

History of the Akron Public Schools



Introduction

In 1997, the Akron Public Schools marked its 150th year of public education for all children.

One hundred fifty years is a long time for any institution to be in existence, especially one faced with as many inherent challenges as public education. Those serving in public education must always work toward its goal of educating all children, no matter what goes on outside the school doors.

What is interesting is how many of these challenges are not unique to the present day. Even as the idea for free public schools for all was introduced, Akronites were complaining about having to pay property taxes to educate other people's children. Our first superintendent left because the Board of Education could not afford to give him a raise. Students weren't showing up for school on time, if they showed up at all.

New challenges arose as the years progressed. Some — such as the two world wars and the Great Depression — affected the whole nation. Others were the direct result of our city's close link with the rubber industry. Still others reflected the changes in society.

But, Akron's school leaders have a history of facing whatever challenges have arisen. And more importantly, they have always held the mission of educating all children above everything else.

Akron can be proud of the legacy of its school system. With strong leaders, a dedicated staff and a supportive community, Akron has not only been a pioneer in public education in the past, but continues to be a leader in education as we move into the future.



sources: *The History of Summit County*, edited by William Henry Perrin, 1881; *Lengthened Shadows*, Sally Klippert, 1955; *Akron Beacon Journal* clippings compiled in PTA scrapbooks; Akron Public Schools' *Chalkboard* newsletters; and Akron Public Schools' *APS News* newsletters

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originally printed: February 1998

The beginning

Back in 1840, Ansel Miller, a canal boat builder from Vermont, began to talk about a plan of free public schools for all children in Akron, to be paid for by property taxes. People in Akron who didn't have children, and those who owned a lot of property, didn't like that idea at all! They thought that aside from the money the state allocated for education, it was up to parents to provide for the education of their own children.

In fact, many considered Miller to be a “wild-eyed reformer” and threatened to “bash his head in!”

But Miller didn't give up; and in 1843 he hooked up with Rev. Isaac Jennings, who was a more prominent and respected citizen of Akron.

On May 16, 1846, a committee of citizens was formed — with Jennings as chairman — to discuss how to improve the school system. On November 21, 1846, the committee submitted their plan, which was approved unanimously by the citizens. Then on February 8, 1847, the Ohio Legislature adopted this plan, called “An act for the support and better regulation of the Common Schools of the Town of Akron.”

In essence, the plan called for:

- the creation of one school district in Akron to provide free education for all children;
- the election of members of the Akron Board of Education who would be authorized to make financial and policy decisions on behalf of the citizens;
- the establishment of primary and grammar schools in various locations of the city to accommodate all children; and
- local support of schools through property taxation.

The next year, the state legislature adopted an amendment which allowed other Ohio cities and towns to use what became known as the “Akron Plan.” One hundred fifty years later, these principles are still in effect!

1847-1860

Akron's first “public” schools were established in the fall of 1847 and were led by Mortimer Leggett. Like all other superintendents for the next 20 years, he was also a teacher and principal. He spent the first two years organizing the district.

When Leggett resigned in 1849 because the Board could not afford to give him a raise, Charles W. Palmer and his wife took over until 1851. Together, they were paid \$600 a year.

Palmer became ill during the 1851-52 school year. Because he was also in charge of the grammar school, the school had to be closed all but six weeks the whole year. (The next year, the grammar school wasn't opened at all because of a lack of money to operate it!) Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Olmstead took over until Samuel Cooper was hired for \$65/month. He led the district from 1853-56.

The Saturday morning “spectator” school began during this time. Each Saturday morning, one teacher called her class together for an hour-and-a-half lesson while other teachers, board members, townspeople, etc. watched. Afterward, they had lectures and discussions. All teachers

Fast facts

- H.B. Spelman, one of the first members of the Board of Education, was the father-in-law of John D. Rockefeller.
- The first annual report showed that it cost less than \$2 a year to educate a child.
- After leaving the Akron Public Schools, Mortimer Leggett went on to become Superintendent of the Zanesville schools, establish a law practice, serve in the Civil War, and become the U.S. Commissioner of Patents.
- In 1857 the cost of running the schools for a year was \$4,200.

