

FALL 2020

THE ESC CONNECTION

A DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER OF NORTHEAST OHIO



All in this
Together



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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

By Dr. Bob Mengerink, Superintendent

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I simply want to take a moment to say thank you. Thank you to all of you for continuing to persevere despite so much uncertainty. Thank you for your ongoing resilience under enormous pressure from so many. Thank you for your flexibility when your world changes daily. Thank you for your creativity in solving problems no one could have imagined. Thank you for your patience when others' emotions and frustrations are so high. Thank you for your humor in helping others adapt. Thank you for your leadership in guiding your students, your families and your colleagues through this crisis. No one could have predicted what we are all going through, but school leaders and educators have once again risen to the challenge before them. I know there is still more work to be done, but I have no doubt you will all endure and be stronger for it.

Please stay safe and be well. Don't hesitate to let us know if there is anything you need.

Sincerely,

Bob

[CLICK HERE](#) for the ESC of Northeast Ohio's professional development learning opportunities and calendar through December 2020.

Cover Photo courtesy of Berea City School District.
Taken at the ribbon cutting of their new elementary school.
Story and more photos on page 24-27.



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Career Readiness Toolkit *Available* To Districts



One of the pressing needs in our school districts in Northeast Ohio is to provide more work-based learning opportunities for students to gain an understanding of and participate in experiences in a real world setting that they can't obtain in a classroom setting. Career readiness activities which include work-based learning opportunities such as guest speakers, mock interviews, job shadowing, internships and mentorships help all students whether they plan to go to college before they begin their career or if they plan to head directly to the world of work. Such experiences provide opportunities for students to explore various careers, strengthen occupational and life competencies, develop a network of contacts, and practice transferable skills that lead to securing and retaining a job that will propel them into a career that is a great fit for their interests, passions and skill sets. These experiences also allow another avenue for students to meet the new graduation requirements.

Over the past several months, the Northeast Ohio Career Readiness Leaders Network and the First Ring Career Readiness Task Force have worked collaboratively to create a Career Readiness Toolkit

to support school districts in Ohio. In the first ring school districts, one of our goals is to create common structure, forms and processes in which this toolkit will help take a huge step to fulfill that goal. The toolkit was designed to aid teachers, counselors and community partners giving them templates, lessons and ideas to support work-based learning. In addition the toolkit contains resources, connections to Ohio's Academic and SEL standards as well as assessment links for students who need more support to meet their goals on their graduation plan. Lastly, we added a section to aid in supporting students who are participating in remote work-based learning opportunities to help them learn the appropriate etiquette for virtual meetings. The toolkit will be a fluid document that will have modifications and additions as we acquire new resources and ideas to share. [Click here](#) to access the Career Readiness Toolkit.

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TALK NETWORK

Formerly the Westside Collaborative and the Eastside-Westside Curriculum Group, this network is for individuals interested in networking with other educators on issues and topics as they relate to curriculum, instruction and assessment.

The members of this network believe in providing opportunities for all educational professionals in Northeast Ohio. Members have the opportunity to collaborate, examine and share effective practices and resources that support high quality educational leadership. In addition, there is an opportunity to hear from our colleagues at the Ohio Department of Education as well as other professionals.

Between the monthly meetings, members have the opportunity to email colleagues at the TALK Network using the email talkmanager@nort2h.org. Members can ask questions, seek advice and share ideas. The network currently has 200 members and is co-chaired by Heather Miller, Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction with



the **North Ridgeville City School District**, and Lea Travis, Curriculum Consultant with the ESC of Northeast Ohio. Membership includes assistant superintendents, curriculum directors, principals, coaches and consultants.

