

Fostoria, Ohio

**TUESDAY**

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FOSTORIA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

## Forum builds on the positive

### Appreciative Inquiry takes back door to improvement

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

Fostoria Community Schools are sponsoring a community forum on Saturday to gather stories from parents, students and employees on effective practices in the district and how to build on those positives, Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman, FCS superintendent, said.

"Everybody's voice is important," Lemmerman said. "That's what I like about this so much. ... Everyone will have an opportunity to speak."

The two-hour forum, starting at 9 a.m. in the cafeteria at Fostoria High School, will be training for a three-day summit scheduled June 7-9 at a location to be determined. One of the goals of this weekend's forum, moderated by Bob and Megan Tschannen-Moran, is for participants to have an understanding of the appreciative inquiry process — to be used more extensively during the June summit.

"Appreciative Inquiry (AI) works to get people talking to each other in positive, creative, open, honest, clean, and benevolent ways," states the Web site for the Tschannen-Morans' business, Lifetrek Coaching International. "By

focusing primarily on the things that work well in life and work, AI breaks through not only the defensiveness but also the silos that so many of us experience on a daily basis."

AI, a method developed by Case Western Reserve University, is a fancy name for prompting people to talk about successes rather than failures and is a direct contrast to the standard improvement tactics, Bob Tschannen-Moran said.

A problem-solving approach looks at the worst things in an organization in order to do less of them," Tschannen-Moran said. "I'm not saying we don't need to fix problems. ... AI tries to fix problems by going at the back door. Not what's wrong with you, but what's right with you."

Lifetrek "has incorporated Dr. (Megan) Tschannen-Moran's research into a dynamic and positive process for organizational change," according to a press release from FCS.

Lifetrek, based out of Williamsburg, Va., has been working with FCS for about a year, Tschannen-Moran said.

In a survey given to all faculty in the district, Lifetrek identified seven common values that the district should focus on expanding.

The values are: student learning and success; a sustained focus on improvement; mutual respect and trust; honest, constructive communication; active and productive collaboration; balance between life and work; and community pride and support.

The process is designed to put some "flesh on the bone of these values," Tschannen-Moran said, and to enthruse about a dozen people, a planning committee, to lead the preparation for the summit in June. In addition to group and one-on-one discussions, a video, "Celebrate What's Right With The World," will be shown to those in attendance. The film features photography from Dewitt Jones, a 20-year veteran of National Geographic magazine.

Lemmerman contacted Lifetrek after reading Megan Tschannen-Moran's book "Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools," and was so enamored with it she gave copies to all the administrators of FCS, according to Tschannen-Moran.

The husband and wife team have worked with schools extensively, especially since the publishing of Megan Tschannen-Moran's book, and in a variety of ways.

"The goal is not to feel good," Tschannen-Moran said, adding positivity would be a welcome side effect.

"Ultimately the goal is to make provocative propositions as to how Fostoria Schools can change things to get even more of the good stuff."



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## A new way of working together

### FCS' community forum is precursor for local policy-making summit

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

More than 25 people have signed up to be a part of the planning committee for Fostoria Community Schools' June summit, Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman said, which was about double the turnout for Saturday's community forum.

"We were hoping for more parents and students," Lemmerman said of the forum's attendance, "but when you start a new way of working together, you have to start somewhere."

The summit, June 7-9, will address the strengths of FCS and, with more time to work, will design action steps to facilitate improvement on these strong points through the planning committee.

"This experience is the heart," Megan Tschannen Moran, one of the forum's moderators, said to Saturday's group of about a dozen people. "(You are) the kernel of the seed which will grow and bloom."

Even though the turnout barely filled a table at the Fostoria High School cafeteria, Bob Tschannen Moran said, he would have been happy if only four people showed up — so long as they were filled with hope and energy.

"No one was required to be

here," Bob Tschannen Moran said, adding the people here in this room would help provide for the June summit to host 400 citizens.

The Saturday forum wrapped up two days and 10 meetings, with students, teachers, administrators and the school board, for the Tschannen Morans, a couple from Lifetrek Coaching based in Williamsburg, Va.

During the group discussion, several common themes were presented by the community members in attendance.

In three separate groups, citizens and those affiliated with the school, including Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman and board of education member Pete Cardenas, mentioned achieving an excellent rating and emphasizing mutual respect for students and faculty.

Others, such as FHS teacher Jim Clevenger, said focusing on the pride of overcoming some of the hardships of the region creates positive experiences.

"We are in a situation where our unique problems ... are also great assets," Clevenger said.

A video by National Geographic photographer Dewitt Jones, which stressed the importance of positive thinking, was shown to the groups.



