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INDEPENDENCE PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT MAKES GYM MORE ACOUSTIC-FRIENDLY

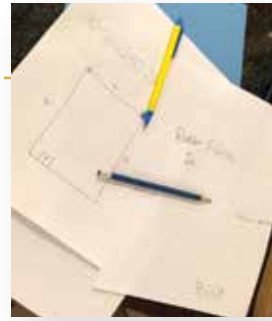
When third grader Isaac D'Anza noticed that the gym in the Independence Primary School was noisy during class, he decided to do something about it.

When he was standing outside of the gym one day, Isaac started a conversation with a staff member about the echo and noise in the gymnasium. This led to a collaboration with Assistant Superintendent Tom Dreiling on finding a solution to the problem. Dreiling and Isaac held weekly meetings over the summer where they discussed adding acoustic-friendly wall padding to the gym walls to absorb the sound.

Isaac D'Anza measured the wall space in the gym for the mats and was involved in the process of finding companies to perform the work and analyzed their quotes. He and Dreiling looked at design options and ultimately chose a company that could provide a customized look with Independence Primary School on one wall and the IPride logo on the other.

Dreiling and Isaac presented their project at the August 17 school board meeting. Isaac said that after working on this project, he learned he had a lot of guts to speak up about the problem and then present the project in front of the school board members.

"To see his excitement not minimize from day one all the way up until his board presentation is part of the beauty of teaching," Dreiling said. The mats have been delivered and installed. Students are already noticing less echo and noise in the gymnasium thanks to D'Anza's efforts.



WHAT DID PANDEMIC TEACHING TEACH US?

by Stephanie DeMichele, Learning Designer + Instructional Coach, ESC of Northeast Ohio

We've endured 19 months of uncertainty. As educators and parents, we've been challenged and frustrated at times. But that's what change is supposed to do: challenge us and make us better. And so, in addition to supporting teachers, I've also been researching the questions: What worked? What didn't? And most importantly, what did we learn to do better moving forward?

From what we're hearing and seeing since March 2020, there are three valuable lessons we, as educators, learned from pandemic teaching, and these lessons have the potential to transform education.



STUDENT-LED LEARNING

Speaking of collaboration, we're seeing educators put more learning in the hands of students as a result of witnessing both the creative and technical skills students displayed during remote learning. The adoption of blended learning where students receive a more personalized learning experience, that includes the best of both worlds to leverage Internet sites, tools, and apps in combination with traditional classroom instruction, encourages students to be more hands-on, more in control of the pace and path of their learning, and ultimately more engaged.



BETTER FEEDBACK

In addition, the pandemic pushed teachers to focus more on providing continued, focused, and constructive feedback during the learning process and less on traditional, end-of-unit multiple-choice test. Additionally, we're seeing students being encouraged to show what they know in a way that features their creativity, critical-thinking, and problem-solving skills. Finally, educators are adopting practices that encourage more do-overs, more retakes, and continued iterations of demonstrations of learning.



RELATIONSHIPS

As difficult as remote learning could be, we recognized the (perhaps forgotten) importance in having a tight-knit community in both virtual and in-person classrooms. Successful strategies that connect teachers and students need to include time for fun, time for self-reflection, time for social-emotional learning, and time for true collaboration.



SHOOT FOR THE MOON: IT'S ALL ELEMENTARY

Learning during a pandemic has had an impact on students both academically and socially. To help kids fill in the gaps, teachers at Cuyahoga Heights Elementary School are aiming to "Shoot for the Moon!" this year. "Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars," said Principal Joy Houchen, meaning that everyone can make some progress.

"It started out to address the fact that kids are about three to five months behind academically, but then it's also that kids don't know how to interact with each other. Some of our preschool kids were never in a school situation. We have other kids who haven't been out to eat. They have been by themselves for the greater part of the year. We realized, we need to teach our kids how to play together, how to negotiate with one another and to understand that everything isn't going to go your way and that it's OK."

Teachers spend the first 30 minutes of the school day in Morning Meeting Time to work with students on social/emotional activities. With the help of mini "lessons"

created by the school's speech-language pathologist, guidance counselor, social worker, and occupational therapist, teachers might show short videos for example and complete follow-up activities to help students get to know each other, understand school expectations, and learn to address problems.

Students earn Rocket Rewards for efforts to be caring, honest, engaged, and safe, and cash them in for prizes. Prizes include pencils, pencil tops, a homework pass, and maybe even lunch with their teacher or a golf cart ride with their principal.

To address gaps in math facts, a math computer program called Reflex Math was expanded in grades K-5. "The program is much better than flashcards and kids can do it on their own," said Houchen. Students become easily engaged in the program and often work outside of school to reach a certain goal. "The kids are excited when teachers announce that they hit their target. And, of course, once they have mastered these facts, it will help them in all of their math."



Just like our educators, we at the ESC of Northeast Ohio modified our approach to continuing education and professional development and have adopted microlearning approaches that better serve and suit the 30,000+ educators we reach. Microlearning is an approach to continuing education that favors technology-based, small- and short-term learning activities that have a big impact. For example, our YouTube series—"Lunch & Learn" and "The Weekly Wrap-Up"—are specifically designed to provide valuable instructional strategies and ideas for busy educators in under 15 minutes. We've also created book studies by text message and virtual coaching and training sessions.

