

# SPONSOR UPDATE

## OCTOBER 2020

**Peggy Young,**  
**Director**

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### 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.

### *Modified report cards released*

Last month, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) released 2020 school report cards which, consistent with COVID response legislation (H.B. 197) passed earlier this year, do not contain overall grades for any district or building, individual grades or ratings for given components or performance measures. The report cards also do not include any information about student performance on state tests, the academic growth of students during the school year, and the extent to which student achievement gaps are being addressed.

The report cards do provide information on graduation rates and Prepared for Success indicators, as well as demographic and enrollment data, and operational details.

Highlights of the 2020 report card results include:

- ◆ Continued improvement in the high school graduation rate – The four-year graduation rate stands at 85.9 percent for the Class of 2019, up from 85.3 percent the previous year. The rate has increased 7.9 percent since 2010.
- ◆ More students are meeting the Prepared for Success measure – The statewide percentage has increased to 42 percent with 3,994 more students contributing points to the readiness indicators compared to last year. The statewide percentage has increased every year this measure has been reported – up 7.8 percent since 2016.
- ◆ Gains in industry-recognized credentials and dual enrollment – Nearly 18,200 in the classes of 2018 and 2019 earned industry-recognized credentials, an increase of 3,427 from the previous year. The number of students earning dual enrollment credits jumped 6,121 from the year before and has grown 58 percent since 2017.

Access report cards online at <https://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/>. Information explaining available report card metrics is also available online at <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources>.



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## **COVID IMMUNITY BILL PASSED, SIGNED INTO LAW**

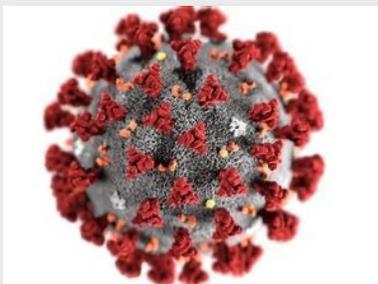
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Gov. Mike DeWine has signed legislation (H.B. 606) passed by the Ohio House and Senate aimed at providing broad COVID civil immunity for businesses and government entities, including schools.

Sponsored by Rep. Diane Grendell (R-Chesterland), the bill seeks to strike a balance between reopening Ohio's economy and keeping Ohioans safe.

"This bill ... is very, very consistent with these two goals," Gov. DeWine said. "Some of the people that are really the front line to both the battle to keep us safe and the battle to bring our businesses back and jobs back are represented by the groups that really have lobbied for this."

Signed by the governor on Sept. 14, H.B. 606 becomes effective in 90 days.



## **Extended testing, report card moratoriums proposed in bi-partisan legislation**

Legislation (S.B. 358) has been introduced to address school and district accountability issues against the backdrop of the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sponsored by Sen. Nathan Manning (R-N. Ridgeville) and Sen. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo), the bill would extend the current exemption for schools from administering state achievement assessments for the 2020-2021 school year and bar ODE from publishing report card grades for schools and districts for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years.

The bill would extend a number of provisions of COVID-related legislation (H.B. 164 and H.B. 197) enacted earlier this year related to funding, high school graduation, report cards and related sanctions and penalties, charter school sponsor evaluations and other issues.

Key education stakeholders – including the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, Ohio Association of School Business Officials, Ohio School Boards Association, Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators, Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators, Ohio Education Association, Ohio Federation of Teachers and Ohio Association of Charter School Authorizers – offered testimony in support of the bill.

The legislation would require the Ohio Department of Education to request a waiver of federal testing requirements which Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering), who chairs the Senate Education Committee, believes is unlikely to be approved.

## **Free meals available through year-end**

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) recently received approval to expand free breakfast and lunch to all students attending schools on the National School Lunch Program through Dec. 31. This opportunity continues the U.S. Department of Agriculture and ODE's dedication to meeting the needs of the whole child during the COVID-19 pandemic. The expanded program will provide nutritious meals to all students with fewer barriers, helping schools get back up and running for both in-person and remote learning. For more information, contact ODE's Office of Integrated Student Supports education program at 1-800-808-6325.