RUSS ZIMMER / Review Times

**DIANE MASEL** and **Pete Cardenas** place dots next to themes prepared by groups at Saturday's forum, addressing what is working at Fostoria Community Schools. Hosted in the cafeteria at Fostoria High School, the event — which attracted about a dozen people — is a precursor to a policy-making summit in June.

"By celebrating what's right," Megan Tschannen Moran quoted Jones afterwards, "we find the energy to fix what's wrong."

Four students from grade 5 signed up to be a part of the planning committee, something which may be surprising but, in actuality, may benefit the group perspective of the committee, Megan Tschannen Moran said.

She showed a video taken at Riley Elementary of fifth-grader Darryl Johnston, where he named several themes he and his classmates came up with

— many which the Saturday group shared.

At the end of the session, dots were placed by participants next to themes that resonated most with them, the top vote getter seemed to be "being excellent schools," which is attainable through the process which will culminate in June's summit, Bob Tschannen Moran said.

"We have evident, in this very room, what we need for Fostoria schools to excel in every way," he said.



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## EDUCATION

# Topics trimmed for local summit

## Strategic planning in the works now for June meeting

By **RUSS ZIMMER**

STAFF WRITER

The dates and themes have been established for an Fostoria Community Schools education summit, which organizers hope will attract more than 300 citizens in June.

The planning committee met Saturday at Fostoria Middle School to narrow the discussion focus to three themes: community involvement, student achievement and promoting a positive environment.

Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman, FCS superintendent, said people who still want to give input on the planning committee can come to the next meeting April 22, where the themes may be narrowed down even more.

The 35-member planning committee will be drafting a strategic plan in advance of the three-day summit scheduled June 8 to 10 at a location to be determined, she said.

Preparation for the summit as well as the event itself, are being facilitated by Bob Tschannen-Moran, along with his wife Megan, of LifeTrek Coaching International.

The couple uses a process known as appreciative inquiry to accentuate the positives of an organization in order to progress.

"Appreciative Inquiry (AI) works to get people talking to each other in positive, creative, open, honest, clean, and benevolent ways," states the Web site for LifeTrek Coaching International.

"By focusing primarily on the things that work well in life and work, AI breaks through not only the defensiveness but also the silos that so many of us experience on a daily basis."

AI, a method developed by Case Western Reserve University, is a fancy name for prompting people to talk about successes rather than failures and is a direct contrast to the standard improvement tactics, Tschannen-Moran previously said.

Among those in attendance on Saturday were students, parents, administrators and staff — all of whom contributed to a "pretty lively and productive discussion," Lemmerman said.

This is the second meeting related to preparation for the June summit.

Both meetings concentrated on presenting the appreciative inquiry process in addition to gathering initial discussion plans.

On Feb. 25, about a dozen people participated in a preliminary forum, which marked the end of several meetings with the community, students and staff attended by the Tschannen-Morans.

Founded in 1998 by the Tschannen-Morans, LifeTrek Coaching has worked with hundreds of individuals, companies, schools, non-profit organizations and churches, according to the Web site.

"This experience, combined with specific training in the coach approach to human and organizational development," the Web site continues, "makes us the right choice for those who want to move forward quickly and successfully in the direction of their dreams."

Bob Tschannen-Moran served as a pastor for more than 20 years before beginning LifeTrek Coaching. Megan Tschannen-Moran has a doctoral degree in educational administration and is the author of "Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools."

## School summit promises to be life-affirming

### Event to yield five-year plan

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

Strategic planning strikes most people, at the very least, as a boring activity, but Fostoria Community Schools hopes to turn that belief on its head, a facilitator for the district's upcoming summit said.

"People will be doing skits, they will be creating murals and playing musical instruments," Bob Tschannen-Moran, founder and president of LifeFreak Coaching International, said. "It's going to be crazy."

FCS is sponsoring a summit June 8-10, which aims to elicit positive stories from Fostorians about their experiences with the district.

Once those stories are shared in a one-on-one fashion, Tschannen-Moran said, small groups will form and that is when the forum gets really interesting.

The small groups will be provided materials and tools then encouraged to relay those stories, experiences and common ideas with the entire summit in a dramatic and unique way, he added.

"The process is creative. It's dynamic. It's fun — there is a lot of laughter," Tschannen-Moran, who will be guiding the summit's discussion and activities, said.

A five-year plan will be crafted and centered around three themes — student success, mutual trust and respect and community pride — decided on by the summit's planning committee, which meets for the last time Saturday morning, Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman, FCS superintendent, said.