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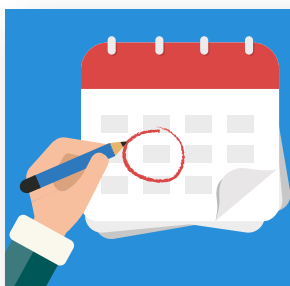
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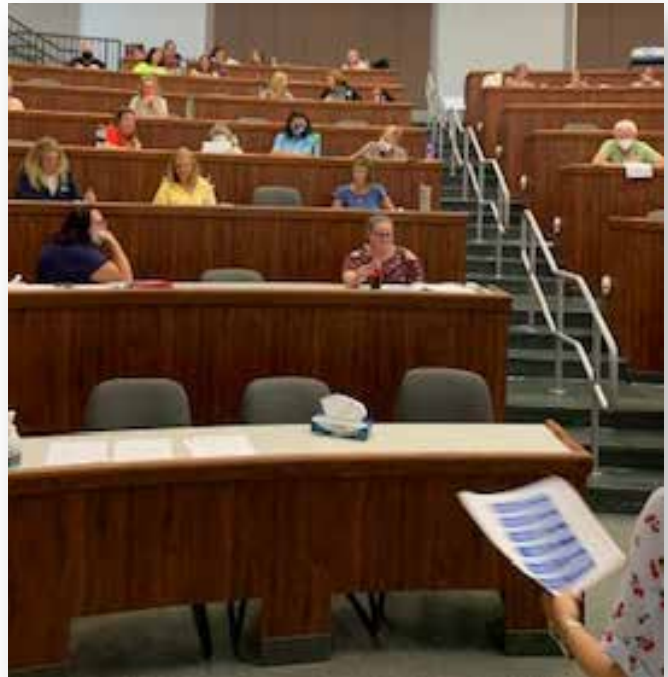
This school year, the network is hosting meetings **remotely**. All meetings are scheduled from 9-11:30 a.m. The meeting schedule is as follows: January 8, February 16, March 12 and May 21.

"RE STORYING"

THE ROLE OF THE PARAPROFESSIONAL



Dr. Julie Causton, founder and CEO of Inclusive Schooling, in partnership with **Barberton City Schools** and the ESC of Northeast Ohio, designed and created a two-day paraprofessional series that focused on “What a Great Paraprofessional Needs to Know and Do.” These sessions were packed with practical tips, helpful guidance and the best ways to provide effective, respectful services to students in inclusive classrooms. Session topics included making sense of the 13 federal disability categories under IDEA, managing and supporting learners with significant support needs in an inclusive classroom, and learning to “flip your thinking” and use positive language to restory the student focusing on student strengths and not their disabilities.



A wild RIDE!

What a wild spring and fall for the Teachers of the Deaf (TOD), Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI), audiologists, Orientation and Mobility and Life Skills Specialists.

Schools shut down and went into virtual mode. However, this group of outstanding professionals had to learn the virtual mode used by each of their districts. Without missing a beat, they rallied as a team, providing support to each other with strategies, materials and constant checking in with each other. This fall, they again began with some

districts virtual, some hybrid and some all in. Making a schedule has been a challenge as each week the game changes, with districts switching to hybrid or all in, changing the schedules weekly. However this team has met the challenge and continues to provide outstanding support to all our 69+ districts and charters.

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OHIO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

Ohio's Assistive Technology Conference and Vendor Fair was held on September 29. Assistive technologies (AT) are tools and supports that provide access to the curriculum and aspects of everyday life for individuals with disabilities. This free, regional event is held yearly and sponsored by the Assistive Technology and Accessible Educational Materials (AT&AEM) Center at OCALI and Ohio's 16 State Support Teams. For the first time, this year's event was held virtually. The day offered a choice of four concurrent Zoom rooms, with six sessions per room throughout the day for a total of 24 live sessions.

The advantage of being virtual was that attendees and vendors didn't have to travel to Northeast Ohio to participate. More than 400 people registered from all 16 SST regions across Ohio, 13 additional states, and three foreign countries. Conference attendees included administrators, related service personnel, intervention specialists, family members of students with disabilities and SST and ESC staff.

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NORTHEAST OHIO BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL

On October 16, members of the Northeast Ohio Business Advisory Council (BAC) of the ESC of Northeast Ohio learned about the economic contraction and rebound as a result of pre- and post-Covid-19 impact to the region. The BAC consists of ESC member districts collaborating to learn and engage with business organizations for preparation of students, workforce development and employment opportunities. The group meets quarterly during the academic year.



During this first session of the 2020-21 academic year, Jim Trutko, an economic analyst, consultant and author, examined historical periods from 2001 to the present to understand the economic environment and what is good, bad or considered normal. Due to recessions, employment has shrunk and then rebounded although not to its high in 2001. Business growth slowed during the 2009 recession with 3,000 fewer businesses as a result. The growth areas are in hospitality/leisure and professional/business services, although these are not the sectors

with in-demand jobs and highest wages. Post-Covid-19 growth is entirely in service-providing industries.

