeting quality indicators in each area but spending less than similar districts. All of these “smart schools” represent the best-in-class districts that can potentially be examples of how other districts can spend less but also meet minimal quality standards.

To ensure a fair comparison, districts were divided into groups of peers, using ODE’s comparable districts grouping that captures the geographical and socio-economic demographics of the district. Then the districts with the cost in the lowest 5% were identified. Ohio’s comparable school districts were sorted into 7 categories by size, income, type, and, student population.

The lowest-spending districts in each comparable district type that were able to meet or exceed the quality indicators were declared the benchmark districts. The benchmark districts, therefore, are the districts that provide a basic quality service at the lowest cost in the specified non-instructional spending area within its comparable districts.

### **The Salem City Schools ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the state out of 102 comparable school districts in the area of Central Administration.**

At the core of all school district operations is administration and management at the central office and school-building levels. Ensuring that students are meeting high academic standards should no doubt be the primary goal, but in support of that goal, successful administrators are tasked with managing personnel and operations in a manner that is both effective in reaching overall student achievement goals and efficient in using the fewest amount of resources to do so. In the case of central administration, the goal was to identify districts that have kept administration spending low while ensuring basic district fiscal and academic health.

Benchmarking and measuring school district administration costs requires an examination of how well the district is being managed financially as well as academically. For this examination, only those districts that are doing a good job at both improving the academic achievement of students and managing expenses were considered successful.

**The Salem City Schools ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state in out of 102 comparable districts in the area of Maintenance and Operations; a remarkable feat considering the age and diversity of our facilities.**

The maintenance and operation of school buildings is a basic function that districts must manage well to provide a space conducive to learning. Not only do school districts need to ensure that their buildings are safe and well maintained, they also need to ensure that they are keeping up with current technologies and business practices that will provide for cost effective facility operations and efficient use of available resources. By examining basic measures of quality, this study highlights districts that have safe, effective and fiscally supported facilities and maintenance operations.

The unit of measurement used to determine which districts are performing efficiently and effectively is building and maintenance operation expenditure per pupil, which covers all items of expenditure relating to the operation of the school buildings and the central offices. These include the costs of utilities and the maintenance and the physical upkeep of buildings. In the case of Maintenance and Operation the goal was to identify districts on the basis of fiscal health of the maintenance operation, general workers' safety, standard costs in key aspects of maintenance, district safety, training, facilities management and condition.

There are great things that are accomplished in the Salem City Schools daily, and now there is even more evidence that things are being done in a manner that has been recognized by the state in naming the Salem City Schools as best in class. Congratulations go out to all school district employees who make Salem City Schools a great place to be in fiscal responsibility, efficiency, and effectiveness.