The summit relies loosely on the structure of the appreciative inquiry process. By focusing on the aspects of the situation which are already positive, you can build and improve on that foundation, Lemmerman has said previously.

The suggestions of the summit will be taken seriously, she said, but, as with every public school plan, it is subject to change based on possible future state funding decreases.

"We might have to be creative

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## School

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in finding ways to make things work," Lemmerman said.

Being at the summit is the first step towards improving the schools, Tschannen-Moran said, because people have to learn to work and face their community challenges together.

"The summit is not the prelude to the real stuff," Tschannen-Moran said. "It is the real stuff."

Lemmerman said 50 people have reserved seats for the summit at the Fostoria High School, where food and child care will be pro-

vided free-of-charge, and there is room for at least 100 more.

People can attend one day or all three — Thursday 1-8 p.m., Friday 9-4 p.m. and Saturday 9-3 p.m. — whatever their schedule allows, she added.

While the district would prefer people to R.S.V.P. — either online at [fostoriaschools.org](http://fostoriaschools.org) or by phone, (419) 436-4100 — Lemmerman said, if someone's schedule changes and allows them to attend, they are welcome to do so.

Everyone who cares about the state of the city's public schools should make time for the summit, if their schedule will allow it, Lemmerman said, otherwise they may regret later not being part of something special.

"People increase their confidence for change and their belief in what they are building when they are part of it," she said.

Tschannen-Moran, who will be at all three days along with wife Megan and facilitator Erika Jackson, said though the activities are fun — a scaled-down train and tracks will be part of the indoor event — serious work will be accomplished.

"The mark of a successful summit is not just that you have a five-year plan on a piece of paper. ... Five-year plans can gather dust pretty quickly," Tschannen-Moran said. "The difference is that the five-year plan grows out of an incredible, positive, life-affirming experience with each other."



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'ALL ABOARD OUR CELEBRATION EXPRESS'

## School summit points direction for district

### Three-day event results in ambitious slate of objectives

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

"The only way to predict the future is to create it," Bob Tschannen-Moran, facilitator at the Fostoria Community Schools summit, said, quoting Peter Drucker, a business management guru "and that's what we are doing here."

The summit, "All Aboard Our Celebration Express," wrapped up Sunday after three days, or about 20 hours, of collaboration between all segments of Fostoria.

A miniature rail system was laid down the main corridor of Fostoria High School, complete with stations — representing each of the school buildings — and cars, which were marked with specific programs and meetings, for the next five years.

Poverty awareness, university mentoring and adopt-a-student were just three of the many programs the groups had committed to sponsoring during the coming years — an admittedly ambitious schedule of objectives.

"There is no way all this stuff can get done by telling Dr. (Cynthia) Lemmerman (FCS superintendent) to do it, or by telling

the school board to do it," Tschannen-Moran, founder and president of LifeTrek Coaching International, said, adding the entire community would have to share in the responsibilities.

The summit began with participants breaking into pairs to share positive, personal stories about their experience with FCS, Megan Tschannen-Moran, facilitator and educational author, said.

Next, the pairs joined together with other couples into small groups to retell their stories and look for similar themes.

The small groups, or "innovation teams," then formulated provocative propositions, Megan Tschannen-Moran said, which were goals — no matter how unlikely or outlandish — that participants would like to see accomplished.

"We can dream big," she said at the conclusion of the summit. "You have to have some crazy ideas to get to the good ones."

The propositions were transformed into skits, which often featured lavish costumes and musical numbers, and presented to the entire forum in the Performing Arts Center in Fostoria High School, she continued.

The plans were refined and the scheduling was illustrated in the train system theme so that summit members could determine whether or not they were overloading a year or a month with too many activities, Megan Tschannen-Moran said.

The appreciative inquiry process — focusing on improvement through the sharing of a positive common experience — is so revolutionary, Lemmerman said, that she, the Fostoria Board of Education and the Tschannen-Morans have been invited to present the summit method to the Ohio School Boards Association's Capital Conference in November.

"We're setting the road for school districts across the state of Ohio," Lemmerman said.

This is the first school system the Tschannen-Morans have put their appreciative inquiry training to use and Megan said the powerful ideas she saw develop during the course of the summit, will be visible in the community by the start of next school year.

"One of the things I've been most impressed with is how deeply people care about the schools," she said, "and that is a tremendous resource and strength."

## Summit strategies to start

### Town hall meetings to gather public input

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

Though the Fostoria Community Schools' summit ended last weekend, planning continues for the implementation of its policy decisions.

Three subcommittees were formed, one for each of the summit's themes: student achievement and success, trust and respect and community pride.