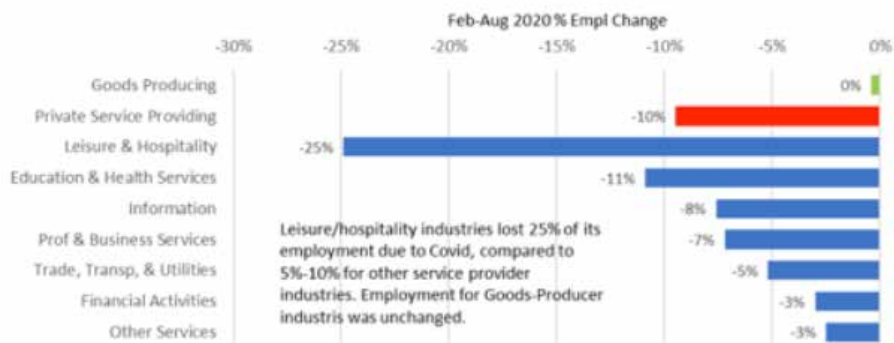


Presenter Adam Snyder, director of Workforce Connect's Manufacturing Sector Partnership, shared how business leaders in that sector have collaborated in response to our area's labor needs. They are focusing on preparation of youth and other unskilled workers by supporting transition from high school or low-wage jobs with specialized training, support for certifications, and aligning to post-secondary education at community colleges. Sector leaders are 1) partnering with education institutions to identify CTE students, 2) using cross-sector partnerships who employ students in first jobs, such as fast food, to scaffold transferable skills, and 3) advocating for key policies with a consolidated voice. Snyder advised districts with existing business relationships to deepen engagement, to recruit alumni as career mentors, and to develop a career readiness curriculum and work-based opportunities.

Pandemic Impact Was Severe On Leisure/Hospitality Employment, Moderate on Other Services, Minimal on Goods-Producers

Metro Cleveland Covid Employment Impact: Feb-Aug 2020 % Change

Leisure/hospitality Lost 25% of its Employment

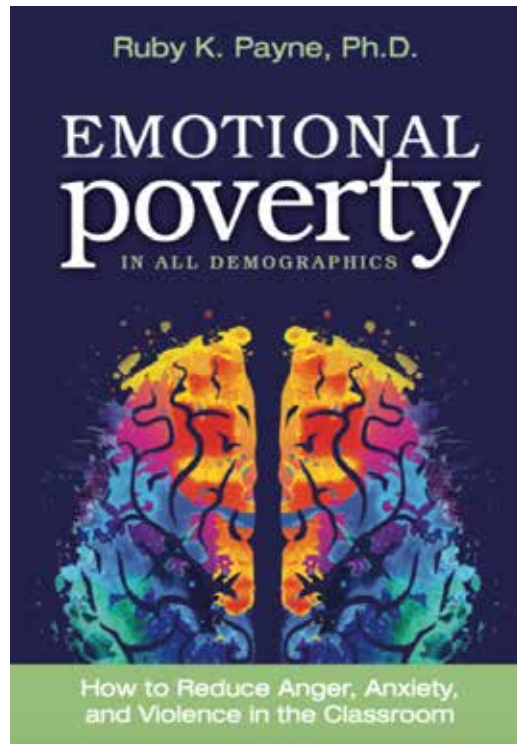


Source: BLS, Current Employment Statistics (CES)

Disrupting poverty **IN OHIO NETWORK**

On October 13, the ESC of Northeast Ohio Disrupting Poverty Network presented a program on emotional poverty. Presenter Shelley Habegger, Ph.D. is the Curriculum Director at **Barberton City Schools**. She is certified as a trainer for Emotional Poverty using strategies developed by Ruby Payne. During the virtual session, Dr. Habegger shared information about handling emotions and emotional outbursts. She provided ways to address anger, anxiety and violence as well as best practices to deflect student behaviors that work in the classroom.

The Disrupting Poverty in Ohio Network continues the series of workshops in November and January. On November 4, SST-3 Consultant Lisa Scott presented on Cultural Competence for the Classroom; on November 30, Paula Kucinic and Nadine Grimm will share Powerful Classroom Practices for Disrupting Poverty; and on January 25, Charesha Barrett, educational leader and diversity practitioner, will present on Social Justice in Education. A program on anti-bias is planned for spring. Register for each session via the ESC website.



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PASSPORT **School Program**

Guiding Extraordinary Individuals Toward a Future of Hope

The 2020-21 school year began in a very different way. Remote learning became the new normal to deliver instruction. The students have enjoyed this way of instruction and it certainly has been a learning experience for all. The students look forward to participating each week and seeing and hearing their teachers, assistants, therapists and especially their classmates. Students are receiving virtual 1:1, small group and teletherapy provided by the intervention specialists, teacher assistants, OTA, PTA and SLP. The Zoom platform has been both a challenge and a terrific learning tool for students and staff at the Passport School program.