Akron Public Schools: the early years

Who taught the students?

The primary schools were taught by young women who were paid \$3.50 a week. The Board justified the hiring of young women



teachers because they could be paid less and were under the supervision of a man (the superintendent).

Back in 1857, the general rule of the Akron Board of Education was to “employ no teachers in the Akron schools but those of *ripe age, ample experience, successful tact, a fine education and an ample fund of general knowledge.* Besides these, the teacher must have *great goodness and kindness of heart, indomitable perseverance, good common sense,* and last, but not least, the *qualities, in a measure, of a successful military general.*”

All that, for wages as low as \$3.50 a week!

What did the students learn?

Surprisingly, a grammar school student back in 1847 was taught many of the same subjects taught now — spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, grammar, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, physiology, chemistry, bookkeeping, etc. Students were also taught natural philosophy, mental philosophy and astronomy.

Who attended?

In 1847, 641 students were enrolled in the primary schools, and 127 in the grammar school. Attendance was a problem, though. Only about 55% of eligible students attended the primary schools!

Where did they go to school?

Akron Public Schools built two primary schoolhouses, 25 x 32 feet, at a cost of \$370 each, in 1847-1848. A dwelling-house was used as the grammar school before a new grammar/high school was built in 1853. The new brick grammar/high school was 70 x 50 feet and two stories high. It cost about \$9,000 to build and was named “Jennings School.”

were required to attend. The district used this “spectator” school until 1860.

Also during this time Jennings School, the new two-story brick high school, opened. It held the grammar school, which was a large room on the first floor, and the high school, which was also one large room, on the second. Both rooms had a recitation room attached.

Horace B. Foster was the next superintendent, from October 1856 to spring of 1857. Edwin Olmstead ran the schools for just the spring of 1857.

In case you weren't counting, that makes five superintendents in 10 years. The Board didn't think that was a good way to run a school district. They decided that in order to attract and keep the best staff, they were going to have to pay more money. So the Board paid the next superintendent, Charles T. Pooler, \$1,000 a year. He led the schools from 1857 to 1860.

1860-1883

From the beginning, schools faced many of the same issues that we face today.

For example, school officials weren't sure how

to handle tardiness and poor attendance. While Israel Hole was superintendent (1860 to 1868), they tried closing the doors a few moments after school opened, and not letting tardy students in until recess.

That strategy didn't work, so in 1864 the district set a policy that three absences a month led to a suspension. And the student couldn't come back to school unless the school board approved. This worked better, because "it inconvenienced the parents and made them feel the power of the Board." About 20 years later, a state law requiring compulsory attendance went into effect, along with truant officers to enforce the law.

Because the people of Akron felt a great sense of pride and ownership in their schools, schools were open to criticism and opinions from everyone. In fact, the town council believed it was their responsibility to help run the schools. They appointed "school visitors" to help out the overworked superintendent.

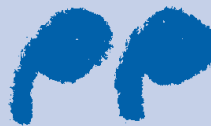
Things changed with the arrival of Samuel Findley, who reigned from 1868-1883. He was the first "true" superintendent. He no longer had to teach or be a principal, and he was given the responsibility and authority to make decisions about the future of our schools.

Findley led the district during Akron's first great period of expansion, when Akron went from an incorporated village to a city. The staff grew from 22 teachers in 1868 to 62 in 1883. Also during this time, eight two-story brick schoolhouses were built (replacing the one-room frame school buildings).

As our district grew, so did the number of our graduates. Akron's first graduate was Pamela Goodwin. She graduated in 1864 and went on to become a teacher in the Akron Public Schools. The numbers gradually increased. Between 1864 and 1868, a total of 15 students graduated. Between 1868 and 1883, the number was 289. By 1997, the total was more than 173,000!

Fast facts

- In 1877, high school students could attend classes in Greek language (a requirement for college) at Buchtel College (later the University of Akron) and receive high school credit.
- In 1877-78, Akron began graduating its students semi-annually instead of annually. This practice remained in effect until 1952.
- In 1882, class sizes ranged from 45 to 76 because of a rapid increase in enrollment.