At Field Elementary, the planning committee — charged with the trust and respect theme — will meet to discuss the specifics of a series of town hall meetings. Deb Ward, vice president of the Fostoria Board of Education, said.

The town hall meetings are to gather and disseminate information from the public, Ward said, adding the events are scheduled for October, January and April.

Decisions will be made in the coming weeks as to an exact date, location and host for the first event, she said.

Dr. Cythnia Lemmerman, FCS superintendent, said the other groups will be meeting to tackle similar questions for their activities.

"The subcommittees are looking at making sure time lines fit, making sure resources fit," Lemmerman said, "and that there are some redundancies."

## FOSTORIA SCHOOLS

The summit was a unique experience and the planning during the new era should reflect that, she wrote in her report to the board.

"(The activities) must not be business as usual," she wrote. "They must demonstrate enactments of the dreams and designs expressed during the summit and mapped out in the action plans and timelines."

Those who were unable to attend the summit are still welcome to participate in the process, Lemmerman said, and may contact her office or any FCS staff member for further details.

Interested parties may also see a summit review online at [www.celebrateschools.com](http://www.celebrateschools.com), she added.

In other board news, FCS treasurer Jane Fruth said the district's true cash report was on track with estimates and that the final report will be presented to the board during a special meeting June 26.

The numbers, which will be more accurate after the final payroll period of this fiscal year is complete, must be approved by the board, she said.

Ward announced lunch prices will be raised 25 cents next year. According to her report, prices have not risen in three years.

Also at the June 26 meeting, Lemmerman said personnel will be hired to fill some of the 10 instructional vacancies in the district.

She also announced the rescheduling of the next Building and Grounds Committee meeting from July 3 to July 5.



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FOSTORIA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

## Educators challenged to dream big

### Summit philosophies to be implemented this school year

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

The staff of Fostoria Community Schools gathered this morning to discuss the implementation of programs and philosophies created during a summit in June.

An appreciative inquiry summit, which used the common themes of positive experiences with the district to provide direction for future objectives, asked participants to dream big and this year, FCS superintendent Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman said, the community will begin to see the benefits.

"Those provocative provisions," she said, "are going to come alive this year."

Updates from each of the subcommittees were given to the faculty, which includes 20 new educators, outlining the school year plans for each group.

Fostoria High School librarian Connie Carnicom, speaking on behalf of the student achievement and success group, said a primary goal of her subcommittee was to make assessment information more readily available to students and teachers.

Another challenge ahead was to harness technology already at the schools to help students master the curriculum.

Adopting one or more students for special attention will help make a difference in their mastering of instruction, FHS principal Jude Meyers, chair of the trust and respect subcommittee, said this morning.

It would be easy to work extra with students who are already excelling, he said, but perhaps the bolder choice would involve students who have to perform ideally.

"Those are the young men and women we need to reach out to," Meyers said.

Georgia Adams of Field Elementary said the community pride and involvement subcommittee would seek to change the outside image of Fostoria through a heightened showcasing of the arts.

She suggested using the Performance Arts Center at FHS for live plays and local

bands as well as murals celebrating the history of Fostoria, specifically the contributions of Fostoria's variety of cultural backgrounds, to tout the diversity of the city.

FCS is improving year-after-year, Lemmerman said, but gaps in different student groups need to be closed.

Though the state report card designated the district as continuous improvement, the same ranking as last year, the marks belie the strides which have been made. If one additional student scored better on one of the state tests, she said, FCS would have earned an effective rating.

The convocation guest speaker peppered wisdom and praise into his speech along with personal stories and proverbial tales.

Dr. Julian Earls, executive in residence at the Nance College of Business Administration, called teaching "the most noblest of professions."

He had the audience laughing one second while the next moment the crowd would be silent absorbing knowledge from a man who holds eight degrees.

Earls said the summit was inspiring to him because of the dedication faculty mem-

bers were showing to their students and community.

When you rent a car, Earls said, it is not commonplace to wash it before its return. However, when you purchase a car, he continued, it is not unusual to take special care.

"The message is how different you treat things when they belong to you," Earls said, "and when they belong to someone else."

Earls said he was proud to speak at the FCS convocation, despite the fact the bulk of his training lies in physics, because of the undefined effect interaction can have on an individual's development.

"Science cannot reduce that to arithmetic," he said.

Educators who take the extra step for their students can have a profound long-lasting effect on their students, Earls said, which is something that should never be taken for granted.

"When you care about the students," he said, "they will remember you for a lifetime."



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## EDUCATION

# Grandparents organize to ensure academic success here

### Older generation being recruited for school projects

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

The theory that everyone has a stake in the city's academic success is reflected in the establishment of a new support organization for Fostoria Community Schools.