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Mary (TA) reads a book on What Makes Night and Day while Retta (PTA) works with Mark to stretch out his arms to exercise and identify the pictures in the story.

Brad works with Ryan to recognize and say his vocabulary words. The students have enjoyed seeing their teachers and are engaged in the activities, often smiling and waving to the screen.



Rob and Rhonda (OTA) co teach a group lesson on fall with Delana, Mark, Dae'shon and Ky'Shawn. Students follow steps to rip pieces of paper, use fine motor skills and identify colors. Students are excited to share their finished works of art.





Civia (SLP) works 1:1 with Rocketta on her daily calendar activities by identifying day, month, date and weather, while Cody assists in the group home. Civia works with Haley on her first/then communication cards.



Rhonda (OTA) works with Kishan to trace the letters in his first name. A combination of small group and 1:1 teletherapy sessions are provided remotely weekly from the Passport School building.



Ms. Carol leads Movin with Music, a live Music Therapy group at Metz. Rob and the students join and participate in the music with instruments and stretching movements. They get excited to hear their names!



Rob uses the communication device with Micaiah to deliver mail to Kathy in the office. Micaiah uses a picture card at home virtually to deliver mail. "Here's the mail."



Staff and students dressed up for Halloween Zoom! Delan was a nurse, Dae'Shon was a doctor, Rob was a hippie, Lisa was a mouse and Mary was a bat. Students read spooky stories and identified characters and answered questions about the story.

CAPSTONE ACADEMY

What an unusual start to the new school year! Despite all of the uncertainty, it remains a priority of Capstone Academy to provide the highest quality educational services during these unprecedented times. The Capstone Academy 2020-21 distance learning plan includes a combination of remote learning and direct services provided on the students' residential units. Although we are starting off following a hybrid model, we are prepared to switch to either full remote learning or the return to in-class instruction at any time.



Ta'Myra watching her online lessons.

Our situation at Capstone Academy poses some unique challenges as compared to traditional school settings since our program is housed within a residential

facility. The introduction of a contagious virus would have serious consequences for our medically-fragile students. Capstone Academy is adhering to all infection control policies and procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff. Consequently, we have limited school staff



Jaquise attending his preschool science class.

interacting with the students on the residential units to minimize exposure. Our intervention specialists are creating videotaped lessons in all core areas (English/language arts, math, science, and social studies) for each grade level. The virtual lessons support the Ohio Learning Standards – Extended for school-age students and the Ohio Early Learning and Development Standards for preschool students. The Capstone Academy paraprofessionals assist students in accessing their academic videos. Supplemental online content is also provided weekly to support the lessons, as well as art, music, and adapted physical activity videos. Occupational, physical, speech language and massage therapies are provided through direct services to the students.

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SCHOOL READINESS STARTS EARLY WITH PARENTS AS TEACHERS PROGRAM

Will my child be ready for school when the time comes? That is one of the many questions new parents are trying to answer for their babies and toddlers; especially during these uncertain, atypical times brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

But for families in Cuyahoga County, the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program continues to offer support for optimal early childhood development. One of the main goals of the program: school readiness! PAT enrollment is open to families with a child from birth to age three, but services can continue up to kindergarten. The program provides parents with the knowledge and tools to support the health and development of young children at every stage. All services are home-based or virtual, voluntary, and at no cost to families.

“Many children in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County begin their first day of kindergarten already behind,” says Tom Wetzels, the Parents as Teachers manager with Bright Beginnings. “The pandemic only increases the need for PAT. Children develop through interactions with others, experiences and activities that are now limited to families for safety and/or economic reasons. Think about libraries, day cares, playgrounds, museums, etc. PAT can help fill the void.”

Through PAT, parents and caregivers can also join the online parenting support group, Parents Connect, to share resources and experiences. Parents Connect was the first of its kind to use Facebook for program participants in alignment with program goals.

The Parents Connect initiative has been so successful in recent years that it received a grant from the Bruening Foundation to conduct



a formal evaluation and to create a manual that could be used by other programs. Over the last two years, PAT programs nationwide have created their own social media parent groups based on Parents Connect. At this year’s Parents as Teachers International Conference, PAT leadership in Cuyahoga County fielded questions about how other programs can improve engagement. “Parents Connect has become more valuable with the pandemic so parents, who may be more isolated now and limited in their ability to get together with other parents and children, can have a platform to interact with others,” Wetzels added.