Cool quotes

"It is not so much what the teacher *says*, as what he *is* and *does*, which affects for good or evil the future lives and character of his pupils." — Samuel Findley, 1869

"The experiment we have made in the last six years in employing none but women as regular teachers in our schools has been eminently successful." — Akron Public Schools Annual Report 1874

"Students stop short if they think all there is to school is the memorization of the textbook." — Israel Hole, 1863

"We will try and make money that we may spend it upon good schools. In short, the education of the mind must be the great end for which we live and do business." — Isaac Jennings, 1868



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1883-1900

Free textbooks, kindergarten, intramural sports. We take these things for granted in our public schools now; but 100 or so years ago, they were brand-new ideas.

Elias Fraunfelter, Akron's superintendent from 1883 to 1897, gets credit for introducing free textbooks to the classroom. Before that, students had to supply their own.

Many other interesting things happened during the time that Fraunfelter was superintendent.

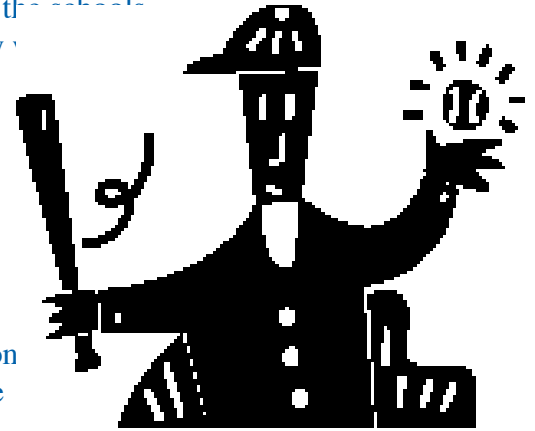
For example, the original Central High School (facing Union Park) was built in 1886 at a cost of \$135,000. It housed the Board of Education and the superintendent's office in the basement. Its tower held a 2,000-pound bell and a clock with four illuminated dials, 16 feet in diameter each!

Also, it was during this time that Akron began naming the city's school buildings in honor of citizens who had been involved with the city or the schools.

Girls, girls, girls

- In 1888, female teachers could be fired if they got married.
- In 1895, the first two women were elected to serve on the Akron Board of Education: Frances Allen and Margaret Sadler.
- In 1899, male grade school teachers received \$68/month while their female counterparts received \$56.20/month. At the high school level, men earned \$92/month while women earned \$73/month.
- By June 1891, Akron Public Schools had graduated a total of 747 students in 28 years. Of those, 215 were boys and 532 were girls. Although there was an equal number of boys and girls in Akron, more girls graduated because more boys went to work before they graduated.

In 1890, the school board did away with formal exams for promotion from one grade to another.



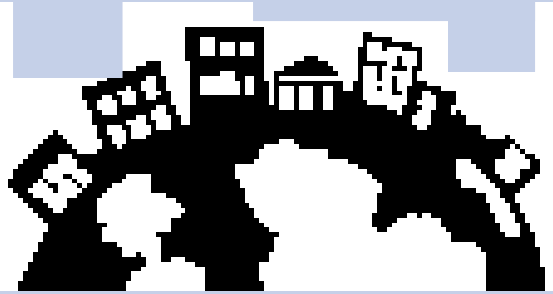
They thought that many qualified students who were shy and easily embarrassed would “choke” at the moment of truth, and thus be kept behind. Instead, promotions were based upon the recommendations of teachers and principals.

After Fraunfelter retired, Richard Thomas — a newcomer to Akron — led our schools from 1897-1900. Some of the highlights of his brief tenure include:

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- The establishment of a trial kindergarten, for children between the ages of 5 and 6.
- The establishment of night schools for some high school students and foreigners. Night school teachers were paid \$2 a night.
- The opening of an “upgraded school” which was a room set aside in the high school for so-called “delinquents” from the elementary schools.
- The first high school track meet, held in 1898. Events included the hammer throw; the running hop, skip and jump; and the pole vault. Baseball also began that year.