Gloria Wolph, founder of the Grandparents' Organization, said the purpose of the group — which has its first official meeting this week — is to recruit the older generations for a myriad of school projects.

Tutoring and mentoring students of all ages is a primary focus, she said, but any involvement is welcome.

"Sometimes all (students) need is an ear to listen and some encouragement," Wolph said, "and we will make sure they get plenty of that."

The organization, which will convene at the Holmes Administration Office at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, has its roots in a June summit which analyzed ways to improve the district by focusing on positive aspects, she said.

Wolph was actively involved in "All Aboard the Celebration Express" as a member of the community pride and involvement subcommittee.

"It's so important for young kids in the community to know there are people who care about their success," she said.

At their initial open meeting, Wolph said, attendees will participate in a brainstorming session to formulate ideas on future plans, such as a dance or bake sale.

The organization will have leadership installed — a president, vice president and treasurer — to centralize the group's activities, according to Linda Anderson, Fostoria Board of Education and member of the community pride and involvement subcommittee.

Anderson said the group will provide an outlet for grandparents of children in FCS buildings as well as those without relatives in the school system.

"It takes a village to raise a child," she said, borrowing a phrase from the familiar African proverb.

More than 4 million children in the country live in a home owned by a grandparent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, which Wolph points to as important fact.

"The grandparents are having to take over the role of some parents, for whatever reason," she said.

Often, FCS Superintendent Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman said, parents want to be more involved with their child's schoolwork and activities, but do not have the time to devote.

"This group," she said, referring to grandparents, "has the time. If they are retired, where they can be available on a regular basis."

The dynamics of public education have changed in the generations since some of today's grandparents had children in school or were attending class themselves, she said.

The organization could serve as a learning experience for its members, Lemmerman added.

Wolph said she also believes the arrangement would be beneficial for both parties.

"This could be a rewarding experience for any grandparent involved," she said.



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FOSTORIA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

## BOE slates town hall meetings

### Forums outgrowth of summer summit

Fostoria Community Schools' June summit focused on the district's positive aspect, and next month residents can continue that theme or go down a different path.

Deb Ward, vice president of the Fostoria Board of Education, announced FCS' intention to host the first of three town hall meetings Oct. 12 to promote an open dialogue about the district's direction.

"We want people to have a voice and be heard," Ward said at Monday's board meeting.

Ward, a member of the trust and respect

committee during the summer's "All Aboard the Celebration Express" forum, said the meetings aim to give a feeling of ownership of the public schools to the community.

Tentatively, she added, the hour-long meeting will be at the Geary Family YMCA at 6:30 p.m.

Other subcommittees, including the community pride and involvement group, have also been active, FCS Superintendent Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman said, such as exploring possible locations for student murals.

Board President Linda Anderson said the Grandparents Association has been recruiting at Fostoria Redmen varsity football games and will be hosting its initial meeting Thursday at Holmes Administration Building at 5:30 p.m.

Anderson and Lemmerman indicated the district is moving ahead with its search for a treasurer — a position currently occupied in the interim by Tina Peyton — during a series of closed door meetings beginning tonight and continuing through next week.

The board will be meeting with a representative of the Ohio School Boards Association, which FCS has contracted to assist in the search and vetting of the candidates.

By the end of the calendar year, the district hopes to have a treasurer in place, school officials have previously said.

Anderson presented the other members of the board with some literature from the OSBA on grassroots lobbying ideas.

One suggestion Anderson brought to the board was a candidate forum, where

local and state politicians would appear for a question-and-answer session in Fostoria.

Board member Pete Cardenas said the process would have to be expedited if the district wanted to host any candidates before the elections in November.

"There are a lot of critical issues here which affect schools," he said.

Anderson said the district may want to partner with one or more neighboring school systems to share the burden and make their forum more attractive to political hopefuls and incumbents.





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FOSTORIA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

## District to praise the fine arts

### Thursday event to emphasize students' creative skills

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

The arts will be at the forefront of Fostoria Community Schools Thursday evening as student masterpieces will be on display before a town hall meeting.

The first of three town hall meetings for residents to discuss what works in the city's public education system will take place at the Geary Family YMCA, according to Superintendent Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman.

"We are hoping to get some information on what we do best in the fine arts, and what we need to continue and grow," Lemmerman said.

The doors will open to the second floor presidential room at 6:15 p.m. for community members to browse through student artwork, she added.

The visual arts will be followed by music in the form of a short performance by students from the Fostoria High School choir, she said.

