

## Getting to Know Dr. Mike Thorwart, New CRSD School Board Member

Citizens For Education sat down recently with Dr. Mike Thorwart, one of Council Rock's newly elected school board members (Region #7, Northampton Twp.) After many years of attending school board meetings as an involved parent, Mike decided to enter the school board race when his predecessor, Patty Sexton, decided not to run for another term and encouraged him to run. Mike felt this was his opportunity to serve his community. He would like to see many more parents get involved in CRSD issues, and encourages individuals to come to school board meetings or watch them on TV.

Born in St. Mary's, a town in northwest Pennsylvania, Mike grew up in a home adjacent to a farm. He earned BS and PhD degrees in Chemical Engineering from Penn State, was employed for 23 years as a Department of Defense contractor, and currently works as an enterprise program manager for OSIsoft in Philadelphia. Mike has two children in CRSD schools: a daughter at South and a son at Hillcrest. He and his wife Theresa, an AP Calculus teacher in a NJ public school, have been Holland residents since 1999.

Nearly three months into his new school board role, and as a member of the district's Facilities Committee, Mike sees a lot of change coming to Council Rock with the renovation of Holland Middle School and the construction of a new Newtown Middle School. He thinks redistricting across the district would serve students, by better balancing building capacities with enrollment, and serve taxpayers by closing a middle school and, perhaps, an elementary school. Ideally, Mike would like to see a small margin in capacity in each school to accommodate future growth and feels that as the larger capacity high school, North should have more students than South, even if some students have to come from the south side of the Neshaminy Creek. With redistricting decisions, he would like to avoid sending any individual school's students to more than one middle or high school.

Mike is a proponent of data-driven decision making and one of his board goals is to encourage deeper analysis of district data, such as PSSA results, to get a better understanding of academic strengths and weaknesses. With regard to the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) implementation in Council Rock, in which students would bring their own laptop or tablet to school, Mike wants to think through the details prior to implementation to ensure that the program works as intended. Mike feels there are many elements that need to be considered, including creating appropriate policies such as protections of student and teacher privacy. With the PA state government recently putting the requirement for Keystone exams on hold, Mike thinks it is still wise for students to continue to take the Keystones after each corresponding class so that the information is fresh and the opportunity to excel is greatest. If the state should abruptly reinstate successful Keystone scores as a graduation requirement down the road, those students would not have to take the test perhaps three years after they took the class.

In his spare time, Mike is an avid gardener, growing heirloom tomatoes, cucumbers, hot and bell peppers and more. He recently started 180 petunias from seed that will be transplanted to his yard come spring. Mike can be found on occasion driving a tractor at Styer Orchard or canning dozens of jars of green beans gleaned from Styer's harvest, a friendly bartering relationship that began when Mike went in search of aromatic apple wood needed to smoke some turkeys.

Mike welcomes constructive input from the Council Rock community and is willing to discuss any issues related to our schools. He can be reached at [mike4crsd@gmail.com](mailto:mike4crsd@gmail.com). Overall, Mike's first months on the school board have been positive, though very busy with a full slate of meetings, lots of background reading, and many events with students, staff, and administrators. He especially enjoys interacting with students and recently was invited to read to second graders at Holland

Elementary. Citizens For Education thanks Dr. Thorwart for taking the time to speak with us and wishes him well in his school board endeavors.