Superintendent Thomas had many great ideas, but he was criticized by the press and parents. Although the Board supported him, he resigned after only three years, letting Henry V. Hotchkiss guide our schools into the 20th century.



It's a small world

In its early days, Akron was a melting pot of people from all over the world. Our schools reflected that diversity. In 1888, 9% of the city's school-aged population of 7,707 were born in other countries including Greece, Sweden, Germany, Norway, Ireland, Russia, Hungary, Italy, Scotland, France and England.

1900-1920

When Henry V. Hotchkiss became the superintendent in 1900, Akron had one high school, 11 elementary schools, 150 teachers and 5,000 students. Twenty years later, when Superintendent Carroll Reed took over, there were four high schools, 26 elementary schools, 800 teachers and 33,000 students!

The amazing growth in the school system was a direct result of the phenomenal growth in the city of Akron, due to the rubber industry. During this time, population in Akron grew 480% – from 42,000 to 200,000. In fact, from 1911 to 1920, Akron was the “world's fastest growing city.”

It was quite a challenge for a school system to keep up with those numbers! An increase of 2,000 students a year meant two new buildings a year were needed. It seemed as soon as a school was built, like South High School in 1911, it was filled to capacity. But Hotchkiss firmly believed that each child should be provided for. He once explained, “People may live three to a room, or may live in tents, but each child must have a seat with his name on it as long as he remained in Akron.” He also said, “A child is only 6 or 10 or

whatever age he might happen to be for one short school term, and it behooves his elders to see that he gets the advantages to which he is entitled at that time — not two years hence when someone can get around to it, but RIGHT THEN.”

As well as finding seats for their students, school officials also tried to keep them healthy. Bowen and Mason schools were the first to feature “open-window rooms” for underdeveloped and undernourished children. Since at that time about 30% of children under 18 had tuberculosis, and crowded classrooms could lead to spreading the disease, the health commissioner requested more air in rooms for pupils likely to get sick. In 1918, an influenza epidemic raged throughout the nation, closing schools for several weeks. More than 600 died in Akron during that time.

Another crisis that occurred during Hotchkiss' superintendency was World War I. Physicals for the draft were given at Central High School, and the Summit County War Work Council used high school auditoriums to promote Liberty Bond campaigns. Some people thought the schools should close during the war. But Hotchkiss said, “Don't the children of war time have as much right to an education as those of peace time?”

Fast facts

- In 1900, pupils were forbidden to chew tobacco, paraffin, wax, India rubber or chewing gum on school premises.
- In 1911, Akron High School became known as Central. By 1918 there were three other high schools in Akron: South, West and East.
- In 1912, the Home and School League was organized (the PTA's ancestor). Mrs. F.A. Seiberling was president.
- In 1920, the maximum salary for an elementary school teacher was \$2,000, and for a high school teacher, \$2,800.

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1920-1928

In the 1920s, Akron school officials developed better ways to serve students:

- An Americanization program was designed to help the many Akron students who were first-generation Americans. Special Americanization classes were held afternoons in the rubber companies, and evenings in some of our schools. Visiting teachers came to homes to teach English, shopping and home management to foreign housewives.
- A “continuation school” began for working boys and girls who were required by law to have at least four hours of schooling a week. The slogan was “earn more and learn more”; students were taught brick-laying, shorthand, forging, etc.
- The “platoon” system was expanded. In this approach, classes were split into two. In the morning, half the students went to English, history, etc. while the other half went to gym, literature, etc. After lunch, the classes switched. In 1924, our platoon schools attracted visitors from all over the country.

Our schools also tried to be responsive to the needs of the business world. In 1920, businessmen complained to Superintendent Carroll Reed (1920-1925) about the way school math was taught. Reed asked them for suggestions. Within months, Akron courses included lessons on check writing, tax computation and borrowing.

