



OEF News

Summer 2011

A publication of the Okemos Education Foundation www.oefsite.org

Back from the Brink...

We wouldn't normally recommend twenty-two pages of small-print budgetary line items for your summer reading, but the 2011-2012 Okemos Public Schools budget tells a story of an unprecedented school funding crisis and how it has been addressed as well as the outlook for the future.

You can view a copy of the 2011-2012 school budget by going to www.okemoschools.net and clicking on *Transparency Reporting*.

But first, as they say in Hollywood, the backstory...

In 1994, Michigan voters passed Proposal A, changing the way public schools are funded. The intent of Proposal A was partly to eliminate educational inequality among schools districts receiving vastly different levels of funding and partly to limit the growth of property taxes. The taxing burden shifted from property tax to sales tax, increasing sales tax from four to six percent with the intent of funding K-12 public education. The state legislature would now establish the funding level or the per-pupil foundation allowance for school districts on an annual basis.

At the same time, the state severely limited the ability of voters in each school district to fund their schools at the local level. We can vote for district-wide bonds or millages to build new schools, pay for technology, purchase school buses and fund building improvements and renovations, but we're prohibited from routing our property taxes into the district's General Fund, which pays for actual operating expenses.

When the state's economy and sales tax revenue were strong, all school districts in Michigan received modest increases in the per-pupil foundation allowance each year. But most years these increases were not enough to offset the negative financial impact of two trends:

- In many districts - including Okemos - student enrollments have steadily declined.
- Operating costs, including health care premiums and energy bills, have risen much faster than the per-pupil foundation allowance.

As a result, Okemos has had to trim \$11.2 million from its annual operating budget over the past 9 school years.



If you've lived in Okemos for more than a year, you're probably aware of the cuts the district has made, including but not limited to: closing three schools; reducing the number of administrators, teachers, counselors, and support staff; reducing transportation; postponing the purchase of textbooks; reducing electives; eliminating many after-school clubs and extracurricular activities; and increasing extracurricular and athletic participation fees.

Nearly every Michigan school district has wrestled with these challenges for years, but this past winter when both houses of

the state legislature released their proposed budgets for the coming fiscal year, things began to look truly bleak.

It was clear from the beginning that the per-pupil foundation allowance was going to be reduced. The Federal Education Jobs Fund program (part of the national stimulus package), which offset a \$170 per pupil cut last year, was set to expire.

Next, due to changes to the state's tax system, public schools were told that the per-pupil foundation allowance would be trimmed by another \$300 this year and the mandated contributions to the state-run retirement system would increase approximately \$220 per pupil.

After several months of uncertainty as state legislators hammered out compromises, it appeared that Okemos schools would face a \$5 million budget shortfall.

To close this gap, the district would have to cut nearly 12% from last year's budget, and those of us who were watching the funding crisis unfold tried to imagine what the impact on our students would be when roughly 1/8th of the district's funding vanished.

Then, with only a few weeks left until the June 30th deadline for having next year's school budget completed, state officials supplied some financial breathing space. School districts would receive a \$120 per-student infusion of state aid to help cover the mandated pension contributions. And, school districts that met four out of five "financial best practices" would receive another \$100 per student.

As these and other details of the state's K-12 education budget were released, it became

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Okemos Education Foundation

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OEF Trustee changes

The OEF has had several transitions in its trustee roster since our last newsletter. We have added a new trustee, Martha Kliebert, and have had four trustees step down from the board.

Martha Kliebert and her husband Lee grew up in the Detroit area and moved to Okemos in 1987. Martha owned a banking sales and service consulting firm and was the Executive Director of The First Tee of Mid-Michigan. She recently finished an 18-month appointment as the Executive Director of the Lansing Sesquicentennial Foundation where she oversaw planning and execution of a year-long, community-driven 150th "Birthday Party" showcasing the City of Lansing's past, present, and future.

Martha and Lee's two sons completed their K-12 education in Okemos (Adam – OHS 2004, Oakland University BS-Health Science 2008, Oakland University DPT 2011, and Brian – OHS 2007, University of Michigan BS-Aerospace Engineering 2011). Martha was an active school and classroom volunteer throughout those years including President of the Okemos Parent Council and co-chair of the Okemos Citizens

Committee that was successful in passing the Technology Bond. Martha and Lee were Okemos Athletic Boosters board members in charge of concessions and volunteers and both continue to care deeply about Okemos Public Schools.

We are very sad to say goodbye to four trustees who have stepped down since our last newsletter. **Paula Bjornstad** served as the OEF Awards Chair for several years. **Alison Patterson** was our Corresponding Secretary and a member our Grants Committee. **Cindy LeVine** was active on many fronts with the OEF, most importantly serving for several years as Chair of the OEF Awards banquet. **Sally Sproat's** contributions during her tenure as a trustee included designing our banquet programs and newsletters for many years and most significantly creating and maintaining our website, www.oefsite.org. We thank these four for their years of service and dedication to the OEF and Okemos Public Schools and wish them well in their future pursuits!