Every teacher I know has worked harder in the last year than ever before. Hopefully, we made the technology work for us in that time and now, moving forward, we can work smarter and not harder. And assuredly even better.

Cover Photo: The Independence High School Biology Society members have been busy all summer and fall educating the community, both young and old, about the natural environment that surround where they live. Residents enjoyed attending the fall Open House at the District's Land Lab located on Stone Road in Independence. The land was once a Nike missile base. It is now more than 50 acres of protected land in the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation area. It also has an indoor nature center.

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LITERACY LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID-19

TIPS FOR IMPROVING LITERACY THAT ADULTS CAN DO WITH THEIR CHILDREN

By Jamie Smith, Curriculum Consultant, ESC of Northeast Ohio

Research tells us that children who read on grade level are more likely to be engaged in school and graduate. How can parents, grandparents and caregivers help improve literacy as a result of learning loss through Covid-19? Through the past 19 months, we've learned a lot about how children learn best and how evidence in the field of literacy and the science of reading can fill gaps and propel students on a path to being better readers.

Decades of research shows that written language is a code and to be a successful reader, children must figure out how to crack this reading code. Combinations of letters represent sounds. This is called systematic phonics and is not intuitive. The Science of Reading research shows explicit phonics instruction benefits young readers and particularly those who struggle to read. Deficits in phonics begin to compound over time, but there is much more to reading than seeing a word on a page and pronouncing it aloud. Children need to make meaning out of the words they read, which means they need deep background knowledge and vocabulary. Eventually, they need to be able to recognize most words automatically and read connected text fluently. But knowing how to decode is an essential skill in becoming a proficient reader. If children can't read the words on the page, they'll never become fluent readers. In a phonics program, teachers teach the letter sounds in a sequential systematic way and explicitly tell students which letters correspond to which letter patterns rather than asking students to figure it out. Teaching kids how to crack the code is the most reliable way to make sure they learn how to read words.

So, what can we do as adults to help our children read? Research shows that the most common factor in building resilience in children is having at least one close, positive relationship with a responsive and supportive parent or adult caretaker. Reading regularly together is a great way to not only build resiliency by spending time together, but also literacy skills by focusing on vocabulary and building background knowledge through text.

Tips to help build background knowledge and vocabulary and not just guess words include...

- » Read with your child nightly and focus on the words, not the pictures.
- » Don't tell children to "read the pictures" but rather enjoy the pictures and focus on vocabulary by providing a quick, child-friendly definition of a new words.
- » Have children repeat new words after you say them.
- » Use the pictures to talk about the vocabulary in the story, or demonstrate new vocabulary words, which is different from directing students to "read the pictures."
- » Have your child come up with their own definition or example of how to use the word and repeat the word again.

Adults also can have awareness around the type of books their child is reading. Decodable texts are books that align with explicit, systematic phonics instruction. They are simple stories constructed using almost exclusively words that are phonetically decodable, using letter and letter-groups that children have learned in phonics lessons. It's important to discuss with your child's teacher the reading skills your child is working on at school so they are practicing those skills when reading at home or independently. Above all, we want reading to be enjoyable and we can use reading to help make sense of our lives. When we, as adults, speak with our children about what they are reading, and our children have access to rich vocabulary use, literacy skills can flourish in children.

Information in this article was gathered from Ed Week, Parenting for Brain, The Measured Mom, and The Conversation.

CUYAHOGA HEIGHTS LOCAL SCHOOLS CELEBRATES HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Students at Cuyahoga Heights High School and Middle School will be referring to books, desks, and workbooks as los libros, los escritorios, and los cuadernos thanks to the efforts of Cuyahoga Heights High School's Spanish Club to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

Breaking into teams of two and three, the more than 70 club members have visited dozens of classrooms to identify common items that can be labeled with their Spanish name. During the week of October 4, students adhered the labels to the classroom fixtures. They also labeled items in the upstairs and downstairs main hallway at the high school and the main hallway at the middle school. In addition, teachers were given information about Hispanic Heritage Month to share with their classes.

"We do have Spanish speakers in our buildings and it is important for us in our school bubble to realize and respect the cultures of others," said Spanish teacher Christine Bennett, about the project. The club saw this as a way to increase knowledge and understanding of the history, culture, and contributions of Hispanic-Americans, and, at the same time, "get the word out" about the fun things happening in Spanish Club.

In addition to the labeling project, the Spanish Club held a "pulsera" or bracelet sale October 4-18. The bracelets have been made by children, teens, and young family members in Guatemala and Nicaragua. Because neither country's government has its own education system, families must pay to send their children to school. "Every amount raised will go to help kids in these countries pay for their schooling," said Bennett. Those who make the bracelets also learn a skill. "I think it would be fun to help some of the families out who don't have what we have here (in the U.S.)," said junior Kayla Vallee, about the bracelet sale.