Things were going well for Reed and the district until the Ku Klux Klan wielded its influence on the Board of Education. In the 1920s, Akron had become a stronghold in the north for the Klan, and many people in the government were members. In January 1925, the Klan gained a majority of Board membership, causing Reed to resign with three years left on his contract. The Klan majority on the Board selected George McCord (1925-1928) as superintendent, which caused the three non-Klan Board members to

Delinquents

We read in the papers
We hear on the air
Of killings and stealing
And crime everywhere

We sigh and we say,
As we notice the trend
“This young generation”
Where will it end?

But can we be sure
That it’s their fault alone?
That maybe most of it
Is really our own?

Too much money to spend
Too much idle time,
Too many movies
On passion and crime.

Too many books
Not fit to be read
Too much evil
In what they hear said.

Too many children
Encouraged to roam
By too many parents
Who won’t stay at home.

Kids don’t make the movies,
They don’t write the books
That paint the gay picture
Of gangsters and crooks.

They don’t make the liquor,
They don’t run the bars.
They don’t make the laws.
They don’t drive the cars.

They don’t make the drugs
That addle the brain.
It’s all done by older folks
Greedy for gain.

In so many cases,
It must be confessed
The label “delinquent”
Fits older folks best.

(dated 1923)

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resign. The Non Political League (NPL) was formed to free the schools of Klan control; and by 1927, the NPL had won the three vacant Board posts. In 1928, the anti-Klan faction had a majority on the Board, and told McCord he wouldn't be rehired. In fact, McCord was never allowed to hold any school position in the state of Ohio after he left Akron.

1928-1942

During the time that Thomas Gosling was superintendent (1928-1934), many schools were added to the Akron district through annexation. In 1929 alone, we gained 3,947 students from nine Kenmore schools and 1,106 students from three Ellet schools. These additions helped increase enrollment from 43,180 in 1928 to 54,877 in 1931.

Akron continued to build schools to accommodate its students. But when the depression hit, there was no money; and the building program came to a halt. In May 1931, in order to save money, staff was cut and classes got bigger. The schools' financial woes increased when the tax duplicates were reduced three times, making the total assessments on property 30% less than normal. Many people were unable to pay their property taxes anyway. The schools were closed for five weeks over the winter break for the 1931-32 year, and Gosling decided to close the schools a month early. The teachers begged for the opportunity to keep the schools open to June, even to work without pay; but it was to no avail. In June of 1932, teachers' salaries were cut by 20%; and no new teachers were hired. In 1933, teachers were paid with scrip, or artificial money. "Real" money was paid only when it was available.

Ralph Waterhouse (1934-1942) was our next superintendent. During his tenure the first African-American teacher was hired; elementary students listened to radio programs like "Calisthenics with Music" and "Literary Quiz Program"; Victrola records were rotated from school to school by Board of Education trucks;

The first school buses were used in 1938.

Four buses were bought to serve students who lived beyond the two-mile walking distance from their assigned elementary schools.



food, glasses, minor operations and clothes for needy children were furnished; the first school buses were used; Hower Vocational School became the new trade school center; and the first motion picture with sound was presented at Central High School.

Although by 1941-1942 the enrollment had dipped down to 39,273, overcrowding was still a problem. Portables (temporary frame dwellings) were used to cope with the enrollment demands; students had to trek to the main building to go to the bathroom. High schools ran in double shifts, so students only went to school half a day. This allowed schools like East to educate 2,736 students in the 1939-40 school year.

Fast facts

- In 1920, the Akron Teachers Association held its first meeting.
- In 1923, a new elementary school cost \$200,000 to build; a new high school cost \$750,000.
- In 1939, the former Bowen school was converted to the Board of Education Administration Building. It also housed the Home and School League.
- During an influenza epidemic in 1941, 6,973 students were absent on one day.
- In 1942, a female teacher could not work after she was five months' pregnant, and she could not return to work less than a year after the birth of her child.

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1942-1955

World War II wove its way indelibly into the fabric of the Akron Public Schools. In 1942, 5,000 high school students worked part-time in war production. During 1943, students sold \$127,000 in war stamps and bonds. Children brought scrap metal to school during a war scrap drive in 1942, then paper, rags, tin and other items during a salvage drive in 1944. The curriculum expanded to include classes in “camouflage,” “pre-flight” and “signalling and communication.” Schools were supplied with bomb safeguards (shovels, sand and spray guns).