OEF

Message from OEF Chair

On behalf of all 3,919 Okemos Public School students who benefited from OEF grants last year, I would like to thank our generous supporters. Last year was one of tremendous growth for the OEF, and every student in every Okemos school had opportunities which would not have been possible without OEF support.

Throughout this newsletter you will find highlights of the OEF's impact. In September we awarded our first Strategic Fund grants



Dean Bolton-OEF Chair

providing for a wide array of learning opportunities and purchases that could no longer be funded out of the district's budget. In November the school community gathered to

recognize the excellence of administrators, teachers, support staff, volunteers, alumni, and OEF supporters at our annual OEF Awards Banquet. In January a second round of grants were awarded from our

Strategic Fund, further proof that this new OEF program has already had tremendous impact. In March, the OEF and Summit Community Bank once again sponsored the annual visiting author program at every elementary school. And, as we've done for the last 26 years, throughout the 2010-11 year we awarded grants to individual teachers for projects that brought innovation into their classrooms.

Please join us and invest in our children, their education, and our community's future by supporting the OEF.

All together, by the end of the school year the OEF had given a record number of 59 grants and awards for a total of \$71,000!

To maintain the strong connection between our community and our schools, we are also including information in this newsletter about other important initiatives and activities underway in Okemos schools,

including the Meridian Senior Center's important role in our community and our teachers' collaborative efforts to improve education.

As the OEF looks forward to next year and beyond, we remain committed to continuing all of our grants and award programs in order to enhance and maintain the excellence of the Okemos Public School District. Already, we've committed to \$150,000 to support learning next year.

We need your support to do this and more.

Please join us and invest in our children, their education, and our community's future by supporting the OEF. I can think of no greater return on investment. And, there is no greater reward than seeing the light of learning, knowledge and experience in the eyes of our students shine. Please help us make a difference for each and every Okemos student! OEF

See page 8 for how you can help!

Message from our Superintendent

The Year of Change, Challenge . . . and Stress!

The 2010-11 school year was filled with significant changes, a multitude of challenges and a variety of stresses for students, families and staff! First and foremost, we experienced significant loss within our



*Dr. Catherine J. Ash,
Superintendent of
Schools*

Okemos school community. In the fall of 2010, an automobile accident resulted in the deaths of three recent Okemos High School graduates. Throughout the year, several of our students experienced the loss of a mother

or a father. There is no greater impact on the life and perspective of an individual than the loss of a loved one, whether it is a child, a parent, or a friend. As a school community, we gathered, we listened, we talked, we cried, we supported and we comforted each other through these devastating losses, recognizing that everyone deals with grief differently. We will continue to remember, keeping families in our thoughts and in our hearts.

Admittedly, the other changes and stresses we experienced as a school district pale in comparison. However the challenges were very real and impacted students, families and staff to varying degrees.

Relationships

The new K-8 grade configuration generated the most change. Throughout the K-8 environment, there was a blending of students, families and staff resulting in "new relationships". As with any relationship in its beginning stage, there is an adjustment period! Children, families and staff started to become acquainted with the "unfamiliar". It was important to identify shared beliefs, to establish common understandings, to create meaningful goals and to build relational trust. There were certainly great gains made during the 2010-11 school year, and we will continue to focus our efforts on these newly formed relationships in 2011-12.

Programs

A new 5th-6th grade learning environment was created at Kinawa. During the 2010-

11 school year, three separate programs were operating within one school. The 5th grade program was operating similar to elementary grades, 6th grade continued to mirror middle school programming and Montessori classrooms attempted to blend both concepts. Even though this posed great challenges for scheduling and staff, every effort was made to limit any negative effects on students and families. However, after analysis and reflection, we believe we can do better! In 2011-12 there will be one 5th-6th grade program, maximizing our ability to address the academic and social needs of our students.

At the elementary level, a new common K-4 reading program (Reading Street) was introduced. This intense and strategic approach to teaching reading required extensive time and focused learning by our staff. However, combined with the implementation of literacy blocks, unquestionably it had a positive impact on learning.

Schedules

In order to accommodate the new grade configuration, as well as the time parameters required to meet our bussing needs, there were new starting and ending times at every level. Families had to adjust their schedules and coordinate their plans, which were not easy tasks. The blending of the school communities and the altered school days also resulted in longer car lines at all of our K-8 buildings, complicating and often lengthening the time spent waiting to drop off or pick up children from school. Scheduling complications were truly one of the unintended consequences! We acknowledge the stress this placed on families and we thank you for your understanding and your patience.

With the implementation of professional learning communities, on thirteen Wednesday afternoons throughout the school year families were again asked to adjust their schedules. Teachers utilized this time to collaboratively work toward ensuring that all students learn. The work involved analyzing relevant data to identify the current level of student achievement, establishing goals targeting academic or behavioral improvement, identifying research based improvement or enrichment strategies and interventions, coordinating and designing systematic approaches to achieve the goals, then monitoring student progress. We are confident that the benefit to our students will ultimately exceed the inconvenience to our families.

(Note: More information regarding Professional Learning Communities and our efforts with Response to Intervention can be found on page 5).

