

Orange County Public Schools 2015 State of the Schools Address

This address was delivered by School Board Chair Bill Sublette and Superintendent Barbara Jenkins at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts on May 5, 2015. The event was sponsored by Bright House Networks Enterprise Solutions; CFE Federal Credit Union; Jostens; Valencia College; the Central Florida Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.; Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association; Duke Energy; Greater Orlando Builders Association; the Orlando Regional Realtors Association; and the University of Central Florida. Chairman Sublette was introduced by Rich Maladecki, President and CEO of CFHLA.

Sublette:

Good morning! Thank you for taking time out of your busy lives to come hear about the exciting year we've had at Orange County Public Schools, and to hear what the future holds.

An acquaintance of mine recently turned me on to that great philosopher, Winnie the Pooh. Pooh once said, "The best thing to do is stop writing introductions and get on with the book!"

So on the advice of Pooh, let's get on with the book! You've come here today to hear about the arts in education and I can think of no better way to do that than to begin this morning with a special announcement from our friends at the home of Winnie the Pooh, Walt Disney World. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the President of Walt Disney World to the stage, George A. Kalogridis, for an exciting announcement.

Sublette:

What an exciting opportunity for the children of Orange County Public Schools. Thank you, George. I know you have to make an early exit to make an important meeting back at the Castle, but please convey our thanks to your 74,000 cast members whose hard work made this possible.

I also want to invite all of you to stay after this morning's presentation and join our students in the Walt Disney Theater as they experience the magic of *The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg*. Now that sounds like one of our Board meetings!

A short 3 1/2 years ago we hired Dr. Jenkins as our Superintendent. We set a high bar for her, telling her that we aspired to win the Broad Prize for Urban Education, not just for what the prize symbolizes, but for what it measures. You see, the Broad Prize celebrates improvement in America's urban public schools. It is the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for a school district. Each

year the prize goes to that urban district which demonstrates the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among low-income students and students of color.

When we hired Dr. Jenkins we thought it would take 4-5 years to become a finalist, and 6-7 years to actually win the prize. Clearly, we underestimated Barbara Jenkins, because our Orange County Public Schools are the 2014 Broad Prize winner! My, how I love those little guys!

Not only did we win the Broad Prize, but last year we became only the 3rd school district to win the Governor's Sterling Award for Organizational Excellence in the 21 year history of the award. The Sterling Award is modeled after the Malcolm Baldrige Award. It recognizes superior leadership, economy and efficiency, and, most importantly, customer satisfaction! And you, our families and students, are our customers.

And we were named for to the AP Honor Roll for the third time, a prestigious list of only 4% of the school districts in America which increase student participation in rigorous AP college courses while simultaneously improving the rate at which their students pass the AP exam.

Dr. Jenkins we have much to be proud of, and I'd like to invite you to join me on stage for our State of the Schools address. Ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Barbara Jenkins!

Jenkins:

Yes, Chairman Sublette, we do have much to be proud of, and it seems only fitting that this week is Teacher Appreciation Week because our success in winning the Broad Prize is due to the dedication of 13,000 teachers, 9,000 support staff, and 192,000 students. They work hard each and every day in the classroom and in our schools. Representing our wonderful teachers is Lainie Clowers, OCPS Teacher of the Year, and representing our support staff is Mark Nelson, OCPS Support Person of the Year. Lainie, and Mark please stand and allow us to applaud our hard working professionals through you. *[Applause]*

We're joined today by two other gifted employees, Principal Angela Murphy-Osborne of Palmetto Elementary, who recently was recognized as this year's Principal of Achievement by the Florida Department of Education, and Mark Shanoff, Principal at Ocoee Middle, the 2014 National Distinguished Principal of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Please stand and allow us to recognize you.

Our ability to reward our 22,000 employees for their hard work through their paychecks - where it really matters! - is dependent upon tax collections. The Great Recession put a crimp in those collections. Our per-student funding remains down by \$426 from 2007, and our purchasing power is down by \$1,500. The funding for significant raises was previously not there, but this year our Board dug deep and I am pleased to report that we recently entered into a two year contract with our teachers, a contract which provides them with average raises of 6.3% per teacher, and a \$1,000 Broad Prize bonus, and a similar raise and \$500 Broad bonus for our support staff. Can I have all our teachers and staff here today stand so we can give you a hand!

Sublette:

We especially want to thank our community for their support of public education. This year Orange County voters renewed the local option 1 mill property tax in support of public schools, a revenue source which has enabled us to avoid draconian cuts in sports, the arts, and music during the recession.

