



## *Perry Community School District*

January 5, 2026

### **Reflections**

Dear Perry Bluejay Board, Cabinet, and Staff,

Since 1979, I have had the privilege of serving in the most important profession—public education. Over the past 46 years, I have been blessed to serve as a teacher, coach, principal, and superintendent in five public school districts. After the 2025–2026 school year, I will retire from this incredible journey. On June 30, 2026, I will officially conclude my service with the Perry Community School District—the best profession and the best school. I will always be a proud Perry Bluejay.

I have been incredibly fortunate to be supported by a strong and caring family, dedicated school boards, loyal friends, and outstanding colleagues from Panora-Linden (now Panorama), Johnston, Rockwell City, Orient-Macksburg, and Perry.

In 1989, I was excited to be hired as principal of Lincoln and Webster Elementary while also having the pleasure of serving kindergarten students housed at Perry Junior High School—classes that were taught on the stage of the historic 1910 building. All of those schools have since been replaced by houses and townhomes, but the memories and impact remain.

Since 1989, I have been part of many notable accomplishments at Perry Community Schools. Over the past 32 years, I have worked alongside talented educators, board members, administrators, and directors who embraced the core values that make Perry such a special place to thrive: Growth Mindset, Integrity, Gratitude, and Relationships.

I have always said—and witnessed—that our teachers and paraeducators are among the most skilled educators any school could employ. They embraced Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and the importance of differentiated instruction, which is key to student success. Every teacher attended the national PLC conference in 2017, and staff have continued their training throughout the past nine years.

I vividly remember our first non-English-speaking student enrolling in 1991. At the time, all students read from the same basal reader, at the same pace, regardless of ability. Our staff did the most important thing—they accepted and loved that student and began learning how to differentiate instruction for the good of every child. Over time, our educators became experts in serving students with diverse learning styles and supporting English Language Learners. I learned so much alongside them.

Today, instructional coaches walk beside first- and second-year teachers along with their mentors, creating a strong system of support. Our paraeducators work tirelessly each day with some of our most challenging students, and it is our hope to expand professional development opportunities for them just as we have for teachers.

As superintendent, I have been grateful to serve with a knowledgeable and committed School Board over the past nine years. Linda Andorf organized multiple board sessions on roles and responsibilities, creating clarity that the Board “steers” the mission while staff “row” the day-to-day operations with collaboration and trust. This level of understanding

Superintendent – Clark S. Wicks



Director of Finance – Dallan Christensen

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is rare and invaluable. Many districts struggle in this area, but Perry is fortunate to have board members who serve multiple terms—clear evidence of their commitment to our schools and community.

I have also had the privilege of working with the most talented, hardworking, and knowledgeable Cabinet members one could ask for. I affectionately call them my “Horses”—a reflection of their strength, work ethic, and dedication. Because of this team, I thoroughly enjoyed my time as superintendent. Together, we navigated COVID, major facility renovations, the loss of 109 students in one year due to the Tyson exodus, and the horrific tragedy of January 4. That event was by far the most challenging, and this team has continued to help our school and community heal through the unimaginable.

Through every challenge, the Perry School Board and staff have remained steadfast in creating a safe, inviting environment focused on the betterment of students and our school.

## **Accomplishments**

Perry Community Schools have much to be proud of:

- Perry Elementary is a Blue Ribbon School—the highest honor a school can receive.
- Our principals are outstanding educators who are deeply committed to student success.
- Our facilities have come a long way from the early 1900s. Our maintenance department keeps the facilities looking sharp. Perry High School, built in 2002, remains rock solid and is home to the only Educational History Museum in the United States, as well as Dan Marburger Court, which brings pride every time you step into the gym. Perry Middle School received a fresh look in 2022, greatly improving upon its 1960s design. Perry Elementary will soon receive a much-needed \$13 million renovation. Dewey Field now features new bleachers, a press box, concession stand, track, and a welcoming entrance. Additional upgrades include the multipurpose turf room, Industrial Technology spaces, and a renovated bus garage. Over \$40 million has been invested in facilities during the past decade.
- Annual technology upgrades have transformed teaching and learning, including computers, security systems, cameras, and infrastructure (a far cry from the typewriter days!).
- Our School Resource Officer provides daily reassurance and visibility.
- The PPAC is a top-notch auditorium.
- The PACES program continues to thrive independently.
- More than 20 teachers earned Computer Science endorsements through a Department of Education grant.
- Our administrative assistants and district office staff—the voice and face of our schools—support students and staff every day.
- Our curriculum cycle continues to strengthen, with math adoption coming next year.
- Activity coaches dedicate countless hours to athletics, clubs, and fine arts.
- Our three nurses guided us through many major health challenges.
- Our nutrition and transportation departments do tremendous work feeding and transporting over 1800 students daily.
- Our four support administrators played a critical role in Recovery, Wellness, and Renewal.
- The Bluejay Way plaques and Word Walls remind us who we are.

## **The Future of Perry Community Schools**

The future is bright for Perry Community Schools:

- The district’s financial outlook has made a strong positive turn, and careful stewardship will remain essential.



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- Professional development will continue to be a priority, with full-day opportunities to implement curriculum with integrity. I strongly recommend a full-time Teaching and Learning position—thank you, Dr. Ross, for your commitment this past year.
- The School Board remains steady, experienced, and committed to educational excellence.
- The Perry Elementary renovation will be exciting and challenging—stay flexible and focused on the end goal.
- Perry Strength and Performance and Perry Youth Sports continue to build strong/agile students and strong character.
- Perry Schools have a great partnership with the City of Perry. We are so appreciative of all the support you give to our schools.

## Closing Thoughts

In closing, I want to share a story.

On a cold, blustery night shortly after the January 4 tragedy, I finished work with the Recovery Team around 10:00 p.m. after an exhausting day filled with grief, fear, and uncertainty. More than ten inches of snow had fallen. As I approached my truck, I noticed a piece of paper taped to the door handle. I still keep it in my desk drawer. It read:

*This is tough, but so are you.*

*Grandpa: Stay strong and you will overcome this sad thing. Love you.*

—Thai Wicks

My message to all Bluejays is this: We have many supporters. Never give up. You will overcome the challenges that come your way. As educators, we serve in the most important profession—one that strengthens democracy and serves every child.

Displayed in the Educational History Museum at Perry High School is this quote:

*“The public school is the greatest institution for the encouragement of real democracy existing. Its policy is to place all on the same equal playing field.”*

—Henry W. Chehock, Superintendent of Perry Schools (1919–1922)

Thank you for being educators in a public school that meets the needs of so many students. Thank you for your support, and thank you to my family—Deb; our children and extended families, Kevin/Bethany, Ashlee/Tom and Kyle (all kids are Perry graduates); and our grandchildren, Thai, Zeke, Olivia, Luca, and Dominic—current and future Perry students.

Proud to be a Bluejay. Proud to be an educator for 46 years.  
Onward. Finish Strong. Go Bluejays! Go Jayettes!

Sincerely,  
**Clark Wicks**

*“Your value is determined by what you make of yourself.”*

—Dorothy Wicks, Mom and Educator for 33 Years

*Be the reason someone smiles today.*

- Roy T. Bennett



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