Finances

Since November, Okemos Public Schools has been discussing the financial challenges facing the district in 2011-12. We continued to work together within and throughout our district to address the negative and significant impact of declining enrollments, increasing costs and inadequate state funding resulting in a \$5 million budgetary shortfall. It was overwhelming to consider the depth of the cuts in our programs and services, knowing the magnitude of reductions imposed throughout the district over the years. Once again, we successfully worked with employee groups, as well as the school community, to address this monumental and unprecedented budget challenge. Through reductions in expenditures, increased revenue through fees and leasing opportunities and significant sacrifices made by every employee, we were able to preserve many of our quality programs and services. It is evident in the outcome that we all share the same core belief that we must make every effort to ensure that our children continue to receive a quality education.

As a school community we were able to maintain the "together" spirit of our mission statement and did not permit these dire financial circumstances to be divisive within our schools or within our community. However, it must be acknowledged that like the majority of public schools in Michigan, Okemos will be facing a similar monumental budget challenge in 2012-13. We have and will continue to implement cost reductions, to evaluate various alternative revenue sources and to seek opportunities for further consolidation of services. We must also continue to focus on political solutions by actively encouraging our Governor and our legislators to make a commitment to our children's future by ensuring that K-12 public schools receive adequate funding.

In typical Okemos School community fashion, we worked together to manage the changes, to collaboratively problem solve the challenges and to support each other through the stresses. Through it all, the families and the community continued to actively support our schools, and Okemos Public Schools continued to deliver quality

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clear that Okemos would have to cut its budget by “only” \$4.2 million.

A few retiring staff will not be replaced, less software will be purchased, counseling and secretarial services will be reduced, 5th and 6th grade programming will be restructured, the pay-to-participate fee for student athletes will be increased, community education programs and services will be significantly restructured, and other cuts appear throughout the budget. This still did not cover the \$4.2 million shortfall.

District employees also played a role in the solution. Every employee agreed to forego any type of pay increase for the 2011-12 school year. Further, all employees also agreed to changes in their health care benefit plans and will now be contributing 20% towards the total premium. In the end, approximately \$2.3 million was a result of district employees’ willingness and belief


in “making sacrifices for the good of the whole”.

While classrooms, programs, and services will be impacted, we are relieved that the cuts were not as drastic as anticipated. The danger is that, having seen this year’s highly-publicized funding crisis solved, we parents and community members may begin to believe that the crisis has past. However, the long-term prognosis for school funding remains bleak.

According to the Michigan legislature, this year’s \$220 per-pupil infusion that partially offsets the \$470 drop in the per-pupil foundation allowance is a one-time event. This means we can already count on at least \$800,000 less in state aid for the 2012-2013 school year.

What can you do to help the Okemos Schools in this continuing funding crisis?

One of the few ways Okemos residents can directly affect our school budget is by voting “Yes” when the Building and Site Sinking Fund millage renewal appears on the ballot this coming November. Every dollar spent to maintain or upgrade our school buildings that comes from this Fund frees up a General Fund dollar that can be used to support classroom learning.

The most direct way you can individually support classroom learning across the district is by donating to the Okemos Education Foundation. Although individual donors are not listed by name in the school budget, the generosity and dedication of every OEF supporter is reflected near the top of page 1, where your support allows the OEF to supplement the learning activities, buy the materials, and offer the enrichment to make a critical difference to student learning and success. 

Meridian Senior Center: Providing a Purpose in Life

Most people look forward to their first day of retirement with happy anticipation. The first few days or weeks of retirement bring thoughts of being able to do what you want to do and when you want to do it. Travel, reading, spending time with family and friends, studying and learning about your interests, and spending time developing hobbies are activities that are looked forward to. For many seniors, after a few days or weeks of retirement other thoughts may come to mind. Retirement can be described with words like loneliness, isolation, depression, and lack of purpose. You realize that your family and friends can’t spend all their time with you. You also think that your mind needs challenging activities or you will find yourself having difficulty remembering or learning new things. Exercising becomes very important to keep the body limber but it would be more fun to exercise with someone. Volunteering for some worthy organizations helps but you also need to focus on some of your own needs as a retired senior citizen. You find that you need a “purpose in life” – a reason for living and moving ahead.

The answer to having a more enjoyable and fulfilling retirement is to become an active member of the Meridian Senior Center located in Chippewa Middle School. This is a place of fellowship, learning, communication with other seniors, socializing, comfort, friendship, and developing new skills and

talents. The Senior Center is an informative community resource to learn about organizations that provide services for seniors for the different aspects of their lives. The Senior Center has many volunteer positions to be filled so you can feel useful and helpful. Meeting new friends and participating in fun activities gets you out of your home and opens a whole new world of possibilities. The Meridian Senior Center offers trips, exercise classes, line dancing, lunch, computer club, book club, bridge, Mah-Jongg, chess, bingo, euchre, board games, Wii games, movies, foot care, hearing screening, golf and bowling leagues, chair massage, craft club, and the opportunity to speak to health professionals, lawyers, and senior citizen housing managers. You can enjoy presentations by the Harris Nature Center, Kresge Art Museum, cultural speakers from different countries along with a multitude of fun activities such as an ice cream social, picnic, and current event discussions. The Meridian Senior Center provides a “purpose in life”.