As a result, we have art in every one of our schools. We are so proud of our commitment to the arts at OCPS that we chose this beautiful new community venue for the annual State of the Schools address to highlight our commitment to the arts. After all, this morning is all about the STEAM, and the A in STEAM, is the arts.

Jenkins:

As the Chairman mentioned, every one of our elementary schools has an arts programs. Some even have dance and theater. All of our high schools and middle schools have art classes, a band, and chorus, most of them have string orchestras, and many have dance and photography.

Not only are we committed to arts education, but we are also committed to active participation in the arts community. Over 65 schools participated in the Winter Park Sidewalk Arts Festival and 80 students were selected to exhibit their artwork at the Orlando Museum of Art this year. 65 schools participated in the Maitland Rotary and Windermere Rotary Art Festivals.

And our students excel at the arts! Ocoee's Middle School 8th grader Jennifer Lee won 1st place in the state of Florida for her visual art entry in the Atlantic Institute's Art and Essay contest, "Kidness Without Boarders." Her win earned Jennifer and her art teacher, Brenda Bertnick, a trip to Turkey! Diana Schwann, a senior at Timber Creek, will be attending Oberlin to also study vocal performance on a \$55,000 scholarship. Maria Varas of Hunter's Creek Middle School has been accepted to the Middle School Honors Orchestra performance at Carnegie Hall this summer in New York City; and Gian Perez of Lake Nona High school received a full scholarship for the summer performance program at the Berklee School of music in Boston. Will you all stand and allow us to recognize your talents?

Sublette:

And our students excel at the arts. 252 OCPS students were selected for the 2015 All-State band, chorus, and orchestra ensembles, and 1,500 students participate in our All-County ensembles where they learn from nationally recognized conductors and artists. The West Orange High Jazz Band was one of only two high school jazz bands from throughout the world selected to perform at the 2014 Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic.

We also earn national recognition. Lake Nona Middle School's chorus performed in ABC's nationally televised Christmas Parade, Glen Ridge Middle School's orchestra performed at Disney World, and Winter Park High's all-girl a cappella group, Take 7, was named South Champion at the International Championship of High School A Capella groups, making them one of the top 12 a cappella groups in the country.

Jenkins:

We are especially proud of the fact that two of the 15 Florida public schools recognized as Florida Arts Model Schools are our own Howard Middle School for Music, Dance and Visual Arts, and Lake Nona Middle School for Music and Visual Arts. In fact, in only its 3rd year of existence as a magnet program, Howard was named a Magnet School of Excellence by Magnet Schools of America, the first OCPS school named to that distinguished list. Colleen Jones, who led us in the national anthem, is a Howard Middle School Student.

I want to make you aware of the exciting new Career Pathways to Creative Sector Jobs program at Evans High School funded by United Arts. The arts are a major economic engine in Central Florida. One recent study revealed that the arts contribute \$264 million annually to our local economy. While any discussion of the arts tends to focus on the performers, the arts economy is so much more. It is the sound and lighting tech, the usher and the ticket taker, the stage manager, musician, choreographer, producer, director, and box office employee. In fact, the overwhelming majority of jobs in the arts are behind the stage. This wonderful program will provide Evans students with a pipeline into a career in the arts.

Sublette:

Which leads us to our second major announcement today. While we are still working out the details, we want you to know that we are in active negotiations to build and operate a zoneless performing arts magnet school right here on the grounds of the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. It is our dream and vision that our most gifted performers will matriculate into this new school, where students will work hand in hand with seasoned arts professionals, on and behind the stage. We are certain that by partnering with the Dr. Phillips Center in this endeavor we will create a performing arts magnet school second to none in the entire nation!

Jenkins:

The STEM in our STE4M is science, technology, engineering, and math. STEM encompasses almost everything in our daily lives. How we eat, communicate, solve problems, where we live, virtually everything we are exposed to has been developed with a foundation of STEM knowledge. Not only is STEM important to the lives we lead, but for many of our children their ability to earn a living may depend upon them becoming STEM natives. Since 2010 alone, Florida's labor demand in STEM fields has increased by more than 63%. For every non-STEM job posting requiring a Bachelor's degree, there are 2-1/2 STEM job openings, and currently there are more than 55,000 unfilled STEM jobs in the state. And they pay well! STEM jobs which require a bachelor's degree pay an entry level wage averaging \$66,000, and those which require a two year degree average \$53,000 per year.

We live at the epicenter of Florida's STEM economy. Our local modeling, simulation and training industry is a \$5 billion dollar economic engine, and it employs more than 60,000 Floridians. Yet many STEM jobs go unfilled by Central Floridians because of an emerging talent gap, a crisis in human capital which represents a vast, growing, unmet need for highly skilled, educated STEM workers.

