

The ESC Community Connection



The Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County
The Bridge to Educational Excellence

Preparing our Early Learners

Even at their earliest ages, children gain valuable skills that will grow throughout their lifetimes. How well a child is exposed to high-quality early learning and development opportunities builds a foundation for a lifetime of learning. Whether those experiences are gained in their home or in a classroom setting, educators realize these opportunities are embedded in educational success.

On August 12 and 13, 2014, preschool and elementary school teachers, special education teachers, and other educators participated in the Fourth Annual Early Learners Institute. The institute was hosted by the Educational Service Center (ESC) of Cuyahoga County. Tara Kieser, preschool teacher at Independence Primary School, was one of the participants. "We explored appropriate and meaningful ways to integrate technology into classrooms in support of young children's learning. Ebooks were one of my favorite tools that have a 'WOW' factor with kids! Using ebooks on a device such as an iPad brings color, lights, sound, and an interactive component to stories that capture everyone's attention and motivate children to read. Students can create their own storybook, participate in a shared reading, and self select books to listen to as a read aloud," said Tara. "Digital media allow teachers to open up to many opportunities besides what's in their classroom!"

The passion and dedication that all of these educators

have for young children to be successful learners were enhanced throughout this conference by the numerous speakers and workshops. Participants heard from national experts and learned about the latest research-based early learning strategies. They were provided with opportunities to explore proven practices that create and support a successful early learning environment.

The ESC of Cuyahoga County is also working with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, the Gund Foundation, and other community partners on a campaign, PRE4CLE, that hopes to guarantee every child attends a high-quality preschool and every neighborhood has a multitude of great schools from which a family can choose. "PRE4CLE is a major initiative to improve education for our most important regional asset, our children," said Bob Mengerink, ESC Superintendent.



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Students Making a Difference are Recognized

The ESC of Cuyahoga County named several area students as recipients of their annual Humanitarian Awards. Recipients were nominated by administrators in their schools for showing leadership and community service as well as possessing great character during the 2013-14 school year. One student from each middle and high school in the communities of Cuyahoga Heights, Independence and Richmond Heights Local Schools received the scholarships and award. The awards were presented by ESC board members during their individual schools' award assemblies during the months of May and June.

This year's ESC Humanitarians include:

Recipients from Cuyahoga Heights Local Schools

Autumn Cohara, eighth grader at Cuyahoga Heights Middle School



Principal Tom Evans said Autumn shows a spirit of kindness, generosity and compassion in her daily interactions with fellow students and staff. "She does this, not because she feels obligated, but because it is part of her nature. Her random acts of kindness have benefited countless people, and have not gone unnoticed."

Michele Marcinick, graduating senior at Cuyahoga Heights High School



Michele has given up study halls in order to organize and run meetings of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes for the middle school. "She freely gives her time, never asking anything for herself, in order to better the lives of those she works with," Principal Tom Evans said. "The group has met with great success thanks to her kindness and caring attitude. Michele is the epitome of what it means to be generous and good natured."

ESC Board Member Frank Mahnic, Jr. presented both of the awards.

Recipients from Independence Local Schools

Christina Brunsman, eighth grader at Independence Middle School



Christina has been a member of the Builder's Club, choir, student council, volleyball, basketball and track, along with charity drives and Kiwanis weekend activities. In each activity she made an effort to reach out to other students to make them a part of the middle school family. Principal Ben Hegedish said she is on a mission to make life better for others. "Christina came to our school this

year with a broad smile and a loud laugh. Christina made a palpable difference in the eighth grade, our school and the community."

ESC Board Member Carol Fortlage presented the award.

Brittany Byomin, graduating senior at Independence High School



Brittany put in more than 500 hours of community service, including volunteer work with special education students, a church food pantry, St. Michael's PSR program, and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park on the Polar Express.

Principal Bill McGuinness said, "She is a terrific individual, who never looks for personal gain or recognition. She just wants to help others."

ESC Board Member Christine Krol presented the award.

Recipients from Richmond Heights Local Schools

Ihunanya (Precious) Obasi, eighth grader at Richmond Heights Middle School



Principal Tara Roberson said Precious demonstrates kindness and compassion towards others, treating everyone with equal respect and dignity, "turning the other cheek" to those who treat her poorly, and even providing pens, pencils and paper to classmates.

"She is truly deserving, not because of a single incident, not because she is nice to her friends, but because every day Precious practices humanitarianism to all people."

ESC Board Member Tony Hocevar presented the award.

Nichelle Blake, graduating senior at Richmond Heights High School



Nichelle agreed to be a "shadow" for a girl who had just moved from India. She was eager to help her fellow student assimilate into a new culture, new school, and the class of 2014. She showed caring support, not only to her new friend but towards others in the senior class. Principal Jason Tidmore said, "Her ability to bring the student into the Richmond Heights family was a stunning success. I have no doubt that their friendship will last long after high school."

ESC Board Member Anthony Miceli presented the award.

