Kettering City School District
Continues to Tighten Its Belt

A Message from Dr. Jim Schoenlein
Superintendent
Kettering City Schools

As I travel about the community, I hear one consistent theme. People agonize that there is a serious recession going on in this country and that almost everyone has had to tighten their belts. People want to know if the school system, like everyone else, is tightening its belt.

I believe the Kettering City School District has done a good job of being conscientious and frugal with taxpayers’ money. Over the course of the last four years, the district has cut $7.6 million from the budget. These reductions include 57 positions. Over half of these jobs were teaching positions.

For example, the Kettering City School District used to have full time music and art coordinators. Mike Berning now coordinates the K-12 district music program, a monumental task, while teaching a half day schedule of music classes. Susan Bennett coordinates the extensive K-12 district art program while teaching a number of art classes. The Career Tech Principal position at Fairmont High School was eliminated and Nancy Brown, a teacher, now supervises approximately 500 Career Education students and 11 Career Tech programs while still serving as a part-time business teacher.

Before being named Superintendent last August, I served as both Fairmont High School Principal and District Director of Secondary Education, two full-time positions. When I became Superintendent, I asked Norm Knowlton to cover two full-time jobs: Director of Elementary Education and Director of Secondary Education.

During the recent construction projects in the Kettering City School District, 185,000-square-feet of building space was added. Meanwhile, the custodial staff was actually reduced. Custodians are expected to clean this significant amount of new space in addition to their regular duties.
Kettering City School District teachers recently accepted the lowest raise in the last 30 years. All district administrators are on a pay freeze this year.

Ken Lackey, Business Manager for Kettering City Schools, was able to capitalize on increased competition in the energy market to negotiate a 12% reduction in electric costs resulting in a savings of over $150,000 per year.

Every employee of the Kettering City School District has felt the pinch of budget reductions. There is no teacher, administrator, secretary, custodian, school nurse, bus driver, or maintenance man who has not been squeezed by the downsizing of the school district staff. Just like in our community at large, everyone is working longer and harder.

Three troublesome economic forces are bearing down on school districts across Ohio. By law, schools cannot collect any more tax money than is voted in. Local school revenue must remain constant. At the same time, state funding is decreasing, 1% this year and 1% next year, with more substantial reductions looming in the future. Meanwhile, expenses are always creeping up. Sooner or later, every school district in this state must return to the voters for more operating money.

I grew up on a small family farm in Indiana with five brothers and sisters. I know the meaning of hard work and I know the value of a dollar. I promise the people of the Kettering City School District that I will watch over every cent of their money like one of those red-tailed chicken hawks. I hope voters can see their way clear to support our schools and our kids on May 4.