



**Mr. Kose, Director of Noble Academy**



*Mr. Kose and Euclid Mayor, Bill Cervenik*

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**I**nsight welcomes the addition of another new section—along with *Legal Roundup*—to it! In *Q & A*, we interview a charter school champion from around Ohio. It could be a teacher, a principal, a counselor, a student—it could be you!

We start off this new feature with an interview with Mr. H. Thomas Kose, the director of Noble Academy Cleveland. Noble Academy is the first and only start-up (non-District sponsored) charter school in Ohio to achieve the prestigious Excellent with Distinction rating, which is the very highest offered by the Ohio Department of Education.

In November, Noble Academy hosted its sixth International Dinner sponsored by the school. Hundreds of parents, students, policymakers, and other charter school supporters came out for great food, great entertainment, and great times. Attendants included Ron Adler from the Ohio Coalition for Quality Education; Cleveland Council-man Mike Polensek; Buckeye Community Hope Executive Director Patricia Hughes; and Euclid Mayor Bill Cervenik.

OAPCS' Vice President of School Performance and Accountability Marianne Lombardo, with the help of her daughter Sophia, presented a special award to Noble Academy for its outstanding accomplishment. The following week, Stephanie Klupinski of OAPCS interviewed Mr. Kose on how he came to Noble Academy and what he sees as the keys to the school's success.

**Please tell us about your own education and how you came to Cleveland.**

I have a master's in educational leadership and a PhD in management, all from Turkey. I then taught writing at the university level in Turkey. I came to Buffalo, NY, first to get involved with a charter school, working with hiring. Then I came to Dayton and worked with Concept Schools... they then asked me to move to Cleveland, which I did.

**Were you confident you would succeed as a school leader?**

The early days, they were really tough, but enjoyable. We painted the classroom. We painted the cafeteria and everything. Other companies said they could not finish it in time so we did it. Concept Schools helped a lot.

If a school can survive in the first three years, they can survive. I promised Dr. Hughes [the executive director of Buckeye Community Hope Foundation, the school's sponsor] an excellent school in three years.

**What do you see as the keys to your success?**

You cannot minimize success to one single factor but I can say mostly our teachers. We have art teachers, music teachers, computer teachers. Our kindergartners even take all of the extracurriculars. We have full time kindergarten, and kindergartners are getting daily homework, and we are taking them on field trips.

Field trips are important because when I say "Study hard, do your homework, and go to college," it works but it does not motivate students as much as it should because I am their principal. But when someone from outside like you or the mayor says, "Hey, student, go to college," it makes more sense to them... those people are not paid by Noble Academy.

Last week, I took five students and a teacher to the University of Virginia. They met the president of the university. We visited Thomas Jefferson's house. We took students from fifth through eighth grade who had excellent records.

The second factor behind our success is the parents. They come to our school because they are not satisfied. They want to see their kids at the top places. They get involved at the school. Sometimes parents complain about homework—our students have homework every night. All students, even kindergartners, know they have homework every night. Parents sometimes complain and

say 10-15 minutes a day should be enough. But the gaps are happening at home, not at school. The gaps just become wider when they come to school. We explain to parents, we give more homework, and that we expect more parent support of it. That is why we are a better school.

**How do you measure student progress throughout the year?**

We have practice tests from Concept that we do four times a year. The results are sent in detail. We see the answers for the school, for a class, for each student. We have long meetings in my office. I hold 13 meetings for 13 tests. We go over each student's [results], one by one.

**What can America do to prepare its students for success in the 21st century?**

You cannot close your doors and say, we are a perfect school, because we are a global economy. ...

We have global teachers. Our math and science teacher, and computer teacher [is] from Turkey.

We also need to have high expectations. The cut off score for math proficiency [on the old Ohio Graduation tests] was 38 percent... and we call them proficient? You cannot call someone who answers only 38 percent of questions correctly proficient.

Our goal is to have 100 percent in everything. Nothing else inspires me. For the school, it might be 1 percent, but for the child, it's 100 percent. We like that philosophy of No Child Left Behind, we should take every child from elementary school and make sure they go to college.

**Finally, why did you become a member of Alliance?**

In Turkey, we say, "two hands clap together, one hand does not." When we have more, we can learn from the others. We can get guidance. We can learn about news, what is going on in the House and Senate. The Alliance helps us to learn from each other. And when it comes to legal issues, they are strong advocates of the charter school.

Alliance can raise the concerns [of charters], and the voice it is heard. I represent a few hundred students. The Alliance is representing 100,000. Our decision makers know there is something going on here, and the Alliance helps us to hear and to be heard. 🏠