Richmond Heights Elementary School Participates in Science Fair

Richmond Heights Elementary School students capped off their spring focus on science with a science fair on May 23rd. The annual event was bigger and better than it was last year, thanks to a \$1,500 grant from the Innovation Lab Network, sponsored by the ESC of Cuyahoga County. Funds from the grant paid for two science-based assemblies in April from the Akron Fossil Science Center and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Participation in the fair nearly doubled this year, with 50 projects compared to about 30 a year ago. The projects spanned a range of topics ranging from the typical volcanoes and bottle rockets to plant life, astronomy, and how to make lightning. Volunteers from the city and area businesses judged the projects, which were given ratings of satisfactory, good, excellent, or superior based on the student's use of scientific method, ability to explain the experiment, and how the data were displayed.

Fourth-grader Molly Repasy took home the top prize for her project "How much grease is in your potato chip?" She picked the topic from several she and her father, Paul Repasy, found on the Internet. "It interested me the most," she said. The experiment required her to weigh a potato chip, then crush it and leave it on a piece of paper for five minutes to extract the grease.



Teams Go Head-to-Head in Second Annual Academic Super Bowl

The ESC of Cuyahoga County sponsored the second annual Academic Super Bowl on April 9th. More than 70 students from East Cleveland, Fairview Park, Independence, Lakewood, Rocky River, South Euclid-Lyndhurst and Westlake participated in this event. Teams had practiced since January answering questions using buzzer systems in science, mathematics, language arts, and social studies. Three team head-to-head competitions, computer questions, and individual team events determined the six teams that would participate in the final round. Westlake took home the district tournament trophy and the individual team champion medals.



Recognizing Excellence in Education for Students with Disabilities

On May 16th, more than 200 people came together for the 36th recognition of excellence in education for students with disabilities awards program at the Essex Place in Independence, Ohio. The event is planned by the ESC of Cuyahoga County and the State Support Team – Region 3.

The recognition brunch is an opportunity for educators, teachers, students, and community members to celebrate the great things that are happening in special education today. Students, peers, parents, educators, paraprofessional and educational aides, as well as community partners received awards. This year, three individuals from Independence Local Schools were recognized.

The Outstanding Educator Achievement Award, that honors educators who are exemplars in designing instructional strategies and programs, was given to Helene Ozog of Independence High School.

The Outstanding Peer Achievement Award, that recognizes students who have established positive relationships, assisted other students with disabilities, and are exemplary role models, was given to Elena Paporizos, a junior at Independence High School.

The Outstanding Student Achievement Award, that acknowledges achievements of school-age children and youth with disabilities in Cuyahoga County, was given to Dominic Presot, who was nominated by The Achievement Centers for Children.



Rose-Mary Center School

The second annual "Stroll & Roll" fundraising event was held on a cloudy afternoon on April 25th. Once again, the playground fundraising committee planned a well-organized, weather cooperating event. For a \$15 donation, a student was sponsored and the donor received a very smart looking ESCRMC tote bag. Staff, families and friends walked with the students through familiar sights in the Tremont area. They included community-based training destinations, such as the library, recycle center, ice cream shop, "Civilizations" coffee shop and numerous other sights. After the stroll, everyone was invited to the gym for snacks and a picture video of last year's walk. The stroll raised approximately \$450 for new playground equipment – a new swing set with two swings. Interested in donating to next year's event? Call 216-621-3451.



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Fall 2014



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ESC Board Members Receive Award of Achievement

On March 5th, ESC of Cuyahoga County Board Member Tony Hocevar received his fifth Ohio Award of Achievement from the Ohio School Board Association (OSBA). ESC Board Member Frank Mahnic, Jr. received his seventh Ohio Award of Achievement. Out of some 3,300 school board members statewide, only 58 received this award this year. In addition, Mahnic received his 15-year award of service as a school board member.

OSBA's annual Award of Achievement program recognizes Ohio public school board members who work hard to become better board members. They earn credits toward the award by enrolling and participating in workshops and conferences, volunteering for service to their association and working on behalf of their own board.



ESC Board Member Frank Mahnic, Jr.



ESC Board Member Tony Hocevar.

Cuyahoga Heights Local Schools Collaborate with Baldwin-Wallace University

On April 10th, the ESC of Cuyahoga County hosted the Bridging Regional Resources for High School-Higher Education Alignment Showcase to demonstrate the achievements of the consortium's members as a result of the three-year pilot project to enhance college and career readiness for students. Specifically, the goals were 1) to alleviate remediation rates in mathematics and English for entering freshmen in Ohio's public universities and colleges, and 2) to enhance teacher preparation for Common Core and Ohio's New Learning Standards.

Members of the ESC's consortium included math and English faculty from high schools in Beachwood, Hudson, Olmsted Falls, Solon and Strongsville, as well as from the Cuyahoga Valley Career Center. University and college faculty from Baldwin Wallace (BW), Cleveland State (CSU), Cuyahoga Community College (CCC), and Ursuline also

participated. With mini-grants, Beachwood and CCC collaborated on math placement exams and early interventions for students, while Strongsville and BW English faculty and students cooperated to improve student writing skills at the high school's Writing Center. Cuyahoga Heights faculty participated with BW faculty in a professional learning community. Consortium members are planning to continue the collaborations begun through this grant.



Joy Houchen, Cuyahoga Heights Elementary School Principal (far left) with Joe Bergant, Cuyahoga Heights Local Schools Superintendent and Tom Burton, Director of Administrative Services (far right)