The schools’ involvement didn’t end when the war was over, either. In 1947, more than 5,000 WWII veterans received counseling through the veterans’ guidance center of the Akron Board of Education. Akron students filled thousands of Junior Red Cross gift boxes with health, educational and play materials for children abroad. They were also asked to conserve food for Europe by eating less bread and pastries, but more potatoes, oatmeal and fresh vegetables.

Otis Hatton led the schools during this period of war and peace (1942-1955). During his tenure as superintendent, the school population increased from 37,737 in 1942 to 47,783 in 1954. In 1950, the new Ellet High School building — the first new building in the district since 1931 — was dedicated.

The ’40s and ’50s brought a shift away from a focus on college prep courses. A 1944 study showed that 80% of our graduates didn’t go to college, so more emphasis was given to “preparation for life” and vocational education through Hower Vocational High School.

The following also happened during Hatton’s superintendency:

- Kindergarten was reestablished (1943)
- High school seniors began receiving vocational guidance (1947)
- All schools received motion picture equipment (1947)
- Driver’s education began (1948)

- The last January graduation was held (1952)

Hatton retired at the end of the 1954-55 school year, making way for his successor, Martin Essex.

View from the top

While Otis Hatton was superintendent (1942-1955), he shared many of his views regarding issues of the day in a weekly newsletter. Here are some excerpts:

On Americanism

“The opportunity to go to school is a privilege that is yours. This is not true the world over. This privilege is yours because of our country’s ideals — sometimes called Americanism. It will take a prepared people if our way of life is to continue for our people and be spread to other peoples throughout the world. That’s why we have schools for all.”

On character education

“Children of all the people learn to work and play together in the public schools. They learn to understand one another; to recognize the importance of being cooperative and responsible. Their acceptance of classmates is not conditioned by race, color or creed, unless the prejudices of parents have been passed on to their children.”

On the role of home

“In this atomic age our homes, as well as our schools, must become better or there may be no world in the future. Our children are entitled to homes where there is love and understanding; where parents and children work together, play together and plan together; where security is found in the honesty and openness that exists between members; where democratic ideas are really practiced. A generation of children brought up in such an atmosphere may make the world safe from war.”

Fast facts

- In 1943, the Garfield High School prom cost 50 cents per couple.
- In 1962, approximately 75% of Akron students who began the ninth grade graduated from high school (the national average was 60%).
- In 1965, the last of Akron's portable classrooms was replaced.
- In 1965, Akron launched seven anti-poverty programs financed through federal grants.

1955-1966

Essex, who was the district's superintendent from 1955 to 1966, called Akron a "boom town." During the 1950s, Akron's schools grew eight times faster than the city's population. School officials looked upon this enrollment as an economic asset to the community because the students represented future buying power, future consumers and future markets.

During Essex's superintendency, student population ranged around 56,000. Between 1955 and 1962 eight new schools — including East and South high schools, and Case and Hatton elementaries — were built and 13 major additions were constructed. Essex encouraged the building of sports fields adjacent to high schools "to build loyalties." He said, "I have always held that trophy cases are important to the morale of a school."

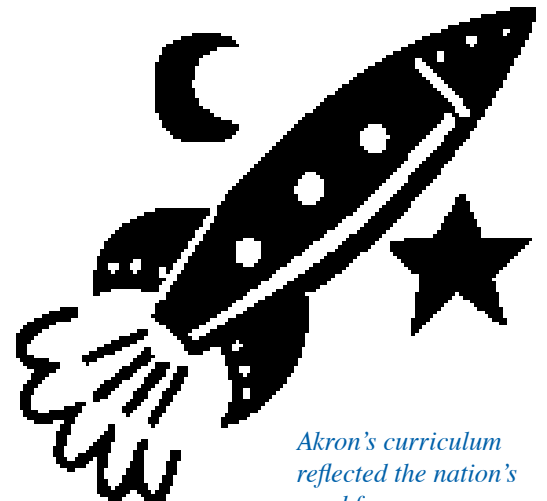
The big problem was trying to find enough teachers, since the district was hiring about 375 new teachers a year. In 1957, Akron started a recruitment program to help relieve the teacher shortage. Akron representatives visited every teacher training institution in the state. Appeals were made through PTAs and notes were sent home with children. Personnel offices of area

industries were urged to check on the wives of incoming personnel. If they had teaching potential, the schools would contact them.