On October 30, the Spanish Club took Spanish I and II students to Dia de Muertos (Day of the Dead) Ohio presented by the Cleveland Public Theatre. "This



is the only event in which students will have a really immersive experience featuring the Spanish language, art, culture, music, dance and food," said Mrs. Bennett.

Since 1988, the US has observed Hispanic Heritage Month by celebrating the histories, cultures, and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. The observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson. President Ronald Reagan expanded the observance in 1988 to cover a 30-day period from September 15 and ending on October 15.

The Spanish Club's positive efforts were featured on Ideastream's NewsDepth program during it's A+ Award segment.

RICHMOND HEIGHTS LOCAL SCHOOLS OFFER NEW MANUFACTURING PATHWAY FOR STUDENTS

Richmond Heights Local Schools is now offering a new opportunity for students looking for a career path in the manufacturing field after graduation.

This pathway enables students to build foundational manufacturing skills through a mixture of video, text, 3D animation, and interactive activities while fulfilling graduation requirements.

There are four certification areas used to assess knowledge including: Safety, Quality Practices & Measurement, Manufacturing Processes & Production, and Maintenance Awareness. In order to receive a Certified Production Technician (CPT) certification, students must pass all 4 individual areas. The CPT certification is a nationally-recognized credential.

"This program is what you need to become an entry-level production technician," said teacher Joshua Patty, Richmond Heights Local Schools. In order to teach the class, Patty took an instruction course that included troubleshooting a Skill Boss computer-controlled machine to test his ability to problem solve.

To incorporate work-based learning, hands-on activities, and field trips, Patty is reaching out to local manufacturing companies to establish partnerships. "Through cultivating partnerships within our community, the district will be able to sustain and grow this valuable program," said Principal and Assistant Superintendent Marnisha Brown.



The intended impact of this program is to give students the training necessary to get a foot in the door of the manufacturing industry and to show these types of programs will benefit companies.

"With more exposure, and as we build more partnerships, companies are going to see the benefits of fewer training costs of their future employees since we will already have a lot of that accomplished with our graduates," said Patty.

Currently, there are three seniors enrolled in the courses. Beginning next year, the course will be offered to both seniors and juniors to allow time for additional certifications including Certified Production Technician (CPT) + Skill Boss program.

Richmond Heights offers this program through a grant awarded through the Ohio Department of Education.

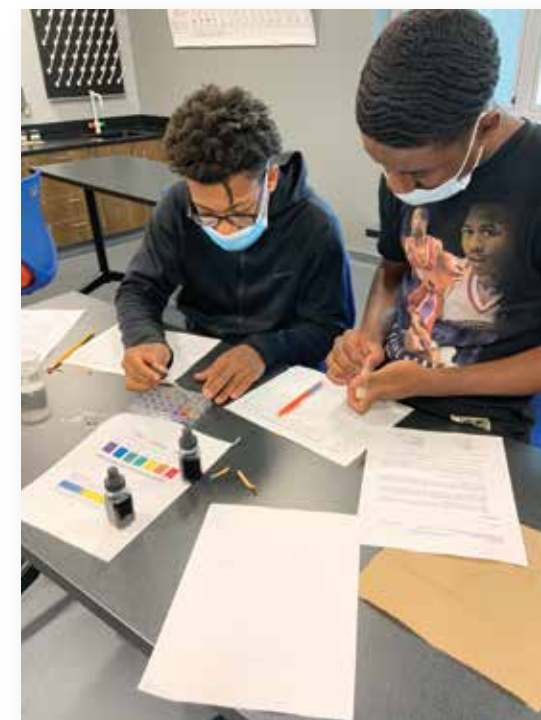
"We saw the need with the new graduation requirements to ensure that students had different career pathways and not just a focus on college," said Brown.

This pathway is one of several elective courses that students are able to explore through Richmond Heights Local Schools.



HELPING SCHOOLS IMPROVE MATH AND SCIENCE INSTRUCTION

By Bob Glavan, Curriculum Consultant, ESC of Northeast Ohio



Math and science teachers in the Richmond Heights Local Schools have been working with education leaders at the ESC of Northeast Ohio for several years. The ESC has provided many learning opportunities for these educators as well as coaching in the classrooms.

Math and science lessons have been updated, additional resources to help teach students are now being used, and many student-centered, hands-on experiences have been created.

Several Richmond Heights science instructors – Meredith Connerton, Ronica Dillions, Nick Grande, Brenda Graves, and Cynthia Sizemore – have become valued members of the ESC Northeast Ohio Science Specialists Network. This group meets four or five times each school year to share and learn new ways of teaching. They join more than 100 science educators from 25 different school districts that have attended these meetings. Teachers from Cuyahoga Heights Local Schools also attend.

The ESC also assisted in the planning stages for the cutting-edge Makerspace in Richmond Heights Local Schools' new 7-12 school building. District educators attended the Fab Play Conference at Hawken School in 2019 and 2021 to develop and practice skills needed to guide students' work in this Makerspace.

It is energizing to observe students in the Richmond Heights Local Schools engaged in work and learning. We are confident that the result of all these efforts will be graduating intelligent, problem-solvers who will be able to address the many challenges they will face as they enter the world.

