

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Nathaniel E. Leonard
PRESIDENT

Thomas A. Clark
Brian P. Driscoll
Henri Pell Junod, Jr.
Susan R. Karas
Jennifer Kaufman
Ann V. Kloiz
Bob Lampus
David J. LaRue
Kenneth E. Marblestone
William F. Miller III
Mario Marino
Mark M. Mountain
Nancy Osgood
Christopher Pascarella
Mary Reynolds Powell
Nadya Scheiner
Elaine E. Schulte, MD, MPH
Troy D. Thomas
Sara M. Timken
Adam S. Verles
Tracey F. Weaver

TRUSTEE EMERITA

Jenifer B. Garfield

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS

Rudolph "Bob" Garfield
Joyce Glickman
Peter Herbruck
Walter Maischoss
Cara S. Stirn

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Lou Salza

LOWER SCHOOL [GRADES K-6]

Vanessa Diffenbacher, Head
1551 E. Wallings Road
Broadview Heights, OH 44147
440.526.0003

UPPER SCHOOL [GRADES 7-12]

Jason M. Culp, Head
10036 Olde Eight Road
Sagamore Hills, OH 44067
330.908.6800

ADMISSION OFFICE

440.526.0717

www.lawrenceschool.org

Our mission is to teach students using diverse learning strategies, ignite their potential and inspire academic, personal, and social success.



HB 49 Proponent Testimony
Lou Salza, Head of Lawrence School
Senate Finance Committee
June 6, 2017

Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the committee, my name is Lou Salza, Head of Lawrence School in Broadview Heights and Sagamore Hills, OH. Lawrence is an independent school, (State-chartered, non-public) accredited by the Independent School Association of the Central States (ISACS), serving 357 Special Needs students (Specific Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder, and High Functioning Autism) in grades K-12 on two campuses. I am grateful for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of the language passed by the Ohio House of Representatives which exempts Lawrence High School students on the Jon Peterson Special Needs and Autism Scholarship from the state-mandated high school testing and graduation requirements. Students attending Lawrence who do not receive ODE scholarships are already exempt. We seek parity for our students on the Jon Peterson Special Needs and Autism Scholarships; however, we do not seek exemption from appropriate measures of accountability for our high school students' achievement and accomplishments.

RATIONALE

Families choose Lawrence because we provide an effective educational alternative to non-categorical special education programs offered in their home school districts. As a result of our students' learning disabilities and need for diverse teaching strategies, the mandated end of course exams impose excessive loss of instructional time for students and teachers, and subject our students to emotionally painful, frustrating tests that fail to demonstrate or measure in any authentic way what our students know, what they have learned, or what skills they have acquired.

Students with special needs require different teaching strategies as well as different methods of evaluation. They often experience struggles and even failures in their general education school programs. These experiences cause students not only to fail academically – despite possessing active intellects – but also to suffer anxiety and depression as early as 3rd or 4th grade. At Lawrence we take seriously our responsibility to restore our students' confidence in themselves as learners. We do this by providing structured, systematic, multi-sensory instruction in small classes grouped by functional ability levels and taught by carefully prepared, highly trained teachers. This allows students to acquire the reading, writing, math and executive function skills that were out of reach to them in the general education environment. Mastering these skills rescues our students' aspirations for learning at Lawrence and beyond.

End of course exams contradict the spirit and the substance of the Individual Education Plans implemented under State Special Education regulations. They place our students back in the same untenable situations that special education programs were intended to relieve. Students who require alternative educational programs likewise require alternative methods of assessment and evaluation.

We know that what we do works well for our students. On May 26, 2017, Lawrence graduated 39 seniors in our 13th Commencement. Of those 39, 37 will matriculate to colleges and universities this fall. Ten seniors participated in the College Credit Plus



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Nathaniel E. Leonard
PRESIDENT

Thomas A. Clark

Brian P. Driscoll

Henri Pell Junod, Jr.

Susan R. Karas

Jennifer Kaufman

Ann V. Kloiz

Bob Lampus

David J. LaRue

Kenneth E. Marblestone

William F. Miller III

Mario Morino

Mark M. Mountain

Nancy Osgood

Christopher Pascarella

Mary Reynolds Powell

Nadya Scheiner

Elaine E. Schulte, MD, MPH

Troy D. Thomas

Sara M. Timken

Adam S. Vertes

Tracey F. Weaver

TRUSTEE EMERITA

Jenifer B. Garfield

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS

Rudolph "Bob" Garfield

Joyce Glickman

Peter Herbruck

Walter Maischoss

Cara S. Stirn

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Lou Salza

LOWER SCHOOL (GRADES K-6)

Vanessa Diffenbacher, Head

1551 E. Wallings Road

Broadview Heights, OH 44147

440.526.0003

UPPER SCHOOL (GRADES 7-12)

Jason M. Culp, Head

10036 Olde Eight Road

Sagamore Hills, OH 44067

330.908.6800

ADMISSION OFFICE

440.526.0717

www.lawrenceschool.org

Our mission is to teach students using diverse learning strategies, ignite their potential and inspire academic, personal, and social success.

Program and earned high grades in college-level English classes. From 2005 to 2016, 86% of Lawrence graduates have matriculated to a two- or four-year college or university. Sixty-six percent (66%) of Lawrence graduates go on to attend a four-year college or university compared to 15% of students with LD in the general population.

Lawrence tracks our graduates once they are in college through membership in the National Student Clearing House. **Our graduates persist from freshman year to sophomore year of college at a rate of 77% compared to a national average for all college students of 68%.** These statistics illustrate that Lawrence students have been prepared to succeed after high school despite their early experiences of struggle and failure in other schools due to learning disabilities.

BACKGROUND

Our Lower School serving grades K-6 was founded in 1969 at Case Western Reserve University. Our first campus was established in 1993 when we purchased the former Wallings Road School in Broadview Heights. Our Upper School campus (grades 7-12) opened in 2007 and grew rapidly due to the high demand for individualized special education at the secondary level. Over the past five decades, Lawrence has won the loyalty of our families the old-fashioned way: we earned it - and we continue to earn it every day. Lawrence currently serves students from 88 towns and cities, 64 school districts and 11 counties in northeast Ohio. All of our families pay tuition, and many drive long distances. This year about one third of our families received \$1.2 million in need-based financial aid. These funds are raised by our school and Board of Trustees in our continued effort to make our programs available to families regardless of their financial circumstances.

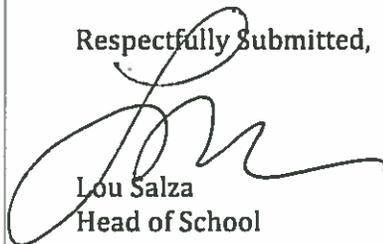
Lawrence School was among the first schools to be designated a provider of the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship by the Ohio Department of Education, and we have been providers under the Autism Scholarship Program since 2004.

We ask that the Senate acknowledge that students' IEPs and eligibility for ODE State Scholarships indicate different requirements for these students in both teaching strategies and evaluation methods.

By preserving the exemption for all students attending ISACS-accredited schools, including those receiving ODE special education scholarships, you are protecting the right of these students to be evaluated in an effective and appropriate manner that does not cause unnecessary emotional pain and frustration.

Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss this important policy proposal in greater detail.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lou Salza
Head of School