For more information about the Meridian Senior Center call 517-706-5045.

BY **Carol Pixley**, Secretary of the Meridian Senior Center Advisory Board and part-time assistant to Senior Center Director Cherie Wisdom. Carol volunteers and participates in many activities at the center.

Okemos School Board Candidates Needed!

From "NOTICE OF FILING DEADLINE FOR BOARD OF EDUCATION CANDIDATES" on the OPS website:

Three seats on the Okemos School Board will be on the ballot for the November election with the following terms of office:

- (one) two-year term expiring December 31, 2013 and
- (two) four-year terms expiring December 31, 2015

Terms of office on the Okemos School Board begin January 1 and end December 31.

Interested citizens must file an Affidavit of Identity and a nominating petition (minimum 40 signatures) at the Meridian Township Clerk’s Office (Central Park Drive/Marsh Road) **by 4:00 p.m. August 16, 2011** to be placed on the November 8, 2011 school election ballot. A \$100 nonrefundable fee may be filed in lieu of a petition.

Nominating petition forms may be obtained from the school board office (Okemos Road at Mt. Hope) or from the township clerk’s office. You may also obtain a copy of the Affidavit of Identity from the Secretary of State’s website at www.mich.gov/sos.

Meridian Township Clerk Mary Helmbrecht is the Election Coordinator for Okemos Public Schools. Citizens may call 853-4300 with questions concerning the election process.

Update on Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and Response to Intervention (RTI)

During the 2010-11 school year, the Okemos Public Schools engaged in two important initiatives to enhance student learning and achievement... professional learning communities and response to intervention.

Thirteen, two-hour sessions for professional learning communities (PLCs) were established throughout the school year to allow time for teacher collaboration within the school day. While this early release of students was burdensome for some families, the improvements to both teaching and learning were significant and our students benefited.

Throughout the district teachers met in groups with their peers who have a shared responsibility for grade level, course or subject area student learning outcomes. Each group focused on the four critical questions that drive the work of a PLC:

- **What do we want each student to learn?**
- **How will we know when each student has learned it?**
- **How will we respond when a student doesn't learn it?**
- **How will we respond when a student already knows it?**

Every PLC participated in this ongoing process of clarifying the essential learning outcomes for that grade or subject area, identifying the current level of student achievement and establishing a goal for improvement, identifying and implementing improvement or enrichment strategies, and providing periodic evidence of progress. The teachers established SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable,

PLC Early Release Dates and Times

2011-12 Dates of the PLCs:

September 14 and 28
 October 26
 November 16
 December 7
 January 11
 February 29
 March 14 and 28
 April 18
 May 23

School Start and End Times on Early Release Days:

Elementary:

K AM 8:50 AM - 11:00 AM
 K PM 11:40 AM - 1:50 PM
 Grades 1-4 8:50 AM - 1:50 PM

Kinawa 5-6:

8:45 AM - 1:35 PM

Chippewa 7-8:

8:00 AM - 12:50 PM

OHS 9-12:


7:45 AM - 12:35 PM

Realistic, and Time-Bound) to help guide this process.

At the elementary level the major emphasis of PLCs was implementing the new core reading program, Reading Street. The middle schools focused on implementing consistent academic vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies across the curriculum. The high school faculty spent the majority of PLC time aligning curricula, establishing essential outcomes and


sharing assessments within courses and departments. Utilizing the PLC structure, the Response to Intervention (RTI) initiative assisted teachers in learning to examine core instruction for all students, administer universal screenings and analyze the data, provide intensive instructional interventions or enrichment for students and monitor academic progress monitoring. The collaboration and consistency that has been achieved through this opportunity for dialogue among teachers has truly been invaluable.

Through anecdotal feedback from parents and a survey of professional staff, we are modifying our professional development schedule to better meet the needs of our families, students, and faculty members. There will be two full days of professional development (September 1 and February 21) and eleven two-hour PLCs in the upcoming school year. This schedule allows for increased student contact time, as well as opportunities for more intense training on specific topics identified at the building or district level. The decrease in the number of early release days demonstrates an effort to respond to parent concerns regarding the need for child care. Additionally, Community Education will continue to enhance offerings for students on early release days.

As we continue to invest the time and hard work to implement the principles of RTI and PLCs, we believe our educational community will be strengthened in both teaching and learning and remain focused on the mission of our district: Together... educating with excellence, inspiring learners for life! 

BY *Patricia Trelstad*, Deputy Superintendent of Okemos Public Schools.

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educational programs and services to our students and to our families. I am hopeful that 2011-12 will be a year with fewer changes, challenges and stresses. However, I am confident the quality of education and services, as well as the strength of relationships will continue at a level of excellence because none of us will settle for anything less! 

As of 6/30/11, the Okemos Education Foundation had the following fund balances:

General Fund: \$ \$78,197
Strategic Fund: \$28,933
Temporarily Restricted Funds - \$14,865
Permanently Restricted - Endowment Fund: \$231,834

- The OEF General and Temporarily Restricted Funds are used to fund OEF grants, awards and program costs.
- The Strategic Fund (initiated in Spring 2010) is used to fund grants in two areas: Core Academics and Extracurriculars/Clubs.
- The OEF Endowment Fund is managed by Pension Trend Investment Advisors and will be used to fund future grants and awards.