To connect families to PAT or other evidence-based Home Visiting programs, school leaders can start the referral process at brightbeginningskids.org or call (216) 698-7500. Parents as Teachers at Bright Beginnings is proud to be an affiliate of the Parents as Teachers National Center.

BUILDING A FUTURE

In a World
where you can be
ANYTHING...

BE YOUR

#



SELF
OCS 2020

A white structural beam sat outside the new Oberlin City Schools elementary school where community members, staff, alumni and others could sign either their name or write a positive phrase.

Building a future for education in Northeast Ohio during a world health pandemic has been anything but easy for the ESC of Northeast Ohio's superintendents, administrators, teachers, staff, students and parents.

The past eight months have presented challenges like never before.

But through it all, districts move forward in finding ways to present the best educational models possible for their community – whether remote, hybrid or all-in – to all students in Northeast Ohio.

Great things are happening in the classroom, at home, and on building grounds through new construction projects.

We are all in this together and continue to support and lift each other during these long, trying times.

Photos and stories submitted by local school districts.

Beam Signing Commemorates New Elementary Building at Oberlin City Schools

As the finishing touches are taking place on the new **Oberlin City Schools** elementary building, the District asked for current students, community members, alumni and even retired employees, to sign a white steel beam that was erected on November 12. “It’s important to leave behind a legacy for our future generations,” said Superintendent Dr. David Hall. “With the way 2020 has affected all of us, it is equally important that we remain positive. That’s why we are creating this time capsule of positivity.”

Oberlin City Schools is in the process of being consolidated into a single campus on Pleasant Street where the Oberlin High School is currently located. The next phase of construction will be a new building for grades 6 to 12, which will adjoin the new, currently unnamed, elementary school. The construction of the new elementary school is one of several in Lorain County that has been or will be constructed by Greenspace Construction.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view the progress of the facility.



Renovation of Learning Spaces at Mayfield City Schools



The renovation of learning spaces at Millridge Elementary School in the **Mayfield City School District** supports the district's path of personalized learning for all students. Reimagined spaces now provide students and teachers with a Media/STEM Collaboration Center, new student dining and a Grade 4-5 Collaboration Lab. The roof also was replaced at the school.

New classroom furniture at Mayfield Middle School (MMS) was delivered and installed this past summer. Work continues at MMS to complete a new greenhouse and renovated courtyard which has been unused for decades. The space will invite students to explore environmental education and tend to greenhouse plants and vegetables.



Is your district embarking on new construction or renovations? We'd like to highlight your projects in an upcoming *ESC Connection*. Please submit a story and photos to charlene.paparizos@escneo.org.



North Royalton High School Students Begin Learning in New Wing

The new Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) wing of North Royalton High School in the **North Royalton City School District** is complete. With the addition of high-tech science labs, new industrial technology, and flexible learning spaces incorporated into the classrooms, students will have the opportunity to collaborate with others and enroll in a variety of advanced science courses. The old media center and administration area was transformed into a new student dining/kitchen area. This included all new kitchen equipment, new administration offices and a new completed main vestibule that will be used towards the final phase of the project. The new media center features two small group rooms, a spacious student hub area and plenty of reference/storage rooms. This renovation also features

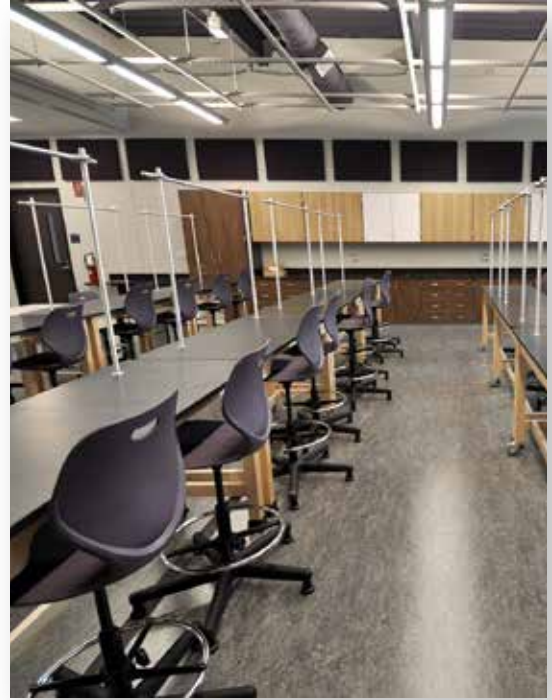
operable glass panel partitions that can be used to separate the media center during the school day if necessary. There is added access to the courtyard from the media hub with new windows and storefronts. Heritage Hall display cases are also complete and showcase trophies outside of the new auxiliary gym.

