



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Matt Skrajner

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Mentor Schools will become the first Northeast Ohio school district to post its finances to the Ohio Treasurer's online, publicly accessible checkbook.

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel and school district leaders announced the partnership on June 2 at the district's administration building.

The district's budget will be available at ohiocheckbook.com, a website that Mandel's office launched in December 2014 that interactively displays state spending. Earlier this year, the treasurer's office sent out 18,000 letters asking local governments and school districts if they wanted to post their own financial records to the site.

"In this process, there's going to be leaders and there's going to be followers," Mandel said. "You better believe when I leave Mentor today, I'm going to be traveling all throughout the state of Ohio talking about the Mentor City Schools, talking about what you're doing today."

Mandel said he hopes that, in the next few years as more schools join the website, districts will be able to easily compare themselves with others across the state to identify ways to save money and increase efficiency.

"If we see in other parts of the state there's a common vendor, for instance, that you're using here in the Mentor Schools that 50 other school districts are using throughout the state of Ohio, maybe we can create a bulk-buying consortium or some type of group that we can use to get better prices," Mandel said. "If we can save money that way, maybe it's a little more funds that can be used to buy another computer for a classroom or put another teacher in a classroom."

As of June 1, more than 225,000 searches have been performed at ohiocheckbook.com. The site displays spending in multiple formats, including charts and graphs, that can either be printed, saved onto a computer or directly shared online through social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and LinkedIn.

Mentor Schools plans to have its finances available on the website sometime in August and keep them updated on a monthly basis.

Mentor Schools Chief Financial Officer Daniel Wilson said the website will allow the district to publish its finances in a more sophisticated and interactive way than it has been on its own website since 2005.

He also understands the responsibility of school and government officials to spend money responsibly.

"But even more importantly, to be fully accountable for every single dollar we spend. It's not our money, it's the taxpayers' money," Wilson said. "We're proud to be the first in Northeast Ohio to sign on and implement."

Mentor Schools Superintendent Matthew Miller also thanked Mandel and his office for offering their services without any additional cost to the district.

"This is just one more feather in our cap in terms of taking a leadership role in education," Miller said.

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