

SPONSOR UPDATE

JANUARY 2021

**Peggy Young,
Director**

**Jennifer Schorr,
Associate Director**

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Education Division of Buckeye Community Hope Foundation is to establish strong public community schools by adhering to quality authorizing practices, ensuring responsible oversight, and setting high standards for school performance.

OUR VISION

The Education Division's vision is strong communities of healthy, well-educated students, and a future in which all students have access to a high quality public education. Ohio thrives as increasing numbers of schools graduate students equipped to assume a positive role in society.

Governor vows budget investments will continue in upcoming biennium

In a year-end interview with Gongwer News Service, Governor Mike DeWine indicated that his second operating budget proposal – which will be introduced as a bill in the House in February -- will maintain some of the key priorities of his first, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic crisis.

Among the priorities DeWine is committed to continue funding is the Student Wellness and Success dollars to support K-12 wraparound services.

“I made a commitment to superintendents and to education officials that we would not pull the rug out from under them,” Governor DeWine said. “If they hired a counselor, if they set up a clinic in the school, that we would not pull the money back in the third year or the fourth year. You’ll see very robust funding for that in the budget that we will propose.”



The Governor also acknowledged that COVID-19 and the shift to remote or hybrid learning hasn't worked well for some students and their families.

“One of the things we've started to discuss with the legislature and with people in the education field is: How do we compensate for that lost education for some of these kids? We don't have an answer yet, but if you look at what we're going to do in 2021, that's one of the important things that we need to be doing and focusing on, is how we're going to do that.”



VACCINES OFFER HOPE, RAISE QUESTIONS

The COVID pandemic is far from over, but development and approval of vaccines that began rolling out in December allow us to see a light at the end of the tunnel. Recent polls reveal that not everyone will be willing to be vaccinated, raising questions for employers.

The law firm Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP recently published a document, *The Coming Vaccines - And the Coming Workplace Dilemmas with Mandatory Vaccinations* -- of interest to schools and other employers.

Learn more from your own legal counsel and by accessing the Vorys's document online at: <https://www.vorys.com/publications-2818.html>



Governor signs school safety bill

Governor Mike DeWine signed several bills at year-end, including House Bill 123, sponsored by Representative Gayle Manning (R-N. Ridgeville).

Entitled the "Safety And Violence Education (SAVE) Students Act, the bill requires districts and schools to register with the SaferOH tip line or enter into an agreement with an anonymous reporting program beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

Anonymous reporting program providers must annually submit to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and the Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS) the number of reports made through the program and the method by which they were received. Districts and schools are required to submit specified data concerning anonymous reports to both state agencies.



The bill also requires public schools serving grades six through 12 to create a threat assessment team whose members must complete a training program (from an approved list maintained by DPS) upon appointment and once every three years thereafter (unless a member has completed a program in the preceding year that is later approved by DPS).

Schools serving grades six to 12 must provide annual instruction in: 1) suicide awareness and prevention; 2) safety training and violence prevention; and, 3) social inclusion (beginning with the 2021-2022 school year). Appropriate state agencies are tasked with maintaining lists of approved programs.

School administrators will be required to incorporate a school threat assessment plan and protocol for the building's threat assessment team into existing emergency management plans.

New training system to come

Buckeye Community Hope Foundation (BCHF) is in the process of changing board training platform providers. This change will allow BCHF to offer a broader range of courses with a smoother experience for users. School representatives will provide more information as it becomes available. Watch your emails for the rollout coming this month!

LUDACRIS FOUNDATION'S KID NATION FEATURES EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT

Rapper Ludacris launched a new initiative last year featuring music videos aimed at teaching kids to stay clean and get along against the backdrops of the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide protests against racism.

"It's geared toward trying to enrich and empower the next generation, influenced by my own children and wanting them to live in a better world than we live in," Ludacris said. "I want to reinforce the positive morals and teachings as a parent, especially during a time when there's more home schooling going on ... Repetition through influential music is the perfect catalyst to get these ideas embedded in their consciousness and even subconsciousness because we know how influential music is for kids."

Check out Kid Nation online at:
<https://ludacares.org/kidnation/>



Writing Challenge: A perfect virtual project

For teachers who are looking for an idea that not only focuses on learning standards but also prepares students for state assessments, Buckeye Community Hope Foundation's (BCHF) Writing Challenge is an excellent option. This year's theme is "Seeking Justice," an important and crucial conversation for classrooms at all grade levels.