Record number of OEF grants help all Okemos students!

If you visit our website (www.oefsite.org), one of the first things you'll see are photos of Okemos students benefiting from the technology, materials and activities supported by our donors. Here are some of the stories behind those photos.

Essential academic skills

Thanks to a grant for the *Take Home Reading Program* at Cornell, first grade teachers will purchase more high-interest books for students to carry home in the special book bags (funded by their PTO). Their goal is to nurture habits of reading for information and pleasure, and to support parents in their roles as educators.

A Kinawa 5th grade Math teacher had bought several *mathematics games* out-of-pocket, found they were an effective and fun way for students to learn and review math concepts, and wanted to enable an entire class to use these at the same time. A grant of \$375 enabled her to purchase enough games.

Thanks to another grant of \$340, seventy students in the High School math classes will be able to utilize *Geometry templates* to more precisely draw and visualize the shapes described by the formulas they are solving.

A \$2,130 grant enabled school librarians to purchase the *Social Studies through Literature collection* (127 non-fiction, biography and historical fiction titles) that will be shared among the seven school libraries.

A series of small grants provided the Montessori students across all grades with materials that facilitate learning in math (from basic decimals to geometry), reading and social studies.

The **Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Fund**, created several years ago with a generous donation by the Deits family in memory of Connie, funded a number of science grants this year, including:

- The *Science Olympiad Enhancement project*, which will purchase the materials our student competitors will use to construct their science projects and a set of reference CDs and DVDs to prepare them for science tournaments, and pay the registration fees for state and regional tournaments.
- The *Science Through Literature initiative*, involving the purchase of 77 high-interest books awarded an "Outstand-

ing" rating by the National Council of Science Teachers that will be shared via interlibrary loan with all seven school libraries.

- The *Solar Greenhouse Learning Center* for Cornell Elementary's "Nature's Crossing," a pond and wetland area that enables students to pursue a "dirt-under-fingernails approach" to learning about wildlife. The new structures will include a greenhouse in which students can grow plants throughout the year and space for students to work on science projects.

The **OEF Strategic Fund**, created to support district-wide initiatives identified by the district's leadership, provided funds to purchase *new World Religion textbooks at the high school, math software for Kinawa, and reading software at the elementary level*. These essential purchases had been delayed for years due to cuts in the district's budget.

Students as knowledge creators

Several Business and Technology teachers at Okemos High School are developing lesson plans that incorporate the *six Flip camcorders* purchased with a \$486 grant. The cameras will allow students to film each other performing a range of tasks and share them with fellow students and those who follow them in subsequent years. Some of the video sequences students will script, film, edit and share include:

- Proper parenting techniques in the Child Development course
- Safety instructions for their peers to watch before using lab equipment and cooking gear
- Fashion technique demonstrations and dress rehearsals for fashion shows in the Fashion Design course
- Commercials in the Sports Marketing and Entrepreneurship classes
- Typing techniques and ergonomics in Keyboarding classes
- Interviews with professionals in the community to support career exploration
- Mock job interviews, permitting students to critique themselves

Cornell students will contribute illustrations and photographs that convey positive behavior choices to a book that will be self-published and distributed to all classrooms by the beginning of the coming school year. *A \$500 grant will cover the costs of printing 15 copies of the hard-cover book.*

Assisting those who face learning hurdles

Several grants will help students use technology to break through the unique learning barriers they face.

- Struggling readers at the high school will be able to improve their comprehension, reading fluency and decoding skills with *optical scanning "reading pens"* purchased through a \$460 grant. As students glide the pen over individual words or full lines of text, they can hear the words read aloud through a speaker built into the pen or an attached ear-phone, or hear definitions for unfamiliar words. These pens will reduce the need for students to leave their regular academic classes to seek special reading support.
- A \$1000 grant purchased the *Edmark Reading Program*, which is helping students at the elementary through 6th grades who are reading well below their grade levels to catch up with their peers.
- Okemos students struggling with Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PPD) are benefiting from another grant of \$560 that paid for a set of *thirty books and seven CDs that promote speech and language development*.

Reading consultants at Kinawa will also be able to provide reluctant and below-grade readers with a range of *high-interest "Tween" fiction and non-fiction leveled readers* purchased with a \$500 grant.

Enriching learning

Fifth grade students have expanded options in their general music program, thanks to a \$1,000 grant that funded, along with support from the Kinawa Parent Group, the creation of the *Kinawa Guitar Lab*. With the addition of 16 guitars and supporting equipment and method books, Kinawa music teachers and volunteer instructors from Marshall Music Company will provide students with rich creative learning experiences. In addition to learning to play popular contemporary and folk songs, students will explore the historical, social and cultural contexts in which the songs were written, and then learn to write their own songs that reflect the world they are experiencing.