*Photo courtesy of Capitol Square Review & Advisory Board*

## MASK MANDATE CHALLENGED

About two-dozen parents are challenging Ohio's mask mandate for classrooms, filing a lawsuit against the state in the Putnam County Common Pleas Court. They claim that the public health order violates the separation of powers, and also violates First Amendment rights of free speech because mask wearing has become politically symbolic.

"The coronavirus disaster is the primary issue in the upcoming 2020 election," the lawsuit reads. "The wearing of masks and the imposition of 'mask mandates' is now a political issue with contradictory evidence available from credible sources. The wearing of face masks has become politically symbolic, and presidential candidate Joe Biden has adopted a black face mask as a symbol of his campaign."

"The opposing major party has taken the opposite view on nationwide mask requirements, and has called for the reopening of the state, like Ohio, where the government is still advancing the coronavirus disaster."



## State mandates, implements K-12 virus reporting plan

After announcing his plan to require K-12 schools to create ways – using new or existing communications tools – for parents to report student COVID-19 cases, Gov. Mike DeWine unveiled two new data dashboards to inform Ohioans about cases in schools and among children in general.

The first tool features data on cases in schools, broken down by county. The second looks at young Ohioans – those under the age of 18 – reporting the number of cases and hospitalizations.

The intent is to provide parents with access to information that will aid in their decisions on what educational options are best for their children as the spread of COVID-19 continues across Ohio and throughout the nation. The information should not, Gov. DeWine cautions, be used to judge how effective schools and districts are in taking appropriate safety measures.

Schools will be required to report COVID positive test results for students and staff to local health departments within 48 hours, with the information then provided to the Ohio Department of Health with aggregate data published weekly online at: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home>.

## All Schools Meeting 2020

Buckeye Community Hope Foundation hosted its first virtual All Schools Meeting on Sept. 16. The meeting drew 116 participants representing 44 schools. Pete Hall, noted author and educator, gave a keynote address on "Creating a Culture of Reflective Practice." A panel discussion of "What do we tell our students



about racism?" was featured in the afternoon. Timothy Moore, with Hamilton County Mathematics and Science Academy, ended the meeting with a moving vocal presentation of "Hero," dedicated to all of the teachers serving students in the era of a global pandemic.

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## **CHARTERS SHOW STEEPER UPWARD ACADEMIC TREND**

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A recent nationwide study of trends by researchers M. Danish Shakeel and Paul E. Peterson shows large academic gains for African- American students who attend charter schools.

The report notes that the number of charter schools grew rapidly since the first opened in the early '90s, but that the rate of increase has slowed since 2016. The researchers ask: Is the pause related to a decline in charter effectiveness?

They tracked changes in student performance at charter and district schools on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which tests reading and math skills of a nationally representative sample of students every other year.

The analysis shows that student cohorts in the charter sector made greater gains – nearly an additional half-year worth of learning -- from 2005 to 2017 than cohorts in the district sector. The biggest gains were for African-Americans and students of low socioeconomic status attending charter schools.



## ***Court case continues; legislation still pending***

There's been a new development in the lawsuit involving the legality of arming school staff who have not undergone the same training requirements as that of resource officers.

The Ohio Supreme Court has granted the request of the Madison Local School District to stay the Twelfth District Court of Appeals' ruling that armed staff are not exempt from the rigorous training requirements. As a result of the ruling, the district may reenact its policy on armed staff that was in place during the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years.



The district argues that its policy is permissible because state law empowers school boards to determine who can carry weapons in school safety zones.

Sen. Bill Coley (R-Liberty Twp.) has introduced legislation (S.B. 317) that he says clarifies that local officials may enact policies allowing for armed staff. Many testified in opposition to the bill before it was approved by the Senate Oversight & Reform Committee, saying it will make schools more dangerous. The committee vote was strictly along party lines, with all Republican members in support and all Democrats in opposition.