The elementary prompt (grades three through five) asks students to find an injustice in their world (their school, the country, their friend group) and to write a letter to someone in a position of power, urging that person to make change that will address the inequities of their chosen topic.

Middle school students (grades six through eight) and high school students are all reading a novel on which they will concentrate on either a character's influence on social justice or on whether or not the plot and setting of the novel are relevant to the world today.



Last October, BCHF staff hosted a roundtable for teachers to give them an opportunity to suggest novel titles and to discuss how the Writing Challenge would work with their students. In November, students joined their teachers with BCHF School Improvement team members to start the first Student Voice Book Talk. In December, students came together again to discuss the books they were reading and how they were going to begin their writing challenge.

Student book talks will continue in January and February (see details on pgs. 9 & 10) to allow student scholars to participate in enlightening discussions with students from across the state and with teachers.

Even schools that haven't yet started the Writing Challenge with their students can participate – it's not too late! Writing Challenge materials – including a lengthy list of possible book titles that could be used for the challenge – were sent to school leaders early November.

This challenge makes a perfect virtual project that students can work on independently. Teachers can teach small lessons on elements of the writing process (brainstorming, writing a thesis, how to cite textual evidence, characterization, etc.), then assign students to work independently on various aspects of the paper. Students can then bring that independent work back in breakout rooms or small groups to revise, critique and edit each other's work.

Submissions are due March 15. Need another packet sent to your school or help getting started? Please contact Mindy Farry at mfarry@buckeyehope.org.

COALITION GEARING UP FOR VOUCHER FIGHT

The Coalition for Equity and Adequacy in School Funding – the group behind the successful 1990s *DeRolph v. State* school funding lawsuit – has engaged a law firm, Cleveland-based Walter/Haverfield, to represent it in a future lawsuit on Ohio's school voucher programs.

According to William Phillis, executive director of the coalition, more than 50 school districts have already joined Vouchers Hurt Ohio. He predicts success in its challenge in the courts.

"The private school vouchers are being given to people with children who have never been enrolled in a public school," said Cathy Johnson, who serves on the board of South-Western City Schools, which is a member of Vouchers Hurt Ohio. "It's a rip off, plain and simple."

The threat of a lawsuit follows Governor Mike DeWine's signing of legislation (S.B. 89) expanding EdChoice vouchers.



Legislation would ban schools run by for-profit management companies

Among the bills considered by the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee in December was H.B. 549, which according to one of the bill's sponsors would "redefine what schools will qualify for charter school funding by requiring that all charter schools (that are run by management companies) be operated by a non-profit management company by no later than July 1, 2023."

Although the 133rd General Assembly ended with the bipartisan bill failing to move beyond a first legislative hearing, it's likely the bill will be re-introduced given that the bill's co-sponsors – Representative Jeffrey Crossman, D-Parma and Representative Gail Manning, R-N. Ridgeville – both won re-election in November and will return to the House for the 2021-2022 legislative session.

School funding bill saga continues

As previously reported, bipartisan legislation (H.B. 305) aimed at overhauling Ohio's approach to school funding was crafted by now House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and Representative John Patterson (D-Jefferson) with input from a wide range of stakeholders.

Passed by the Ohio House of Representatives in the year-end lame duck legislative session, neither the House bill or its Senate companion (S.B. 376, sponsored by Senator Peggy Lehner, R-Kettering and Senator Vernon Sykes, D-Akron) were approved by the upper chamber.



A major sticking point is the increase to the state's annual K-12 education budget, estimated by the House at \$1.99 billion and by the Senate at \$3.5 billion.

The bill includes a \$5 million appropriation from the Lottery Profits Education Fund to cover the costs associated with multiple studies to determine the true costs of various components of education including those associated with student transportation. Senator Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls), who chairs the Senate Finance Committee, indicated in a year-end interview with Gongwer News Service that one potential path forward is to focus on completing those studies before adopting a new funding formula.

"I'm hoping that we can get those studies done by the end of March," Senator Dolan said. "I think you'll see something about that coming

Continued on pg. 5

PSA CONTEST DEADLINE EXTENDED

The Ohio School Safety Center (OSSC) has extended the deadline of its public service announcement (PSA) contest to allow more students to participate in the statewide marketing campaign. The new deadline is January 31, 2021.