High School French students rotating through learning stations will be using an *iPad* at one of the stations to read French news articles, magazines and books, listen to preloaded songs, use language flashcards and create presentations, thanks to a \$650 grant to the World Language department.

With the closing of the swimming pool at Chippewa Middle School, Physical Education teachers have been seeking new exercise options for students. A grant of \$400 will enable them to *equip exercise stations for students to use* during the winter months or during inclement weather when outside activities are impractical. The equipment itself - resistance tubing, hand weights, and stability balls - is relatively low-tech, but the fitness-related skills students will learn while using the new gear - proper lifting techniques; customizing workouts to include cardio, strength and flexibility exercises, and monitoring their pulse and target heart rate zones - will serve them throughout their lives.

The **OEF Strategic Fund** restored funding for 17 *extracurricular clubs* across the district. These clubs provide students with opportunities to pursue their interests, strengthen their talents, and to acquire important personal and interpersonal skills.

Fourth grade students across the district also benefited with funding for *MSU Seeds of Science field trips*. Students spent 3 days at MSU's Children's Garden with university staff members in an immersion learning experience to enrich their science curriculum.

This year's **Lee Gerard Professional Development Fellowship** award partially defrayed *the costs for three Okemos teachers to attend the American Montessori Society's Annual Conference* in Chicago. The teachers brought back a wealth of information that they have shared with colleagues.

And, for the 3rd year in a row, Summit Community Bank and the OEF co-sponsored the *Visiting Author program* for elementary schools. This year's visiting writer was Shelley Gill, an Alaskan Iditarod veteran with 25 children's books about nature, animals, and adventures.

The OEF also awarded the following Commitment to Excellence recipients \$1,000 each:

Dr. Catherine Ash	Okemos Public Schools
Heather McNeilly	Cornell and Central
Don Poore	Kinawa
Matt Prinz and Josh Coty	Chippewa
Linda Yaske	Bennett Woods

In a year when the OEF gave more grants and awards than ever before (59!) these are just a few examples of how OEF funds were put to use. With your support, we can do even more next year! **OEF**

OEF Grants

Geometry Templates	Okemos High School - Geometry Karen Brunner	\$340
Edmark Reading Program	Kinawa/Hiawatha – Basic Classrooms Amanda Wenzel & Joni Steinhaus	\$1,000
Geometry Manipulatives	Central – 1st, 2nd Grades Lauri Johnson	\$682
Speech Development Software and Books	Early Childhood Basic Classroom Laura Ecker & Courtney Schnelker	\$560
Decimal Unit Manipulatives	Central – 3rd, 4th Grades Christine Batora, Jennifer Schlicher, Karen Casler	\$995
Flip Video Cameras	Okemos High School – Business & Technology Katie Bartel & Dean Buggia	\$486
Assistive Technology Reading Pens	Okemos High School – Resource Classroom Justin Turner	\$460
Social Studies Books	K – 12 Libraries Sandy Fields	\$2,130
Math Exploratory Games	Kinawa – 5th Grade Molly Francis	\$375
Books for Reluctant Readers	Kinawa – Reading Consultant Holly Heie	\$500
Fitness Equipment	Chippewa – Physical Education Jamie Ianni & Kathy Harbert	\$400
Guitar Lab	Kinawa – Music Barbara O'Hagin	\$1,000
Albanesi Math Materials	Central – 1st, 2nd Grades Megan Malkus	\$615
Take Home Reading Program	Cornell – 1st Grade Marie Smith, Amy Petersburg, Cathy Staudt	\$1,000
History of Fundamental Needs	Central – 1st, 2nd Grades Lauri Johnson	\$530
iPad for Differentiated Instruction	Okemos High School – French Melissa Samluk	\$650
Alphabet Sets	Central – Pre-Primary Kindergarten Theresa Weber & Shannon Nedds	\$290
Self-published Positive Behavior Books	Cornell Tara Fry & Christena Sinila	\$500
Math Concepts Materials	Central – 1st, 2nd Grades Megan Malkus	\$575
Take Home Reading Program	Cornell – 1st Grade Marie Smith, Amy Petersburg, Cathy Staudt	\$1,000

Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Fund

Dissection Supplies	Okemos High School Colleen Palmer	\$150
Solar Greenhouse	Cornell Lorri King	\$2,000
Science Through Literature	K – 12 Libraries Sandy Fields	\$1,500
Enhancing Science Olympiad	Okemos High School Laura Richter	\$1,000

Lee Gerard Professional Development Fellowships

Bringing Montessori Back 5th/6th Grade Program Development	Kinawa Marissa McCormick, Corey Nieland, Amanda Medina	\$2,142
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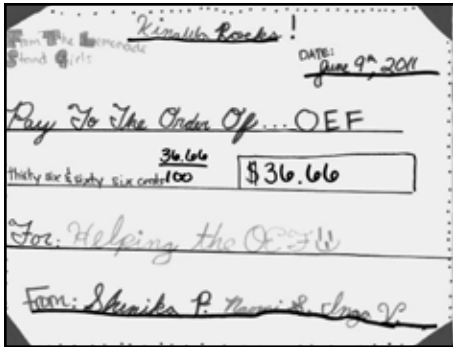
Strategic Fund

After-School Clubs	K - 12	\$18,445
World Religion Textbooks	Okemos High School	\$2,141
MSU Seeds of Science Field Trips	All 4th Grades	\$2,227
Music Program Transportation	Okemos High School	\$1,392
Adobe Suite Software	Okemos High School	\$6,500
Study Island Math Software	Kinawa	\$1,689
Art and Food Exploratory Supplies	Kinawa	\$1,000
Art and Food Exploratory Supplies	Chippewa	\$1,000
Read Naturally Software	Bennett Woods and Central	\$6,400

Okemos students support the OEF!