## ***Board debates elimination of administrative rules on adult learning program***

Many state agency administrative rules must be reviewed, revised as appropriate, and submitted to the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) for consideration every five years. Consistent with that requirement, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has prepared a rules package on programs for adult learners which was reviewed and discussed by the State Board of Education's Teaching, Leading and Learning Committee last month.

In preparing the rules package, ODE staff discovered that no districts are employing adult high school continuation programs. Instead, they are using the state's 22+ Adult High School Diploma, Adult Diploma and Ohio High School Equivalence programs to serve adult learners.

Based on that information, committee members have questioned whether the rules are still relevant and should remain in place. ODE staff have been instructed to determine if districts are aware of the continuation programs, if funds are allocated to support it, and the cost – if any -- of keeping the rules in place. This information is to be shared and discussed at the committee's Oct. meeting.

## ODE OFFERS PE VIRTUAL MEET-UPS

The Ohio Department of Education's Physical Education Consultant, Randi Myers, has partnered with the Educational Service Center of Stark County to host virtual meet-ups every Wednesday, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

All physical education teachers and administrators are invited to attend and learn more about various topics that are important to the field.

Ohio students in grades K-8 are required to have physical education as a part of their curriculum and must be evaluated within the specified grade band.

High school students must complete 120 hours of physical education (1/2 credit) for graduation.

Learn more online at:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Physical-Education/Online-Physical-Education-Resources>



## School drive-through feeds students' bodies, minds

Schools throughout the country – including those here in Ohio – have never faced a challenge quite like the global COVID pandemic. But they are rising to the challenge of addressing students' needs, even as so many temporarily abandoned plans to begin the new school year in-person or with a hybrid teaching model.

Constellation Schools: Lorain Community Middle (Constellation Lorain), slated to operate remotely for the first nine weeks of the new school year, has turned its parking lot into a drive-through for families to pick up essentials, including much-needed food for students, 100 percent of whom are economically disadvantaged.

Using funds already budgeted to feed students under normal circumstances, Constellation Lorain is providing five breakfast and five lunch meals – plus 10 cartons of milk, a mix of white and chocolate – for every student each week during two scheduled pick-up times.

“We started out ordering enough food to provide for every student,” said Principal Jordan McHugh said.

“That, of course, resulted in some surplus, which we've donated to a local church that distributes meals to those in need. We have an obligation to make sure our students don't go hungry and that excess food doesn't go to waste.”

McHugh is using his regular food services vendor with tweaks made to menus. Individual boxes of frozen food are delivered to the school first thing in the morning, thawing throughout the day as they are distributed.

“We've used the same drive-through approach to distribute other essentials to students, including school supplies and technology equipment,” McHugh said. “Every student has received a Chromebook, or in some cases a refurbished laptop, to facilitate remote learning. The drive-through system has worked quite well for students, families and staff. It's safe, which is really important, and efficient.”

McHugh has had to be resourceful in ensuring that all students – many of whom do not have Internet access in their homes – have access to online curriculum, connecting families with agencies that can help, making them aware of locations for public WiFi access, and providing hot spots for those most in need.



*Continued on pg. 6*

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## **ODE OFFERS VIRTUAL MEET-UPS FOR THE OHIO CAREER READINESS LEADERS NETWORK**

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In partnership with the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio, the Ohio Department of Education is hosting virtual meet-ups the second Monday of every month at 1 p.m.

These meet-ups are open to all career readiness leaders and offer resources and tools to develop post-high school readiness for students – whether it’s in preparation for their journey into the workforce, additional education or the military.

Find information about virtual meet-ups online at:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Media/Ed-Connection/Sept-8-2020/Virtual-meetups-for-the-Ohio-Career-Readiness-Lead>



### ***School drive-through — continued***

“It’s so important that we keep students engaged, despite the fact that they aren’t physically in our classrooms,” McHugh said. “Ensuring that students have the basic tools needed to learn under such unusual circumstances is absolutely critical.”