Ohio students in grades six through eight, nine through 12, and those attending higher education institutions are invited to participate in the school safety PSA contest to help spread awareness and encourage participation with the state's tip line.

Creators of winning video PSA submissions will be invited to the OSSC (when it is safe to do so) to work with the team to produce a professional quality version of their original submissions. The newly produced PSAs will then be used in a statewide marketing campaign for the Safer Ohio School Tip Line.

Learn more about the contest online at:

[https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/OHOHS/2020/12/09/file_attachments/1621722/PSA Contest Submission information sheet.pdf](https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/OHOHS/2020/12/09/file_attachments/1621722/PSA%20Contest%20Submission%20information%20sheet.pdf)

School funding — continued

up. We'll appropriate the dollars, but we need a full and complete picture of the whole funding model, and the best way to do that is in the context of a state budget."

There is broad support for overhauling Ohio's method for funding schools which was first ruled unconstitutional in *DeRolph v. State* in 1997. Stay tuned for more as the 134th General Assembly convenes early in the new year and Governor Mike DeWine's proposed biennial budget is introduced as legislation in the House in February.

Legislature sends pandemic bill to governor

Legislation (H.B. 409) amended to extend several COVID-19 related changes to K-12 laws has been approved by the General Assembly and send to Governor Mike DeWine to be signed into state law.

Originally focused on e-school attendance, the bill was amended to add pandemic related provisions including: extending the exemption for schools from retaining students under the third-grade reading guarantee; extending the temporary authority for the superintendent of public instruction to adjust various deadlines; extending the prohibition on the Ohio



Department of Education from issuing ratings for overall grades, components and individual measures on state report cards; and, extending the safe harbor from penalties and sanctions for schools and districts based on the absence of state report cards.

The original focus of the bill was on e-school and district attendance policies which were maintained in the final version. Written reports to parents/guardians for each student with at least 30 hours of unexcused absences over the course of a semester will now be required, and schools must determine whether a remote learning student's absences should trigger absence intervention.

Elf still onsite despite students learning remotely

The Elf showed up at Horizon Science Academy Youngstown (HSAY) again this year, refusing to let COVID stop him from making his regular appearance during the 2020 holiday season.

He and his partner Rick Van Norde – the school's building manager, better known as "Mr. Rick" – were determined to make the winter holiday season special, despite the fact that students are learning remotely and staff are working from home or independently in their classrooms.

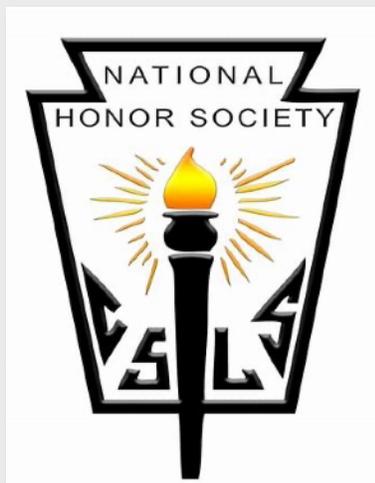
Continued on pg. 6

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**CONGRATS,
HONOREES!**
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Hamilton County Math and Science Academy's lead advisor, Kristen Weickert, recently hosted the school's annual National Honor Society (NHS) induction.

Held virtually this year, 103 students in grades three through eight who exemplify NHS's attributes –scholarship, leadership, citizenship and character – were honored.

Congrats to all who earned this special recognition!



Elf— continued

The Elf and Mr. Rick both enjoy the holiday season and work to make it special for HSAY students. They teamed up again this year and shared photos of their daily exploits with staff, students and their families. Both worked to keep the sidewalks clear on a snowy day and hung out together at the building entrance as they have in the past to greet all who entered.



An Elf selfie ... or Mr. Rick?

One day, Mr. Rick tried to trick the Elf by wearing a disguise, but the Elf wasn't fooled! The Elf wrote students a note with the biggest crayon (a structural pillar painted like a crayon) he could find telling them how much he missed them.

Like the rest of the HSAY team, Mr. Rick always goes above and beyond the basic requirements of his job, doing special things for the school's students and, in this case, fellow staff. He looks forward to hosting the Elf again in 2021 when COVID is under control and students can learn – and celebrate the season – together.

