

James Cain Editorial  
Sunday, February 21, 2016

## Port Huron Schools - State of the District 2016

This past week, Port Huron Schools hosted the first-ever State of the District address. I encourage you to view the presentation in its entirety on our PHS-TV, which includes Comcast channel 6, Port Huron Schools Vimeo.com webpage and our Port Huron Schools channel on EBW.tv

The purpose of the address was to engage our local political, business, nonprofit, education and some parent leaders in many of the real challenges and opportunities facing our district. I was appreciative of the strong turnout and interest in our organization. As a district of this size, it's imperative that we have a positive and supporting partnership with the community. We simply cannot survive as an organization on our own without the investment of our local entities and citizens. The reverse is also true because of the impact our organization has on St. Clair County as its second largest employer.

One of the priorities of Port Huron Schools since we began our turnaround efforts in July 2014, has been to engage with and partner our schools with local businesses. We currently have five pilots that are developing that process and system. It is critical that learning is relevant to the current workplace and done with the intent of establishing career goals, along with gaining fundamental knowledge and skills. We appreciate the opportunity to build partnerships, while promoting a college and career culture with local businesses, exposing students to career paths they may not have otherwise considered.

Some of the broad strokes of what was presented at the State of the District included establishing an understanding of the district's condition at the start of the turnaround, and what our students and families are facing personally. Students receiving state and federal assistance across our district is 46%, and at our highest building, it is 87%. That's a very real challenge that shows the need for establishing education in our region that attracts employers and businesses, while training a ready workforce.

The district presented its efforts to establish a strategy for success with an aligned vision, mission and "Blueprint." These have already had an impact on some of the progress our schools are making academically, with Holland Woods and Central Middle Schools both being removed from the MDE's Priority Schools list in the past year. It's been a tremendous team effort and *everyone* at those schools and the support team they have worked with at the district level deserve praise.

The presentation also included the facets of the May 3, 2016 two-proposal Bond. The bond's goal is to continue to support this progress and in fact, speed its benefit to our community by addressing facilities at 17 of our school buildings, bringing new academic programming along with enhanced safety and security for our students.

"So how can I help?," many people have asked me. It's simple. 1. Advocate: Through actions and words, please speak positively on behalf of Port Huron Schools and the change being done. 2. Innovate: Get involved, be active in our schools, reach out to find out how you can specifically help at the building or classroom level. 3. Educate: Tell your customers, co-workers,

employees, colleagues, friends and community members the value of a robust, thriving and relevant school district for Port Huron.

Go to [phsbtt.com](http://phsbtt.com) for more information about the current plans for Port Huron Schools. Please visit our district resources of [phasd.us](http://phasd.us) and our social media to learn about the positive progress our educators, students and families are making everyday.