From that point, attendees will hear a short overview of FCS's June summit titled "All Aboard the Celebration Express."

The summit centered on the theme of appreciative inquiry, an improvement method which focuses on positives.

As in June, participants will gather in small groups and recall stories or experiences related to FCS, but with a special emphasis on the arts, Lemmerman said.

Some of the efforts made to highlight and finance extra-curricular art programs goes unnoticed, she said.

The music boosters, for instance, raise money to supply the marching band and choir with uniforms and robes, she continued.

"Some of these secrets don't get talked about enough," she said. "If we don't have those conversations, our community and our parents won't know what's available."

The small groups will combine into large groups where the stories and experiences will be retold, Lemmerman said.

At the end of the meeting, community members will fill

**"Some of these secrets don't get talked about enough. If we don't have those conversations, our community and our parents won't know what's available."**

— DR. CYNTHIA LEMMERMAN,  
SUPERINTENDENT

out a short written evaluation for the Trust and Respect committee, a group formed from the summit which is responsible for the town hall meetings.

The feedback will be used to direct the two remaining meetings, Lemmerman added.

Gus Sierra, FCS parent, will be moderating and Bob and Megan Tschannen-Moran, appreciative inquiry coaches, will also be present.

The Tschannen-Morans will be in the district through the end of the week, Lemmerman said, guiding faculty through the reaffirmation process.

On Friday, the coaches will lead the Freshman Learning Community, an eighth-to-ninth grade transition program, in a "mini summit," Lemmerman said.



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## EDUCATION

# District brainstorms expanding programs

## More town hall meetings set to involve community

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

Despite the financial climate, students would be better served by expanding their artistic educational opportunities, participants at a public education town hall meeting said.

After a group brainstorming session during Thursday's gathering of the two dozen participants, ideas were presented for possible implementation into Fostoria Community Schools.

"We wanted to see all the arts in (grades) K through 12," Pam Berrier, a third-grade teacher at Field, said, representing her group, "not to see them cut, not to see them downsized because of money."

Other groups echoed the desire to see art programs expand into new territories, including extracurriculars and coursework.

Additional ideas floated included graphic design classes and a closed-circuit television news segment produced by elementary students.

The town hall meeting was the first of a series of three intended to further the district's goal of community involvement and pride in the local public education system.

A summit in June was the jumping-off point for a series of policy and attitude changes the district intends to adopt with the objective of higher test scores in mind.

Using the appreciative inquiry process, where strengths become the basis and improvement is marked by furthering those positives, FCS wants to stress student achievement through internal and external measures.

One of the pillars of the June summit was empowering the community to have a stake in the future of the district and Jamie Johnson, FCS parent, wants to pass some of that power to the students.

Parents and their children may have divergent beliefs of what is cool and

## District

Continued from page A1

what is not, Johnson said, and students in musical organizations would likely enjoy performing more contemporary numbers.

"Let them have more influence with the music they play," Johnson suggested on behalf of his group.

The brainstorming session was fueled by personal experiences in the local schools, in accordance with the appreciative inquiry process, to give their aspirations a feeling of greater possibility. Megan Tschannen-Moran, coach

for the AI process, said.

"That gives us a basis," she said. "We're not starting from scratch."

Tschannen-Moran and her husband, Bob, said some of the ideas were already sparking interest and would be gathered and referred back to the Trust and Respect committee for further refining.

The Tschannen-Morans are conducting another scaled down version of the AI process with the Freshman Learning Community at Fostoria High School today.

Feedback received at both Thursday's town hall meeting and today's FLC event will determine the shape and scope of future activities, Bob Tschannen-Moran said.

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FOSTORIA BOE

## FCS garners state kudos

### District recognized for improvement plan

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

Fostoria Community Schools put student achievement first, an Ohio Department of Education official said, and has been vigilant in finding creative funding methods for its programs.

The district was given the Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement award for its success by Warren Fauver, director of Wood County Community Learning Centers.

"By far," Fauver said at Monday night's meeting of the Fostoria Board of Education, "Fostoria integrated the steps and activities into their school improvement plan most effectively."

The OCCMSI is a joint project, which seeks to eliminate learning barriers both in and out of the classroom, between Ohio State University, the ODE and six school districts across the state.

Fauver said the district demonstrated its commitment to helping students from all income levels learn life skills by rolling those ideas into its continuous improvement plan.

A number of grant's were, and are being, applied for to cover the costs of programs, which makes them available to any student in need, he said.

One such program — Project SUCCESS, which offers after-school tutelage and recreation — has had an enviable turnout.

"That's a pretty remarkable Project SUCCESS when you can have students want to stay after school for more (education)," Fauver said.

