

Meet the Dover Board of Education! John Maxwell

(continued from front panel)

"We're big fans in our family of the band program," he said. "All three of our children have been involved in the Marching Tornadoes.

"When I moved to town and saw there was a school system in Tuscarawas County that had an orchestra program, I was floored by that. It's just not something you see in an area like this, typically. We're so proud of that program. We've got so many children that are in the orchestra program, let alone the band and the vocal music programs and other fine arts. It's just an amazing program."

Maxwell doesn't see having children in the district as necessary for serving on the school board, but it has its advantages.

"The nice thing about having children go through the system," he said, "and having one still in the system, is it gives me the opportunity to know other students and their teachers as well as from a parent's perspective, and to be able to see what kind of impacts the decisions the board makes for students, staff and the schools in general."

When it comes to the current situation the district and community find themselves in, Maxwell is sympathetic to those who don't want to pay more in taxes.

"Nobody wants to pay higher taxes," he said. "That's true of anybody who works for the school system and even the board members. The unique thing about school taxes is it's one of the few situations where the voter actually gets to decide if they want to tax themselves, or not.

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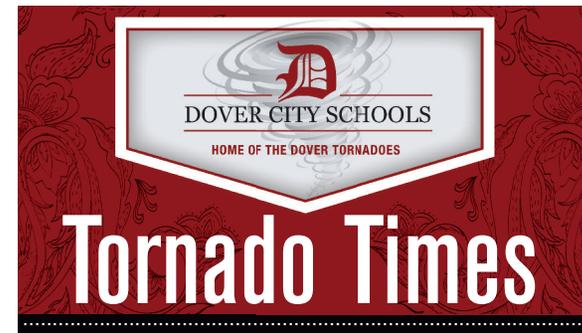
"There's really no greater investment that you could make though, than the future of our children in this community. What we're trying to do as a school system is help our children succeed in the future no matter what their goals in life are; whether it be a college or professional career, or in a different career path. We want to make sure we give them the ability to succeed here while they are students and children here in the district."



Maxwell brings his experience as an attorney to the table when looking over the district's fiscal situation. He sees that the loss of state funding from a variety of angles has affected the budget in a significant way.

"I've been practicing law since 1994," he said. "It gives me a certain unique perspective on issues that arise, but I learn from the other people on the board and one thing we all know is we're here to help with advice and governance, but we rely heavily upon the professionals that we hire.

The administrative staff and the teaching staff, they're the ones who are trained in education and trained in administration and curriculum and they give us a lot of guidance and advice. We trust them to make the right decisions."



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After growing up in Holmes County and attending Notre Dame as an undergrad and The Ohio State University for law school, John Maxwell spent two years working for a federal judge in Indiana. It was then that he and his wife moved back to Ohio, and to Tuscarawas County.

But it wasn't until the time came to decide where to live and send their children to school that the couple made the decision to move to Dover.

"This is a fantastic community," said Maxwell. "When we first moved to Tuscarawas County, we weren't from the area and we lived in a neighboring city for several years. When it was time to buy a new house and the family was getting larger, we immediately zeroed in on Dover.

"We were really happy with the school system and happy with the community as a whole. We just knew it was the place where we wanted to raise our children."

Having served on the school board since 2012, Maxwell has seen two of his children graduate from Dover High School and enroll at Ohio State, while another is a junior at Dover.

Aside from typical areas of education that include Math, Science and Language Arts, the Maxwell family has excelled in the arts, as well.

(continued inside)

Dover Preschool Sets Foundation of Learning

The Dover City Schools preschool program, held at Dover South Elementary and recognized by the Ohio Department of Education with a Step Up to Quality five-star quality rating, has morning and afternoon sessions Tuesday-Friday.

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There are 16 students in each class, and the children have a variety of needs and backgrounds. The goal is to have each student make measurable progress and be ready for kindergarten.

"I think (parents) are very happy with the program," said teacher Jessica Bellinski. "They see that growth at home, too."

Limbaugh has been teaching preschool in the district for 20 years, while Bellinski has been teaching preschool for four. In Limbaugh's time, preschool has changed quite a bit. The program was originally a special education class for preschool-aged children.

"It has improved over the years," Limbaugh said. "Jessica and I both have master's degrees in early child education, which also helps make it a strong program."

One key to their success is the ability to work with children ranging from 3- to 5-years old, all entering the program with different development needs.

"We really have to differentiate our instruction in a way that helps each child make measurable progress throughout the school year," said Bellinski, "and also grow socially and emotionally. The growth that we see in a year in so many of these kids is huge.

"Transitioning from leaving their parents – with drop off and crying at the beginning of the year – and seeing how

they develop socially and academically; it's amazing."

The strides made throughout a school year are celebrated by students, parents and teachers, alike.

"It's fun when you have a parent whose child was not speaking at all," said Limbaugh, "and then they start talking and they say to us, 'Why did we want them to talk?' It's kind of a joke because now they won't stop talking."

And the end of winter signals a favorite time of year for Limbaugh.



"I like when spring comes because we tend to be inside in the winter," she said. "And when spring finally comes for us, and we get outside, you see huge growth. Especially with language."

"I can take them outside and hear them talk more in the 10 minutes we're outside than the two hours we're in the classroom. It's always fun to see (that growth)."