What was happening inside Akron's classrooms reflected what was happening outside. With the United States entering the "space age," science, math and foreign languages received more emphasis.

Other "signs of the times" were polio inoculations, savings stamp sales, anti-litter drives, expanded summer school programs, and heated debates over drive-in theaters (described as "passion pits with settings that encourage teenage immorality"). There was also concern over penmanship (since typewriters were becoming popular), smoking (which was widespread among high school students, and even junior high and elementary students), and a controversy over the lunch hour at schools (parents wanted their children to eat at school; administrators wanted students to go home for lunch).

Despite the challenges, Akron maintained its excellent reputation; and in 1966 the district was a leading force in educational circles.



Akron's curriculum reflected the nation's need for space age technology.

59ers to the rescue

In 1968, a group of students did their part to ensure the passage of an 8-mill operating levy. They were called the “59ers,” so named because at the time the district boasted 59,000 students. During the fall levy campaign the 59ers distributed 29,000 levy brochures to 150 churches and synagogues in their high school neighborhood. After the campaign was over (and the levy passed, 59,347 to 38,801), many 59ers continued to provide service to their schools.

Fascinating firsts

- In 1967, Kenmore launched the Air Force JROTC.
- In 1971-72, the first citywide Garden Fair was held.
- In 1971, Jennings piloted the middle school model, which moved ninth-graders to the senior high school.
- In 1978, the state began funding a program for Gifted and Talented students called “Exploratory School Program.”
- In October 1979, Riedinger Middle School — the newest Akron school building — was dedicated.
- In May 1979, the first woman senior high school principal was assigned to Kenmore.
- In 1984, all-day kindergarten was piloted at Seiberling, Rankin and Hatton schools.
- In 1984, an in-school suspension program was piloted at Ellet, East and Garfield high schools.

1966-1991

During the 25 years Conrad C. Ott served the Akron Public Schools’ district as superintendent (1966 to 1991), Akron — and our country — went through enormous changes. But Ott’s leadership provided a sense of stability for the district.

In the late ’60s, sex, drugs and social upheaval were a fact of life. Sex education, multi-ethnic concerns and drug abuse prevention were added to the curriculum to help our students face these challenges. In 1969, “Project Zebra” grew out of tension between Firestone and South high school students during basketball season. To develop better understanding, a group of students visited each other’s schools and worked together on service projects.

In the ’70s, “human relations” was a hot topic. In a 1970 newsletter, Ott wrote, “As never before, the importance of each human being needs reaffirmation. The inter-relationship of people has become the requisite not only for fuller living, but also for the survival of our society.” A PTA message in 1971 asked, “Have you done your share today to keep the peace?”

Technology also had its roots in the late ’60s. In 1968, Barber Elementary School piloted computerized report cards. This was one of the first experiments in the use of computer services at the elementary level in the country. Computers were also used for scheduling in the secondary schools. By 1981, the first computers began appearing in the classroom.

While our schools tried to prepare our students for an ever-changing society, they also had to deal with an Akron that was losing population and jobs when the rubber companies started closing or moving out in the ’70s. In response to a declining school enrollment, schools had to be closed and some students were bused to other schools. Financial problems followed.

But our schools always held up to any challenge and continued to earn commendations, including an A+ evaluation from the state in May 1987.

Fast facts

- In 1967, the Old Stone School was restored. Home economics students made the period dresses for the guides, and Hower students made the benches and desks.
- In 1968, the Akron Board of Education was found not guilty of de facto segregation of city schools.
- In 1973, 40% of Akron's students were in vocation programs.
- In the 1995-96 school year, the PTA donated 160,000 hours to the Akron Public Schools.
- In the 1996-97 school year, school buses traveled 389,880 miles.
- The 1997-98 annual operating budget of the Akron Public Schools was \$187 million.