McHugh hopes students can safely return to classrooms in November. In the meantime, he and his team will continue to engage with students electronically, maintaining a personal connection with families with the regular drive-through activities.

### ***Sale of student artwork supports community organization***

At just nine years of age, Horizon Science Academy Lorain student Sophia Ohliger has earned a reputation as a very giving soul who raises money for good causes and makes other donations to local community organizations.

Her favorite class is art, and she recently learned a new technique of pour painting, which creates streams of color on canvas. The young entrepreneur has created lovely paintings displayed and sold on social media.

“Every different size and how long it takes us, we put that all together to figure how much it should be for each painting,” Sophia said.



*Photo credit: The Morning Journal*

True to her nature, Sophia has donated her proceeds to a noble cause. Thanks to Sophia, a local organization -- Our F.A.M.I.L.Y. (Fathers And Mothers Involved in Local Youth) – has been blessed with a donation of \$200 and a beautiful piece of art. The funds will support the local community program which provides for at-risk children.

Sophia was recently featured in a story published by the local community newspaper, *The Morning Journal*.

### ***Building remodel allows for expansion***

Students who are returning to their traditional classrooms at the start of the new school year are thrilled, but none more so than those who attend Horizon Science Academy Primary (HSAP) and have access to a newly remodeled section that has allowed for expansion from 11 to 19 classrooms.

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## **PERMISSION TO THRIVE: LEADING BEYOND SURVIVAL MODE**

EnvisionEdPlus has partnered with Miami University's Center for School-Based Mental Health Programs and the Ohio Mental Health Network for School Success to provide a free one-hour training that will help school administrators and their staff get out of survival mode.

During this live virtual session, school and district leaders, academic coaches, team leaders and after-school program leaders are invited to learn to give themselves and others permission to thrive by: creating a plan to increase balance, and connectedness and energy in their own lives; developing a strategy to replicate the training for their staff; and, accessing a virtual swag bag with resources, tools and training options to keep balance, connectedness and positive energy flowing all year.

Choose to attend one of two session offerings on Oct. 7: 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. or 4 to 5 p.m.

Permission to Thrive is free, but registration is required online at: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfaVuY\\_ueLCnKfs4XwWpNCa9S1enbwb1usXP6-l\\_ZRgpNPBTg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfaVuY_ueLCnKfs4XwWpNCa9S1enbwb1usXP6-l_ZRgpNPBTg/viewform)

## **Building remodel — continued**

“Our recent remodel was a part of the original plan when the building was purchased,” said Valerie Anderson, the school’s community outreach coordinator. “It’s allowed for planned expansion, from serving students in kindergarten and first grade, to second grade, as well.”

The building is now configured as a big block “O” featuring two long hallways with flooring that is slightly different but complementary – a mistaken shipment of materials that has turned out to be a blessing in that it’s easy to reference each section of the building by blue or gray.

Students now have access to dedicated art and music rooms, allowing them to leave their academic classrooms for brief periods three of the four days a week that they’re in the building.

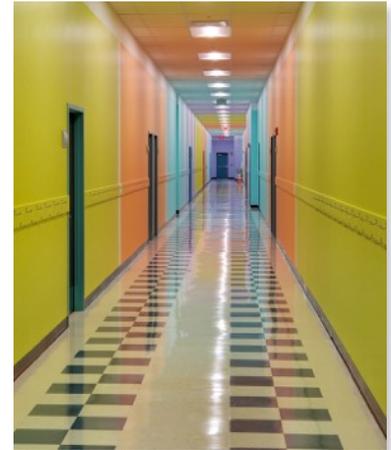
The facility already had a gym, which has been modified to help reduce the potential spread of disease. Individual activity circles have been created with tape on the floor to promote social distancing.

Although the playground is closed due to COVID, students are still able to enjoy recess, with paint used to create hopscotch and other safe, outdoor activities.