Sublette:

OCPS is committed to exposing our children to the benefits of a career in STEM, and to providing our students with the tools they need to succeed in STEM education. We produce a K-12 STEM newsletter, a competition newsletter, and math and science curriculum newsletters to go to our teachers. We use those newsletters to inform our teachers about STEM programs, training, and competition opportunities.

Our own Kat Gordon loves to say it is a poor frog which doesn't praise its own pond. Kat, listen up, because we're about to praise our pond!



Jenkins:

Because we have been promoting the benefits of a STEM education, the number of our students earning industry certification for internet web development has quadrupled in the past two years. Those earning certification as a Microsoft Office Specialist have doubled. Those earning industry certification in engineering have more than tripled. And the number of middle school students enrolled in IT and business programs have quintupled over the past two years alone, from 1,800 to nearly 10,000 students.

Some of our gains are attributed to a \$1 million grant we received from Dr. Phillips Charities to create the Dr. Phillips Charities Certified Schools pilot program. That grant went to five area high schools to increase technical education offerings, mostly in STEM fields. We are joined this morning by Ken Robinson from Dr. Phillips Charities. Ken, please stand and allow us to thank you! [*Applause*]

Sublette:

Our NAF Academies offer specialized learning in engineering, health sciences, and information technology. We have gone from 11 to 23 NAF academies over the past four years alone. The curriculum for the academies comes from the nation's leading provider of K-12 STEM curriculum, programs, and professional development, Project Lead the Way.

Last month we learned that we had won a \$2 million grant from Lockheed Martin to expand Project Lead the Way from 21 schools to all 184 elementary, middle and high schools in the District within only three years! We are one of only three communities in the entire United States to receive this grant. Lockheed Martin's representative, Tobi Allen, is here with us today. Tobi, please stand and allow us to recognize Lockheed Martin's generosity through you.

Jenkins:

In addition to Dr. Phillips Charities and Lockheed Martin, we also partner with the major corporations, professional societies, the armed forces, and the industry groups you see on the screen beside me for everything from teacher training to field trips, curriculum, providing subject matter experts, and hosting classes and competitions.

This fall we will be opening our first Launch Site at Mid Florida Tech. This program is a partnership between OCPS, our local higher education partners, the armed forces, and the Central

Florida STEM Education Council. Our Launch Site will prepare OCPS students to enter the workforce as animators, modelers, programmers, simulation designers, and motion capture technicians. These skills will enable them to work as virtual engineers and create the advanced learning systems used by military and educational institutions. We are excited about the opportunity our students will have to enter these high-demand, lucrative fields!

Sublette:

STEM education is so important to us that we've even taken it down to the VPK level. Our pre-kindergarten teachers attend STEM training provided by UCF professors and Early Childhood Department instructors so they may develop STEM challenges for our pre-kindergartners. Yes, you heard me right - pre-kindergartners! How cool is that! Behind me on the screen you see pre-kindergartners at Waterbridge Elementary engaged in a ramps and pathways STEM challenge. Here you see Ventura Elementary pre-kindergartners design and test a house to protect the Three Little Pigs from the Wolf. This Riverdale Elementary pre-school class has created xylophone using colored water and jars. And to think, we just banged drums and played with our Tinker Toys!

Jenkins:

We're especially proud of our Carver Middle School Robotics Team. Last summer they took part in the MIT/NASA Zero Robotics National Competition, where they went undefeated and won the Florida Region, defeating teams from six other Florida school districts. They made it all the way to the International Space Station Finals at the Kennedy Space Center. What makes their accomplishment even more impressive is that the Carver team was the only Title-I school in the competition. Carver had the highest percentage of free/reduced lunch, minority, and female participants of any team in the country. Four members of the winning Carver team have joined us today, Kenny Bredy, Sierra Hatten, Reshard Tillman and Elijah Wells. Please stand so we can applaud your accomplishment!

Sometimes our students say things better than we ever could. Here's how Ellie Morton, one of our Sunshine State Scholars, expressed her passion for STEM education.

Jenkins:

Now that's girl power! Isn't she inspiring! Ellie please stand so we can recognize you.

We need to address two challenges facing Orange County Public Schools: school siting and testing.

Take a look at the screen next to me. These 12 schools currently exceed their capacity by 150%. An additional 12 schools will exceed their capacity by 150% within five years. Two schools will exceed it by 200%. OCPS is growing. And we are growing rapidly. In fact, this year alone we added 4,700 new students, the equivalent of five new elementary schools.

Fear not. We have relief planned for these schools. We are able to provide relief from overcrowding because last November the voters renewed the 1/2 cent sales tax for school construction and renovation, which means we can build the new schools our community desperately needs and renovate the 65 schools you see on the screen beside me. As you look at some of our beautiful new schools and newly renovated schools, please join me in applauding our

voters for supporting public education not once, but twice at the ballot box last fall! Thank you!