Okemos students gave back to the OEF this past year in many meaningful ways.

Three fifth graders at Kinawa wanted to do something to help Okemos schools because they were aware of the budget cuts that were being made this year. **Shenika P., Naomi S., and Inga V. sold lemonade for three days during the lunch hour at Kinawa and raised \$36.66 for the OEF Strategic Fund!**



Members of the Class of 2011 who organized the annual Senior Servant Day at Okemos High School in May designated the OEF Strategic Fund as beneficiary. The **bidding for senior servants netted almost \$1,000 for the OEF Strategic Fund** and will be used to maintain funding for extracurricular clubs at OHS.

In June the OEF held a contest for Okemos High School students and alumni to see who could make the best video answering "How Okemos Public Schools provides a world class education?" Entries were posted on the OEF Facebook page and open for all to vote. **Congratulations to Max Pittsley and his winning video, "Moving to Okemos."** Visit the OEF website, www.oefsite.org, to watch the video!

The OEF thanks these future leaders for their efforts to benefit all Okemos students! OEF

"An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."

-Benjamin Franklin

A gift to the Okemos Education Foundation helps excellence in educational programs and services for Okemos students now and in the future.

The OEF is a 501(c)(3) organization and donations are tax-deductable to the fullest extent of the law. For your convenience, in addition to donations by mail (see form below), we also accept online credit card donations at www.oefsite.org.

OEF Partners in Education are donors who contribute \$50 or more annually with recognition and benefits at various levels of giving. More information about OEF Partners in Education recognition can be found at www.oefsite.org.

Now more than ever before, it's up to all of us to maintain the quality of education for Okemos students. Thank you for considering a gift to the OEF!

OEF Donation Form

Yes! I/we wish to support the OEF in the amount of:

\$

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please apply* my donation to the OEF's:

General Fund (to support this year's classroom grants, awards, fellowships, and program costs)

Strategic Fund (to restore funding for programs, activities, and purchases that have been reduced or eliminated from the district's budget)

Endowment Fund (to fund future grants, awards, and fellowships)

*Gifts not designated for a specific fund will be considered unrestricted and will be applied where most needed.

Please indicate how you want your name(s) to appear when OEF Partners in Education are recognized publicly:

If donating \$250 or more, for a hotlink from the OEF website's Donor Page to your company website, please tell us your Company Name and

Website Address: _____

Donation Tribute (optional):

In Honor/Memory (please circle one) of: _____

Donations of \$500 or more qualify for complimentary tickets to the OEF Awards Banquet on November 17th.

Yes, I'd like complimentary tickets. Please contact Alicia Hopping at hoppinga@aol.com to reserve your seats.

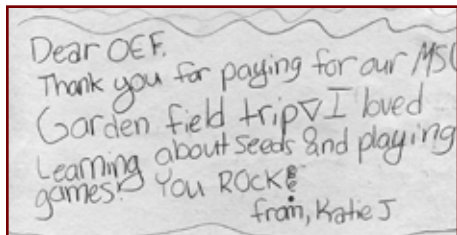
Visit www.oefsite.org to make an online donation.

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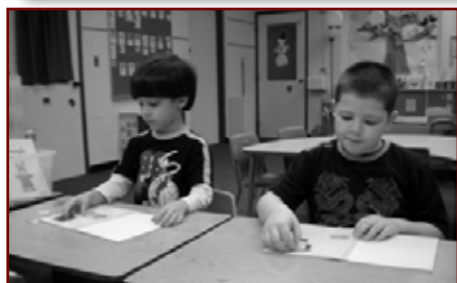
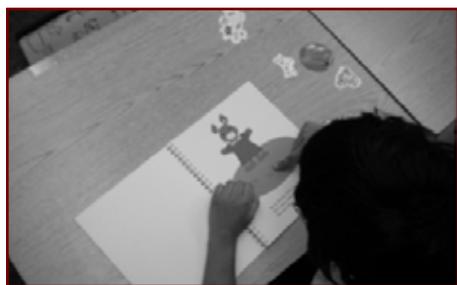
Your support is making a difference for OPS kids!

"Thank you so much for generously funding the 4th grade field trips to MSU gardens. Having a chance to experience hands-on learning about plants at the university is something these children will take with them forever. We greatly appreciate all you do."