In January 1991, Ott relinquished his leadership of the Akron Public Schools; and Dr. James Hardy took over while a new superintendent was sought.

1991-1997

After Conrad Ott's 25-year-long tenure as superintendent, Akron followed the nationwide trend of educational reform. Terry Grier became superintendent in May 1991. Grier was instrumental in the establishment of many new programs, such as a school for the visual and performing arts and BECOME (a program designed to increase the number of minority teachers in the district).

Grier left the district in May 1994. William Spratt served as interim superintendent until Brian G. Williams was asked to come back to the district to serve as superintendent. Williams, who

At the Akron Public Schools, our goal is to help our students reach their destination, whether they choose the trades, the armed forces or college.



had retired from the Akron Public Schools after working as a teacher and administrator for 30 years, was working as a principal at a Catholic school. Williams was thrilled to come back to Akron in February 1995 and fulfill his long-held dream of becoming superintendent.

With a broad base of support from the community and staff, under Williams' leadership:

- Akron continued its lead role in technology in the classroom. Under the state-funded SchoolNet and SchoolNet Plus programs, each K-4 classroom received approximately five computers and all classrooms were networked.
- Akron revised its intradistrict open enrollment policy so students could attend any program and school of their choice. In the 1997-98 school year, nearly 3,000 students took advantage of that opportunity.
- Akron increased its commitment to ensuring the safety of its students through programs like "alternative schools."
- With the help of more than 350 staff and community members, Akron developed a new Strategic Plan to help guide the district into the 21st century.
- All-day kindergarten was reinstated at all elementary schools.

In 1847, Akron pioneered the idea of public education for all children and for the good of our community. It is a belief the district still held dear as it celebrated its sesquicentennial 150 years later.

The Akron Public Schools today: 1998

Mission Statement

The mission of the Akron Public Schools, a pioneer in academic excellence passionately committed to life-long learning, is to ensure that each student in our diverse population achieves his or her fullest potential in a safe and affirming learning center characterized by an extensive, student-focused collaboration of all segments of the community, with an emphasis on preparing students to live and excel in a global environment.

Strategic Plan

Akron Public Schools began the process of developing a new Strategic Plan for the district in the 1996-97 school year. The plan was approved by the Akron Board of Education on August 4, 1997.

Accreditation

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and the Ohio Department of Education

School Board

Mrs. Helen Arnold
Linda B. Kersker
Linda F.R. Omobien
Conrad C. Ott
Denis Randall
Sam Salem
Mary Stormer

Size

The Akron Public School District is approximately 62.47 square miles.

Number of Schools		Average Age
Elementary	41	70
Middle	9	49
Senior High	<u>8</u>	<u>50</u>
Total	58	65

Schools Over 70 Years Old: 53%
Administration Buildings: 10

Web site Address

www.akronschools.com

School System Employees (1997-98)

Total No. of Employees:	3,860
Administrators	83
Principals/Asst.	110
Teachers (full-time)	2,122
Teachers (part-time)	674
Support Staff	871

Bargaining Units

Seven bargaining units represent teachers/professional staff; office support staff; educational assistants; nonprofessionals in Pre-K and Head Start; foremen; child nutrition services employees; and maintenance, buildings and grounds, transportation and warehouse employees.

Total Appropriation (1997-1998)

General Fund	\$186,671,938
Building Fund	\$7,692,641
Other	\$40,000,000
Total	\$234,364,579

General Fund Sources of Revenue

Local	42.2%
State/Federal	57.8%

Per Pupil Costs/Expenditures (FY96) : \$5,782

Number of Students (as of October 8, 1997)

Elementary	16,503
Middle	6,351
Senior High	8,687
Teenage Parents Center	49
Saturn School	10
Overage High School	174
Miller South School	425
IPP Students	<u>132</u>
Total	32,331

Demographics (97-98)

Race: White	50.5%
Non-White	49.5%
Sex: Male	52.0%
Female	48.0%

Elementary Pupil/Teacher Ratio (9/97): 23.53/1



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