“Our students – and their parents -- are so excited,” Anderson said. “Although we aren’t able to host an open house due to COVID safety concerns, we were thrilled to open the new section of the building up to our students.”

The building is clean, bright and has a positive vibe.

“Our building is so inviting,” Anderson said. “We’re taking every precaution to ensure safety and are thrilled to welcome new and returning students to the classroom.”



**Intelligence plus character, that is the goal of true education.**

**— Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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## **DOPR STUDENTS PROMOTE GOOD CITIZENSHIP**

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At Focus Learning Academies of Southeastern and Southwestern Columbus, and Focus North High School, students are taught the importance of community service and good citizenship.

In that spirit, the schools' students and staff organized a "register to vote" activity leaving door hangers promoting voter registration and the importance of voting in the upcoming election at apartments and homes in surrounding neighborhoods.

It was a fun – and safe – activity with participants wearing masks and social distancing.



## **UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS**

October is a month in which Buckeye Community Hope Foundation will continue many of its networks and important conversations initiated in the August and September seminars. All sessions, except the online course in Moodle, are offered virtually via Zoom technology.

### **SCHOOL LEADERS' NETWORK #1 – October 6, 4 to 5:30 p.m.**

This support network will walk a school leader through the year, covering topics of interest. The following are samples of the topics suggested by 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. The next session in the series is scheduled for November 10 (see pg. 10 for details).

#### **Register online at:**

<https://newleadersnetwork1.eventarc.net/e/44360>

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE 2 – October 7, 3 to 5 p.m.**

Update sessions are a networking opportunity for special education practitioners. Come and share in dialogue about high quality services. A portion of the update session will be devoted to new information from the Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children, or other sources. Time will also be given to more in-depth discussion of high-interest topics, and to sharing of information among participants. An emphasis will be placed this year on high-quality, specially-designed instruction through remote learning and/or onsite instruction.

#### **Register online at:**

<https://spedupdate2.eventarc.net/e/44361>

### **REACHING ALL CHILDREN THROUGH EQUITABLE MEANS (RACE) – October 13, 4 to 5:30 p.m.**

This month's session will continue the conversations from August and September about ending systemic racism in schools! The goal of the RACE series is to help educators become aware of how the interaction of one's biases with instruction and learning in the classroom and of the ability to build supportive relationships with students of color and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. The issue of race and culturally responsive education is complex and requires multiple opportunities to help us grow and develop. Topics covered in the series include, but are not limited to,

*Continued on pg. 9*

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## COMPLIANCE UPDATE

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### Annual reports

Annual reports are an October compliance item and are due to Buckeye Community Hope Foundation (BCHF) by October 31. School compliance representatives will review each school's delivery method to parents, students, boards, authorizers and the Ohio Department of Education. They will also verify public notice of availability of the annual report in newspapers and/or online methods.

Section 3314.03 of the Ohio Revised Code states that the school governing authority will comply with the following: (g) The school governing authority will submit within four months after the end of each school year a report of its activities and progress in meeting the goals and standards of divisions (A)(3) and (4) of this section and its financial status to the sponsor and the parents of all students enrolled in the school.

Divisions (A)(3) and (4) state:  
(3) The academic goals to be achieved and the method of measurement that will be used to determine progress toward those goals, which shall include the statewide achievement assessments; (4) Performance standards, including but not

*Continued on pg. 10*

## UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS —*continued*

### RACE — *continued*

the following: parent engagement; recognition and reduction of prejudice; and, effective, culturally responsive teaching practices. School leaders, teachers and others may participate in any or all sessions offered, and additional sessions may be offered.

#### Register online at:

<https://teachingequity2.eventarc.net/e/44362>

### PRODUCTIVE MATH STRUGGLES – *online course via Moodle – October 15 to November 15, 2020*

This online course will help math educators deal with creating opportunities for students who struggle with mathematic concepts to deepen their knowledge and understanding of what is being taught. Participants will be introduced to six essential action steps that will allow the nurturing of productive math struggle. Educators will also explore their own feelings of math struggle; how they define it and how it affects their teaching. The course will require participants to interact and apply key concepts with their own classrooms and share their experiences of that interaction with the online group. Please register by October 7 so that books may be distributed to participants in advance.

