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Results Released from OrthoWorx-Funded Education Study

Schools are well-managed and solid, but need strategic vision focused on future improvements

Warsaw, Ind., April 25, 2011 – OrthoWorx today announced the results of a study of Warsaw area schools that was conducted by Cambridge Education LLC, a world leader in the field of evaluation.

“The overall takeaway is that Warsaw-area schools are doing a good job; they are well managed, facilities are excellent and the schools provide a safe, positive environment for students,” said Brad Bishop, OrthoWorx Executive Director. “However, according to the reviews and comparisons with other districts where orthopedic industry employees often choose to live, local schools need to have a greater focus on the future—to develop a strategic vision for even better performance, depth and breadth of curriculum, and quality of academic leadership.”

The Cambridge Education study consisted of on-site reviews of school performance, comparisons of outcomes data from a number of schools, interviews with parents, administrators and staff, and analysis from Cambridge, which, through its work, identifies best practices at schools nationwide.

“While the study demonstrates that there are definite challenges that must be addressed for the local schools to be considered exemplary, what we find exciting is that the system has already embraced the need for some of the changes recommended in the study and is moving toward the future,” said Cheryl Blanchard, PhD, OrthoWorx Board Chair and head of the organization’s Education Committee. “We are particularly enthused about the superintendent’s strategic planning process, now underway, and the interest we see in expanding the curriculum.”

Tim Boyce, principal consultant for Cambridge Education and the leader of the Warsaw study, said, “While our study found that in certain cases schools are not meeting the needs of all students and that the system can do an even better job of educating students to prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow, we were very pleased to identify that there is a solid foundation in place that can enable rapid system-wide improvement to lift the educational attainment of all.”

In the study's comparative data, Warsaw Community Schools generally scored lower on a variety of measures than reference schools where other orthopedic industry employees locate; reference schools included were Southwest Allen County (Homestead) and Northwest Allen County (Carroll) in Indiana, and the Round Rock Texas school district in Texas (Round Rock was selected because of its proximity to a cluster of medical device companies in the Austin, Texas, area). In particular, the Warsaw school system scored lower on SAT scores, the percentage of students taking Advanced Placement exams and in metrics ranked by Great Schools, the country's leading source of information on school performance (www.greatschools.org).

In addition to the Warsaw Community Schools system, the study also looked at the quality of curriculum and performance at Lakeland Christian Academy, Warsaw Christian School and Sacred Heart Catholic School. Each of these organizations was judged to be established, a standard better than that found in many of the WCS schools.

Specific recommendations from the study included the following:

>>That Warsaw Community Schools should develop a clear Vision and Mission statements, along with strategies for achieving those goals (the system is currently undertaking a strategic planning process);

>>That individual schools within the system should develop individual Vision and Mission statements, along with strategies for achieving those goals;

>>That the system should work with urgency to close achievement gaps between different student subgroups;

>>That the elementary schools should seek ways of expanding the depth, breadth and quality of their curriculums;

>>That the system should consider establishing "theme" schools at the elementary and middle schools levels to focus on areas such as Science and Technology; Performing Arts; World Languages and Culture; Environmental Education; Sports and Leisure; Global Education and Politics; World Civilizations; and Literature and Communications;

>>That the system should ensure that all students in every grade level have at least two hours of science per week, and that the system should appoint a "science and technology champion," who could coordinate best practices among all schools;

>>That the system should ensure that all students in every grade level have at least two hours of social studies per week, and that the system should appoint a "social studies champion," who could coordinate best practices among all schools;

>>That the system should explore the introduction of a World Language in grades Kindergarten through Grade 6; and

>>That principals be trained to more effectively monitor the quality of learning and teaching in classrooms and to provide constructive feedback that would help them to improve their professional practice. In this way they would raise the quality of instruction in their schools; the study praised the principals' management of their buildings, but said they needed to play a stronger role in leading the improvement of classroom instruction.

According to OrthoWorx, the organization will review the results and looks forward to working with Warsaw schools and other stakeholders to assist in addressing the recommendations from the report. "We believe our study will help inform the system's strategic planning process," said Bishop. "Our consultants said that our area schools have the potential to build on their very solid base to be the envy of communities across the state. We look forward to strengthening our partnership with the Superintendent and the entire Warsaw Community Schools system to support their current strategic planning process and to help marshal resources in the business community to enable our area's schools to reach new levels of achievement."

A summary of the study's analysis and conclusions can be accessed at www.orthoworxindiana.com/news/cambridgestudy.

As previously announced, a public meeting to discuss the study will be held Tuesday, April 26, at 5pm at the Grace College Orthopedic Capital Center (Room 106).

About OrthoWorx

OrthoWorx (www.orthoworxindiana.com) is a Warsaw-based, industry, community and education initiative established to advance and support growth and innovation within the region's uniquely concentrated, globally significant orthopedics device sector. Funded in part by the Lilly Endowment, OrthoWorx was founded in 2009 out of a comprehensive study conducted by BioCrossroads. The initiative engages and enhances the broader community interests that both serve and depend upon the sector's continued growth by targeting an integrated set of educational, workforce, cultural, communication, branding, logistical and entrepreneurial efforts.