Students experience the kindness of a stranger

A friend of a friend of Eagle Elementary of Akron Principal Nova O'Callaghan has become an annual supporter of the school's neediest students.

It all started last year, when O'Callaghan learned from a friend about Jeremy Powell's interest in donating three pairs of name brand athletic shoes to economically disadvantaged students. Powell, who is director of Copley Youth Football, has a passion for helping kids and understands what a big deal receiving a new pair of shoes can be to an economically disadvantaged child.

This year, he increased his donation goal to 20 pairs of shoes which, with help from others, quickly increased to 40 – Addidas, Fila and Nike, including some that bear LeBron James' name!

O'Callaghan asked each of her teachers to identify four to five students from their classrooms whose shoes were worn out, too small, too big, or otherwise in obvious need of replacement. One young student who needed shoes this year was still regularly wearing those donated to her by Powell last year.

Continued on pg. 7

FAMILY OF MURDERED STUDENT APPEALS TO OHIO SUPREME COURT

The parents of Alianna DeFreeze, who was kidnapped while on her way to school and found murdered several days later, are asking the Ohio Supreme Court to overturn an appeals court ruling that her charter school was immune in a civil suit.

In the initial lawsuit, the family and estate of the young girl claimed that the school “breached a critical duty owed to each and every parent to provide notice of a missing child.”

Alianna’s death led to the passage of “Alianna’s Alert” (S.B. 82, which was amended into Am. Sub. H.B. 66) in 2019 which requires public schools to attempt to contact within 120 minutes of the start of the school day the parent, guardian, or caretaker of a student who is absent from school without legitimate excuse.



Kindness — continued

Once the list was established, determining correct sizes – through students’ parents or, in some cases, by taking shoes students were wearing right off their feet -- was the next step.

“The students were so excited,” O’Callaghan said. “And not one child who didn’t receive new shoes was jealous of those who did. Their reaction was ‘Wow – that’s great you got a new pair of shoes!’”

Students received their shoes around the Thanksgiving holiday, before Summit County’s COVID rating turned to purple and the school shifted to virtual learning. Students received their shoes during the regular school day and were instructed to carry them home in their book bags.

“We do a lot to help our students – 100 percent of whom are economically disadvantaged – throughout the school year,” O’Callaghan said. “They don’t see donations as charity, but simply as helping those who need it.”

Powell, and his wife – an RN at Akron Children’s hospital – were on hand when students received shoes last year but couldn’t be due to COVID this year. O’Callaghan sent the Powells photos so they could still experience the joy their gifts brought to Eagle students.

For the Christmas holiday, Board Vice President Susan Davis and her husband teamed up with the Dream Center in Akron to provide food for kids during the winter break. All families were invited to receive boxes with meals for breakfast and lunch, as well as a stocking filled with holiday gifts.

Eagle Elementary will continue to make providing support beyond academics to students in need a priority. Powell has established a lofty goal for next year: providing every Eagle student with a new pair of name brand athletic shoes and the thrill that comes from receiving such a generous gift.



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**ATTENDANCE
WORKS: RESOURCE
SPOTLIGHT**
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Attendance Works Parent Flyers – available in English and Spanish – have been updated with tips for learning during COVID-19 and can be emailed to students’ families to help them better understand the connection between absenteeism and academic achievement. Access the flyers online at:
[https://
www.attendanceworks.org/
resources/handouts-for-families/](https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/handouts-for-families/)

Through a collaboration with Discovery Education and Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Kaiser Permanente has expanded its Resilience in School Environments (RISE) initiative to include a new series of e-learning modules called *Ready, Set, RISE!* These no cost, on-demand learning modules reinforce the human connection and empathy in schools. Access *Ready, Set, RISE!* online at:
[https://
www.readysetrisemodules.com/](https://www.readysetrisemodules.com/)



COVID can’t stop Cooking With Dads

The National Center for Urban Solutions’ mission extends beyond education and running two dropout prevention and recovery charter schools – The Academy for Urban Scholars Columbus and Academy for Urban Scholars Youngstown. Its African American Male Wellness Agency hosts various events, including an annual wellness walk and Cooking With Dads.

Spotlighted on the news by Columbus’ NBC affiliate, Cooking With Dads was hosted virtually this year, with more than 100 families picking up meal kits -- generously donated by Hello Fresh -- filled with fresh ingredients to take home to cook up tasty meals and warm memories.