#### Register for this month-long Moodle online course online at:

<https://productivemathstruggles.eventarc.net/e/44363>

### NEWTEACHERS' NETWORK MEETING – *October 20, 4 to 5:30 p.m.*

This is the second 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. Come for supportive conversation, or even for a refresher!

#### Register online at:

<https://newteachers2.eventarc.net/e/44364>

### BCHF ANNUAL BOARD TRAINING – *November 7, 9:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.*

BCHF's annual training will feature topics and activities – all virtually! The annual training event allows board members to fulfill the 2020-2021 training requirements and network with others who share this vital responsibility. Session will include

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## **COMPLIANCE UPDATE — *continued***

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### **Annual reports – continued**

limited to all applicable report card measures set forth in section 3302.03 or 3314.017 of the Ohio Revised Code, by which the success of the school will be evaluated by the sponsor.

### **Annual board member training**

BCHF's sponsor contract requires all continuing board members to complete a total of two hours of training per academic year. Under state law, all board members must take training on open meetings and public records annually. Boards may schedule training sessions or attend conferences to satisfy the requirements. Online training modules are also available from BCHF, and access may be requested through school sponsor representatives. BCHF will host a virtual board training session on Nov. 7, 9:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Additional information, including a link to registration, is available on pgs. 9 & 10.

### **Staff trainings due in October**

- ◆ Bullying, harassment and intimidation training
- ◆ Heimlich Maneuver training

Questions? Please contact your school sponsor representative

## **UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS — *continued***

### **BOARD TRAINING — *continued***

the required Open Meetings/Sunshine Law and public records training.

#### **Register online at:**

<https://annualboardtraining.eventarc.net/e/44410>

### **SCHOOL LEADERS' NETWORK #2 – November 10, 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://newleaders2.eventarc.net/e/44365>

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT BCHF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

***Email settings*** – Please don't let reminders go to your spam! Remember to make the registration tool, Eventarc, a trusted site in your email to receive confirmations and email updates on our 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](mailto: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.



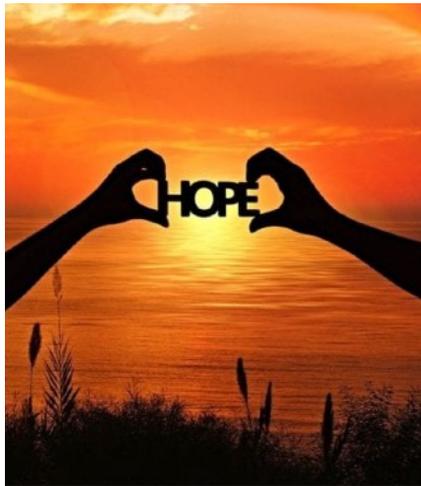
# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

## *I have HOPE!*

*By Kim Jones, School Improvement Representative*

I must admit that the past six months have left me, an extremely positive person, more hopeless than hopeful. I have watched many people that I know suffer during this pandemic through sickness and even death. However, what has caused me the greatest concern is watching our country deal with racism and social injustice, the second pandemic. As a result, the present state of our country is forcing me to take a stand with other educators to create classroom environments that promote justice for all and focus on *hope*. Through our work in education, we can help change the mindsets of adults who frown at the notion of a more equitable world for all cultures. This is essential if we hope to inspire a new generation of thinkers that will ensure in the future that we have a country free of racism. I know it is a lofty goal, but it's what I *hope* for and I am sticking to it.