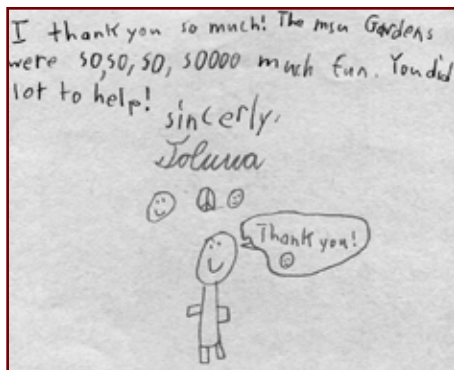
**-Hiawatha 4th Grade Teachers
Shawn Belanger, Eugenia Pocalyka,
Sheila Smalley & Ingrid Yarbrough**



"Please convey our appreciation to the OEF for funding the fourth grade plant unit through the Strategic Fund. This hands-on study at Michigan State University benefits all fourth graders in the district and we were thrilled to receive word that it has been selected by OEF for funding!" -Jeri K. Mifflin, Principal



Students are engaged by the Buddy Bear workbooks and software funded by an OEF grant received by Laura Ecker, Basic Classroom instructor at Central.



"Thank you so much for this fantastic news! We are really excited about going forward with our project. I know it will make a substantial difference to our entire school. I am in awe at what OEF does for our district and our students! Thanks!"

-Tara Fry, Principal, regarding grant for positive behavior book publishing.

"It is with immense gratitude that I accept the O.E.F. grant. Please know that it will be put to tremendous use with Kinawa students this fall, spring and the years to come. I have ordered "The Stevenson Program and Phonics First Foundations for Reading Program". I look forward to their postal deliveries and classroom instruction. Your suggestions for audio technology were very sensible"

Again – thank you! You have made a difference in my students' education."

-Jen Harnick, Kinawa Resource Consultant

"Thank you for an amazing evening! What a memorable night you created for all of us that were honored at the 2010 Commitment to Excellence Awards. My family and friends were very impressed with everything. You truly made me feel special I had a once in a lifetime experience. I appreciate it greatly. Keep up the good work!"

-Heather McNeilly, Art teacher

"It is through the generous gifts of the OEF and its patrons that we are able to enhance learning for our students. I appreciate your support of my efforts in the classroom, and I believe that all of our kids are better off for having the experiences you've helped provide."

-Molly Francis, Kinawa 5th Grade teacher

"I am thrilled for our second graders at Cornell to have received the second phase of my grant from the OEF. I speak for many when I say that the OEF has truly



Adam Goss from Summit Community Bank presents a check to Damian P. for winning the Summit Bank reading contest, held in conjunction with "March is Reading month."

enriched the lives of Okemos students. Thank you for supporting this endeavor."

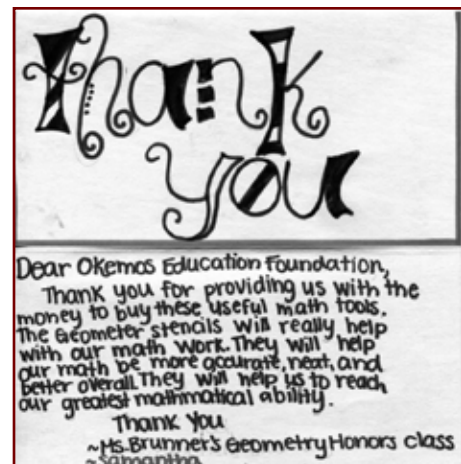
-Julie Bellinger, Cornell 2nd Grade teacher, regarding grant for Math Games and Activity Stations.

"On behalf of the OHS Drama Boosters, I would like to thank you for your support of clubs at the high school this year. In these tough economic times, our school district is blessed to have an organization like the OEF..."

-Susan Bence, OHS Drama Boosters President

"My Geometry Honors class and I would like to thank you for the geometry stencil you have provided us with. They will become of great use to us during school and at home for homework. We are so glad to be able to use these stencils, especially for the things we are learning this semester..."

-Student from Mrs. Brunner's Geometry Honors class



Thank You 2010-11 Partners in Education!

The Okemos Education Foundation thanks our Partners in Education - the many individuals, professionals, and businesses that so generously supported the Foundation in 2010-11. Donors who contribute \$50 or more are recognized as Partners on an annual basis for different levels of giving. Our Partners play a key role in supporting the ongoing classroom grants and fellowships, Strategic Fund grants, Connie Osborn Deits Science grants, and the Commitment to Excellence awards that supplement the excellent staff and programs at Okemos Public Schools. As of June 30, 2011, donors are listed below.

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OEF News

Okemos Education Foundation
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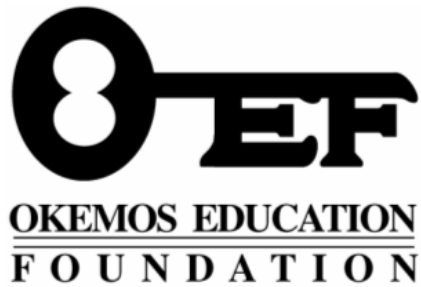
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“Recognizing excellence and promoting innovation in Okemos Public Schools.”

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**It's up
all of
to us.**

Be our Partner in Education!
Your support makes a difference for Okemos students,
now more than ever!
See page 8 for how you can help!