Sublette:

We need the help of our partners on the County Commission, though, in siting these schools. It is clear to all that the school siting process is broken and needs fixing. Schools were once points of pride to neighborhoods. They still should be, and to the neighborhoods surrounding Boone, Winter Park, Edgewater, Timber Creek, Apopka, and countless other schools, they still are.

A neighborhood school is the gathering place, the playing fields, the social hub of an entire community; but all too often those with no skin in the game are working to keep schools out of their neighborhood. The only way I know how to fix this problem is to amend our school siting ordinance. OCPS needs to submit its proposed sites to the Commission earlier, and we need earlier approval by the Commission. We need to reduce the acreage required for schools. And we need to provide for a better method of resolving siting concerns. We have a community known for working together, and I am confident that with the help of my friend, Mayor Jacobs, we will tackle and solve this problem as our community has always solved its problems.

I will end this State of the Schools by talking about the biggest challenge we face, the over-testing of our children. In February, 2014, I appeared before the State Board of Education and asked for a time out. I asked them to delay implementation of Florida's new, unproven Florida Standards Assessments for one year to allow the new tests to be field tested and validated, and cut scores established. I believe I may have been one of the first to request such a delay.

After my testimony before the state board of education, our board passed a resolution pointing out that the combination of new, unproven tests given entirely by computer for the first time, and coupled with the absence of benchmarks and with the added stress of more than 800 newly required End of Course examinations, was asking too much, too quickly and was rash. Our warning fell on deaf ears.

Unfortunately, we all know what has happened since then. The State's computerized testing system has crashed twice in the last month and a half, something a first year programmer could have predicted. With every new failure public, parent, and teacher confidence in the new tests has plummeted. Now, parents throughout the state are in open revolt against the lunacy of holding children, teachers, and schools accountable for unknown results, on an unproven, unvalidated test our entire State has lost confidence in.

Some have strongly opined that we flout the law and lead our teachers and students in civil disobedience. That will not happen. There are times in history when civil disobedience is called for: for example, the stand against segregation and for civil rights, or the movement against apartheid, or when in opposition to an immoral war, fascism, or communism. This is not one of those times.

Jenkins:

We do, however, have an obligation to take the steps in our power to ameliorate the negative impacts of over-testing children, and we are taking such steps. In October we eliminated 27 district

required benchmark tests and FAIR tests, and made clear that the State mandated end of course examinations would serve as a final in every course, and that a separate final would not be permitted. We also established that EOC test scores would not be permitted to affect elementary school grades. In March, we eliminated an additional 42 tests, including elementary school End of Course examinations in social studies and science; and art, music and PE EOC's for grades K-4.

Three weeks ago the Governor signed legislation allowing us greater flexibility in progress monitoring, testing and remediation decisions. However, we are still required to administer the Florida Standards Assessments and state EOC's, and we are still required to measure student performance for all subjects *and* partially base teacher pay upon student learning growth as measured by assessments.

Sublette:

Make no mistake about it, our Board strongly supports accountability. We are not anti-testing. However, our Board has strongly stated that we will not base a teacher's pay upon student test performance on subjects that teacher has not taught.

We believe limited testing using a properly validated, administered test is an important tool for measuring student achievement and learning gains. A properly designed and administered test can help identify areas of weakness, and is an important tool for informing parents of a student's progress in mastering the content that a child will need to succeed in school, their careers, and their lives.

I have three children in public school. Please believe me when I tell you that I hear nightly about over-testing. I am also greatly disturbed over the loss of instructional time during testing season. Our Board recognizes that we have not gone far enough yet. Once we receive guidance from the Department of Education on the new law, we will work to further relieve the testing burden on our students and families, and we have told the Superintendent that we must find a way to keep teachers in the classroom teaching, and students learning, by hiring outside test proctors during test season so our teachers may remain in the classroom teaching.

Together, we have weathered storms before in public education. We have faced and met the test of vouchers, charter schools, student funding cuts, merit pay, crowded schools, even "New Math"! I could go on and on... We have survived, and thrived, because we understand the importance of a free, universal, high quality public education to our children, our community, and our future. With your help we will weather this latest storm and will come through stronger the ever. You need look no further than that statue beside of me to realize that we are, after all, the Top Producer of Successful Students in the nation!

Jenkins:

Thank you for coming this morning, and thank you for your commitment to public education. At this time I'd like to introduce Board Member Pam Gould to bring our morning together to a close with an inspiring example of the performing arts talent in our schools.