Where do we start? We must start at the hardest place first, which is to increase our own knowledge in order to use culturally relevant pedagogy and create classroom environments that truly advocate justice for all. To do this, educators should challenge themselves to have conversations with other educators addressing racism and social justice. These conversations can be very challenging, so it is very important to establish conversation agreements. These agreements provide a safe space, where everyone's experience is welcomed, accepted and needed for the growth of the group. It is important to acknowledge that participants may feel anxiety and stress when talking about this subject no matter their race. Conversation Agreements can be found at <https://iel.org/> under Courageous Conversation About Race Protocol and Ohio Department of Education, Social Studies Meetups -- on Race and Racism instructed by Dr. Cynthia Tyson. Once conversation agreements have been established



among educators, the next step is to identify books that focus on race and social justice. As a school leader I would make reading assignments and allow teachers to use their creativity to discuss key ideas and discussion points from the assigned reading. The following site has great books that school staff can use for a book study: <https://www.weareteachers.com/> under the professional development section.

Once a foundation has been established through reading and conversations, the second step is for educators to use their knowledge to bring more culturally relevant instruction and social justice activities into the classroom. To do this, I will fall back on the language of all educators: curriculum. Based on their assigned readings and staff conversations, teachers should think beyond only incorporating cultural food, flags and festivals as a way of offering culturally relevant curriculum and instruction. These activities merely touch the surface of the culture and the people. It has

always been my thought that if we know better we will do better. As educators we must do better by finding curriculum that engages our students and then marry it with the standards that we need to teach them so a deeper cultural learning experience can be shared. Dyer (2002) states using multicultural literature, teachers can help students form a strong identity and deconstruct society's view that is often negative and forced upon them. Educators can use the following sites to find literature to teach concepts and meet standards: <https://aalbc.com/> (African-American Literature Book Club); and, <https://www.common sense media.org/> (Coretta Scott King Books).

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## HOPE — continued

The third step to work on is promoting a caring environment for all educators and students throughout the school. As educators, we know how important it is that everyone feel safe and valued in the school environment. Unfortunately, too many of our schools have become mini societies that promote a societal agenda, of social injustice driven by the “haves and have-nots.” Schools should be a place that empowers students to learn and develop the thinking skills that they will need to navigate throughout life. We must do a better job of relating to our students’ cultural experiences to know what is important to them and use cultural and social experiences to engage them through the education process. We should refuse to buy into the idea that some students just do not want to learn. We know that every student does not come to school ready to learn, but isn’t it our job to get them there? Finding ways to engage our students has always been tough but it is doable. To create classroom environments that advocate justice and engage students of all cultures, educators must look beyond what they currently see in students and focus on where the whole child can go. Carol Dweck (2020) encourages educators to use growth mindset research as a tool to battle racial bias that shows up in our schools and society. Educators must hold a growth mindset regarding all students’ abilities and work to create learning environments that empower all students (Dweck, 2020).

My most important point to school leaders is that your interaction or lack of interaction will speak

volumes about the importance of race and social justice in your school. Modeling what you expect from the teachers is key. If the discussion on racism and social justice is something that you, as the school leader, are challenged by, then it will be important to invite guests to share the conversation with you so that you are supported. This way you can feel comfortable leading your staff through this work.

One might ask, “How in the world are we going to get all this done while teaching through a pandemic and teaching remotely?” My answer is the same as it would be if we were back to what we consider ‘normal’ -- one step at a time.

You see I have **hope** that one conversation after another will build a foundation to create classroom environments that advocate justice in our schools. I **hope** for curriculum that does not just meet state standards but also empowers staff and students to find their voice and use it to critically think about how we can make our world a better place for all people. I know that the social justice reform that we **hope** to see in this country will not happen overnight. But it is my **hope** that we will see changes beginning throughout some buildings and then more and more will join in to create the change needed to live up to the words in our constitution, that all men and women are created equal. I refuse to believe this is as good as it gets. So, I choose to continue to **hope** for a better tomorrow.

**BUCKEYE COMMUNITY HOPE FOUNDATION**  
**3021 East Dublin-Granville Rd; Columbus OH 43231**  
**(614) 942-2030 [www.buckeyehope.org](http://www.buckeyehope.org)**