Dr. Connie Dorr, assistant

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superintendent for FCS, said because of help from the mental health boards of Hancock, Wood and Seneca counties, the district will be able to house a social worker and therapist to serve student and family needs during the 2007-2008 school year.

In other business, Pete Cardenas, board member, said paint color schemes for Memorial Stadium were proposed by Rod Echelberry, buildings, grounds and transportation supervisor, during a committee meeting last week.

Echelberry briefed board members Monday night on the progress of this year's roof replacement at Fostoria High School, which he said was nearly complete.

Deb Ward, board vice president, said the Trust and Respect committee, formed out of the district's June summit, will be evaluating the Oct. 12 town hall meeting on Thursday.



# Fostoria Community Schools paving the path to excellence

## District to implement attitude adjustment in an attempt to improve students' test scores

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

Fostoria Public Schools has turned to an attitude adjustment to improve lagging test scores.

By employing the appreciative inquiry process in 2006, the district wants everybody to concentrate on using their strengths to pave the path to excellence.

Part of that three-year transformation requires a change in communication districtwide.

The Fostoria Board of Education, along with the district administration, took part in a more than three-hour training course on non-violent communication last month.

By considering another person's feelings and needs before one opens their mouth, they can avoid communication which damages trust and respect, according to Bob Tschannen-Moran, founder of LifeTrek Coaching, which has contracted with the district to provide guidance during the process.

The implementation of the method is a direct outgrowth of an FCS summit in June to solicit positive experiences from the community.

Using the information gathered during the three-day summit, the board laid out three objectives each with its own subcommittee: trust and respect, student achievement and community pride and involvement.

Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman, FCS superintendent, said the method of non-violent communication would be transferred to the entire staff during a recent meeting.

"The bus drivers can hit it off

first thing in the morning," she said.

Eventually the goal is to filter non-violent communication down to the student body, but how to do so is still being debated, Lemmerman said.

Students may become exposed to the method through lessons after school or during recess time, Lemmerman said.

Other initiatives from the summit, include a series of town hall meetings, which are intended to obtain the community's input on school issues, and the consolidation of the various parent teacher organizations.

Lemmerman said one PTO to cover the entire school district may be in place by the start of next school year.

The individual organizations will continue to function on separate ideas, but will also come together on big agenda items, she said.

"We want the involvement, we encourage it," Lemmerman said.

The district, which has struggled to perform well on state assessments, will have a more difficult road ahead on one measurement test.

This year, the Adequate Yearly Progress indicator, part of the No Child Left Behind Act, will increase the cumulative scores necessary for passage, Dr. Connie Dorr, assistant superintendent, said.

The AYP measures the performance of several student subgroups, divided upon such characteristics as race and income level.

If any school in the district fails on any of the subgroups it qualifies in, the entire district is ruled to have not met the AYP standard.

FCS, which has never met AYP, now faces a higher standard.

"It certainly will challenge us," Dorr said.

The district is actively analyzing data to target students in need of intervention in any subject area, and programs are in place to provide extra assistance, Dorr added.



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## EDUCATION

# Giving peace a chance

## FCS staff attend seminar on non-violent communication

By **RUSS ZIMMER**  
STAFF WRITER

Staff at Fostoria Community Schools participated in a day-long seminar to improve communication with the ultimate goal of raising student achievement.

More than 300 employees of all of the FCS school buildings, central offices and the bus garage were exposed to the method of non-violent communication Friday.

By considering another person's feelings and needs before you open your mouth, you can avoid a conversation which damages trust and respect, according to Bob Tschannen-Moran, founder of LifeTrek Coaching, which has contracted with the district to provide guidance.

Tschannen-Moran said the biggest hurdle school personnel were mentioning was taking the time necessary for the non-violent method when there are only so many hours in the school day to teach the curriculum.

"I hope we end up with some people who are interested enough in this process to want to learn more," he said. "We don't need to persuade 300 people."

In the clutches of an enthusiastic handful, the theory would spread to others, Tschannen-Moran added.

When dealing with an unruly student, he said disciplining them in the standard fashion may work — initially.

"But what does the kid do tomorrow?" Tschannen-Moran asked. "And the next day? And the day after that?"

Erika Hossler, a first-grade teacher at Longfellow Elementary, said she believes the method is worthy of the time investment.

"I think we need a more effective way of communicating," she said.