“It’s very important. It’s critical, in particular, in the African-American community to promote healthy living and also fatherhood and being actively involved and engaged with their children,” said Emmanuel Anthony, director of The Academy for Urban Scholars Columbus. “Whether you’re a father, grandfather, uncle, any male figure – if you’re in the life of young people, it’s important that we engage with them. Sometimes cooking together can promote that social component that so many of us need.”



Due to COVID-19, Cooking With Dads participants relied on Zoom this year, but each family spending time together was the most important personal engagement.

“It has the fatherhood initiative where we’re spending time with our kids, getting them off the Internet ... all the screens, in general. Just spending time with them,” said Malcolm White, project manager for the African American Wellness Agency. “Then also making sure they have a well-balanced, healthy meal, not eating out fast-food or going and eating a lot of fatty meals. Instead, they’re making a homemade, healthy meal with a lot of healthy ingredients inside of it.”

Buckeye Community Hope Foundation is a proud sponsor of both schools managed by the National Center for Urban Solutions and of the 2020 Cooking With Dads event.

FROM EDUCATION WEEK: THIS AWFUL YEAR IN 6 WORDS

Education Week asked its readers and staff to summarize 2020 - the most infuriating, frightening, depressing year in recent memory - using just six words.

The inspiration for this activity was Ernest Hemingway, who when challenged to write a novel in six words, came up with this: "For Sale: Baby Shoes, Never Worn."

Here are a few of the many powerful mini-memoirs ...

- ♦ **I can't hear you. You're muted!** - Jeffery Burton, dean of K-6 students, Arkansas
- ♦ **Everyone is at the breaking point.** - Amanda, National Skills Coalition
- ♦ **Bars are open. Schools are closed.** - Chad Aldeman, Bellwether Education
- ♦ **Hello class, can everyone hear me?** -- Heather Parker Devrick, California
- ♦ **Sad, depressing, weird, house bound. Strange.** - Lorraine Tawfik, math tutor
- ♦ **So many losses, but we're surviving.** - Christina Samuels, EdWeek

Continued on pg. 10

UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

The new year is a great time for reflection. Think of your needs as a professional and your school's needs and let Buckeye Community Hope Foundation (BCHF) assist you through its school improvement resources. Consider the opportunities below or customized professional development. Watch your email this month for a *refreshed* copy of BCHF's Professional Development Catalog! With the exception of online courses all 2020-2021 sessions are offered virtually via Zoom technology.

STUDENT VOICE BOOK SERIES Meeting #3 - January 7, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

This session is the next in a series of combination book talk/writing challenges for secondary students and teachers. Books that are used will focus on the important conversations in our country regarding equity and race. The sessions will take place virtually and will include guidance on the writing challenge focusing on one of the book choices, as well as discussions and conversations about the books. Students may only attend with their teachers.

Register online at:

<https://studentvoice3.eventarc.net/e/44396>

ENGLISH LEARNER NETWORK Winter Meeting - January 14, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

These sessions are open to all who wish to support a diverse student population. Topics were identified from participant feedback. Register for any or all of the sessions. Topics to be explored include: culturally relevant teaching and the brain; cultures (focus on Somali culture); and, conferencing with students. Spring: successful grant proposals; teaching writing; and, differentiation.

Register online at:

<https://englishlearner2.eventarc.net/e/44397>

SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE #4 - January 21, 3 to 5:30 p.m.

This meeting is the next in a series of update sessions on topics in special education. Sessions are a networking opportunity for a community of practitioners from BCHF-sponsored schools to share in discussion of best practices. At this particular session, questions about the special education profiles will be answered and behavioral management in a remote learning environment will be addressed.

Register online at:

<https://spedupdate4.eventarc.net/e/44401>

NEW TEACHERS' NETWORK #4 - January 26, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

This is the third seminar in a series that walks a new teacher through the "minefields" of the first few years of teaching. Topics will include: classroom management; lesson planning and delivery; teacher evaluations; testing; special education; and other "hot topics" in education. You may attend any or all sessions; register for each seminar in the series individually.