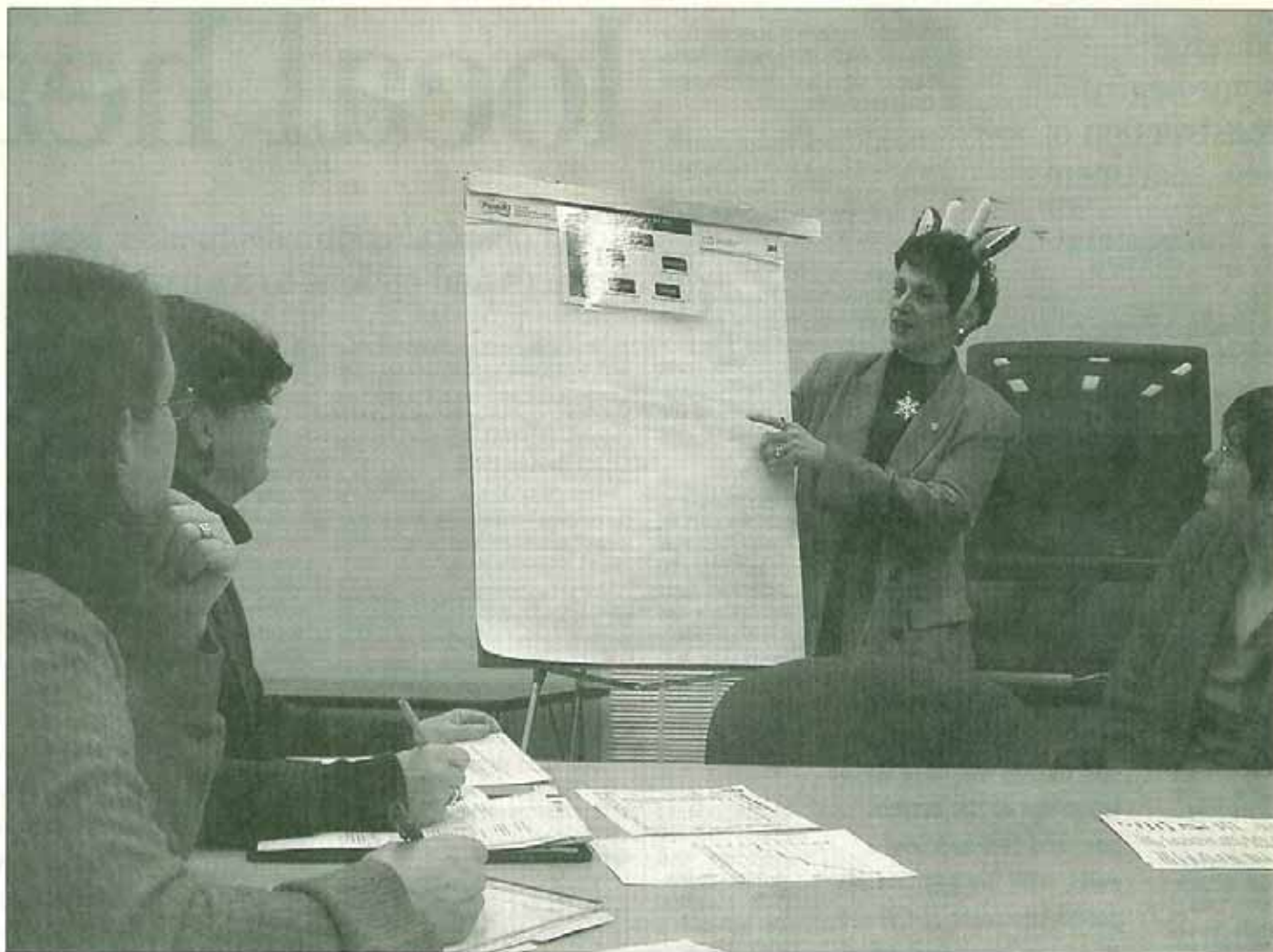
The seminar was an outgrowth of a unique concept framed in a three-day conference in the summer of 2006.

The theme of trust and respect — also the moniker of the subcommittee responsible for Friday's event — was one of three pre-eminent goals established by participants in the district's June appreciative inquiry summit.

The appreciative inquiry process seeks to provide marked improvement by concentrating on an organization's strengths.

The Fostoria Board of Education and district administration was trained in non-violent communication during a special board meeting last month so the officials could assist the facilitators during Friday's seminar.





RUSS ZIMMER / the Review Times

Dr. Cynthia Lemmerman, superintendent of Fostoria Community Schools, goes over plans from the appreciative inquiry summit. The giraffe ears she's wearing symbolize the process's suggestion of listening in a productive, empathetic way.

*Using the information gathered during the three-day summit, the board laid out three objectives each with its own subcommittee: trust and respect, student achievement and community pride and involvement.*