Continued on pg. 10

**THIS AWFUL YEAR
IN 6 WORDS —
continued**

- ♦ **We must do better next time.** – Mark Lieberman, EdWeek
- ♦ **The superintendent cried during our interview.** – Catherine Gewertz, EdWeek
- ♦ **First year teacher: crying and trying.** – Abblie Rexroad, music teacher, West Virginia
- ♦ **Hardest year of teaching so far.** – Christina Collings, elementary teacher
- ♦ **One exhausting Zoom meeting after another.** – Giovanni Vincenti
- ♦ **Challenging, resilience, experimentation, learning, grace, community.** – Larry Wolpe, elementary school principal, Massachusetts
- ♦ **My students need more of me.** – Sarah Dawn-Watson Mott
- ♦ **We're doing the best we can.** – Shari C, elementary school principal

And as the new year begins, here are six words from the editor of BCHF's *Sponsor Update*:

Feels good to be looking ahead!

**UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT EVENTS —continued**

NEWTEACHERS' NETWORK #4 – continued

Register online at:

<https://newteachers4.eventarc.net/e/44402>

REACHING ALL CHILDREN THROUGH EQUITABLE MEANS – Rescheduled date: January 27, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

This series explores how the interaction of one's biases affects instruction and learning in the classroom and the ability to build supportive relationships with students of color and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD). The issue of race and culturally responsive education is complex and requires multiple opportunities to help us grow and develop. Topics include but are not limited to: parent engagement; recognition and reduction of prejudice; and, effective, culturally responsive teaching practices. Participate in any or all sessions offered.

Register online at:

<https://teachingforequity3.eventarc.net/e/44400>

NEW SCHOOL LEADERS' NETWORK – February 9, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

This series of network meetings will support a new or “new to the position” school leader throughout the year, covering topics of interest to all school leaders: testing; legislation; culture; special education; teacher evaluation; data; and, recruitment and retention of staff. Plan to attend any or all sessions; register for sessions individually.

Register online at:

<https://newleaders3.eventarc.net/e/44403>

BEST PRACTICES IN REMOTE LEARNING: All About Engagement -- February 10, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

This seminar is a continuing series of sessions targeted at improvement of remote learning. This particular session will cover specific engagement strategies for remote learning. Participants are encouraged to join in any or all of the series!

Register online at:

<https://remotelarning4.eventarc.net/e/44404>

STUDENT VOICE BOOK SERIES Meeting #4 – February 11, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

This session is the next in a series of combination book talk/writing challenges for secondary students and teachers. Books that are used will focus on the important conversations in our country regarding equity and race. The sessions will take place virtually and will include guidance on the writing challenge focusing on one of the book choices, as well as discussions and conversations about the books. Students may only attend with their teachers.

Register online at:

<https://studentvoice4.eventarc.net/e/44405>

Continued on pg. 11

IMPORTANT INFO ABOUT BCHF PD SERVICES

Email settings – Please keep reminders from going to your spam! Remember to make BCHF's registration tool, Eventarc, a trusted site in your email to receive confirmations and email updates on workshops. Upon registering for an event, you will receive the specific Zoom link.

Trouble registering? – Try copying the Eventarc link into your browser or try changing browsers. If you continue to have trouble, please email Dr. Carol Young at cyoung@buckeyehope.org. Please include names and email addresses of all registrants in the text of your message.

Workshop offerings and registration -- BCHF provides all workshops and seminars without cost to personnel *from its sponsored schools*. However, a minimum number of registrants may be required for a seminar to proceed and BCHF reserves the right to cancel or postpone programs due to low enrollment.

UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS —*continued*

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: online course via Moodle – February 15 through March 15, 2020

This course will examine the research regarding what works and what does not. The focus will be on expanding the teacher's toolkit of effective strategies as well as looking at the attitudes and actions that lead to success. The course emphasizes a proactive approach to avoid problems in the first place including designing engaging lessons, organization, building relationships and time management. Effective strategies to deal with problems when they occur will also be addressed.

Register online at:

<https://classmanagement.eventarc.net/e/44406>

USING GOOGLE TOOLS: online course –

Rescheduled date: February 15 through March 15, 2020

Many schools and teachers use Google Tools in their remote instruction. This online course, presented over the span of a month in four weekly modules, will explore the use of Google Tools in classroom instruction. Participants will create or revise a Google Classroom set up and will add to their "toolkit" by exploring Google add-ons and related tools.

Register online at:

<https://usinggoogletools.eventarc.net/e/44398>

EARLY LITERACY NETWORK MEETING – February 18, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

The Early Literacy Network is an opportunity for K-5 teachers, coaches, reading specialists and educators to share best practices in literacy education. Each network session will be devoted to a pertinent topic in literacy. In addition, discussion will share strategies for improving English language arts instruction in your classroom and your school! Register for any or all sessions to participate in fun and learn about literacy!

Register online at:

<https://earlyliteracy3.eventarc.net/e/44408>

K-8 NETWORK MEETING – February 24, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

The K-8 Mathematics Network is a community of educators sharing best practices in mathematics education. This network will discuss updates, trends and best practices for mathematics educators. A portion of each meeting will focus on sharing ideas and relevant topics to the world of mathematics. This network is open to anyone affiliated with BCHF-sponsored schools who work with students in grades K-8.

Register online at:

<https://mathnetwork3.eventarc.net/e/44409>

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Successful schooling

By Michael Grote, Ed.D., BCHF consultant

A recent news article in a national magazine featured the story of a teacher who had resorted to placing stickers on her face as a way of trying to engage her students in her remote class.

While I am not above resorting to a gimmick occasionally to garner attention, I couldn't help but wonder if this was the best we could come up with as a nation in order to entice kids into paying attention to the lessons we were offering. The human brain is naturally curious. Why could we not design lessons that build on that curiosity?

The Atlantic has been running a series of articles with the theme "On Teaching" in which they look closely at the strategies used by some of the country's most successful educators. As one reads the articles from the past two years, there are certain themes that are evident in all the classrooms and interviews.

Finding a way to connect the content to the students' lives, interests and curiosity comes through loud and clear in each of the articles. A social studies teacher in a high poverty school talks about how important it is to bring politics into the classroom in order to make the history lessons relevant and convince students that they are not confined to their present circumstances but have the power to make society both different and better. It provides some striking examples of making the classroom culturally relevant. Both national situations like the Central Park Five and local situations like a "juvenile disturbance" in Baltimore (the site of the school) are used as discussion material and

later as prompts for writing. All of this could be done online as easily as in a classroom.

A teacher in Michigan developed an environmental life lab, largely as a result of his own difficulties as a student. The lab became a place where students could observe animals, formulate their own questions and, in many cases, find a way to answer them. Science is a subject that lends itself to a hand-on, minds-on approach. Most importantly, the lab lessons have extensions into math, geography and social studies. Inquiry-driven science classrooms are very rare. The teacher laments that increased focus on language arts and math have decreased the time available for science which could

provide the motivation for engagement with the heavily tested subjects.

Supporting the first point of connecting content to students is the necessity of knowing one's students. The interviews make it clear that a uniform, prepackaged solution is not being implemented by any of these teachers identified as exemplary. It isn't that their schools have not adopted programs and trained teachers in using them, but these teachers have come to realize that one approach will not be successful with every student. The interviews are filled with examples of how the teachers learned something about students having difficulty and adapted in order to meet the students' needs, sometimes hiding from their districts what they were doing

Instead of trying to imitate the same old model of school that has been around for scores of years, why not make it our new year's work to develop a new model that better motivates teachers and results in higher student achievement?

Continued on pg. 13

Successful schooling — continued

when districts did not allow for flexibility. For example, “some students benefit from direct instruction while others benefit more from self-directed learning,” in the words of one teacher.

The third common thread was learning from other teachers. A teacher in Texas shared a program developed with her colleagues that helped Latino parents work with their children on reading at home. The program ended up costing only about \$2,000 but had a massive impact on student achievement. Other countries like Singapore and Finland provide many hours for teachers to work together to improve effectiveness. In the United States, we are quick to try to adopt their materials (e.g. Singapore Math), but we never seem to adopt their practices.

In my career, I have seen many attempts, particularly by large districts, to “teacher-proof” the curriculum. Even though the programs adopted were based on research-based, best practices, I never saw any of them actually work. I think it’s because no one program can ever do the three things outlined here: connect content to students’ lives and interests; know your students; and, collaboratively work with colleagues in your building to solve problems. Maybe we should use this time we have now to reinvent school entirely. Given the flexibility we have as charter schools, instead of trying to imitate the same old model of school that had been around for scores of years, why not make it our new year’s work to develop a new model that better motivates teachers and results in higher student achievement?

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