Recognized as one of the top 5,000 STEM schools in the country, the new wing's innovative classrooms and collaborative working spaces will undoubtedly advance the already enriching curriculum provided to students at North Royalton High School.

More pictures can be found at www.northroyaltonsd.org.



"We Inspire and Empower Learners"



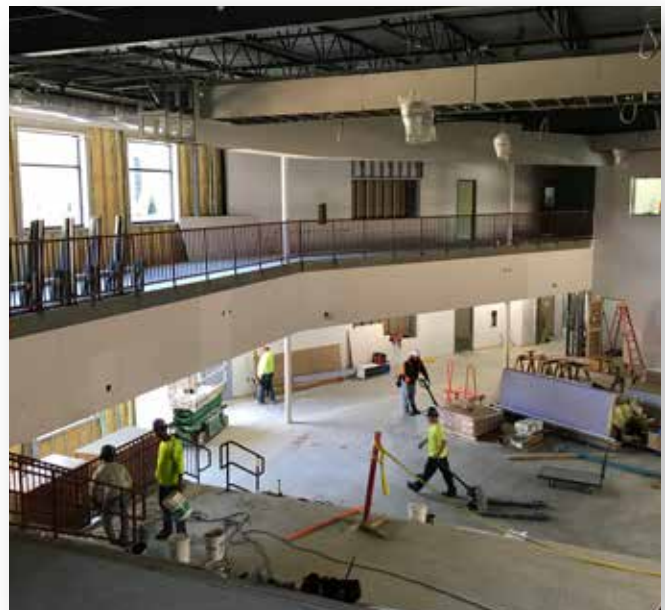


North Royalton Elementary School Construction Progressing

North Royalton Elementary School in the **North Royalton City School District** is starting to take shape. On the outside, sidewalks and site concrete are almost complete and asphalt paving is scheduled to start this month. Brick veneer and windows are also complete. On the interior of the building, framing is complete, and drywall is more than halfway done.

All underground utilities have been installed, and the road is in the process of being widened. The

sanitary sewer extension project is scheduled to start at the end of the month. Color is brightening up the building, too. The first and second grade areas have already been painted and the remainder of the building's interior walls will soon follow. In addition, cabinetry and ceilings are beginning to be put in place. The project is on schedule and on budget this fall and the District looks forward to the grand opening next year.





Chagrin Falls Intermediate School Construction Project Continues to Win Awards and Be Recognized Nationally

Chagrin Falls Schools' Intermediate School has been selected as one of the Engineering News Record (ENR) Midwest best projects. The project received an award of merit in the K-12 category. In November, ENR will run an in-depth feature on each of the winning projects. Gilbane Building Company was the construction manager and Stantec Architecture was the architect.

So far to date, Chagrin Falls Intermediate School has won three awards: Building Excellence Award from Construction Employers Association (CEA),

Award of Excellence from Commercial Real Estate Development Association (NAIOP) and now a Best Projects for Engineering News Record (ENR) Midwest.

“This recognition is due to the hard work and attention to detail delivered by our construction team,” said Superintendent Dr. Robert Hunt, Chagrin Falls Schools. “The building transformed the educational space for our staff and students while retaining and recognizing the historical significance of the site. This was all made possible by a community that supports their local School District.”

Fairview Park City Schools Completes Renovations

In late spring 2020, **Fairview Park City Schools** completed a \$35.2 million facilities project which includes renovations and upgrades to Mayer Middle School, Fairview High School, the Parkview Early Education Center, as well as minor updates to Gilles-Sweet Elementary. This is a result of the successful passage of Issue 112, the district's combined permanent improvement levy and bond issue passed by voters in November 2016.

Renovations and additions included:

- » Addition at Mayer Middle school, which included main office area, orchestra room, and upstairs classrooms.
- » Outdoor courtyards (middle and high school)
- » Air conditioning throughout entire buildings
- » Replace outdated heating systems
- » Handicap access updates
- » Upgrades to fire alarm system
- » Fire suppression system
- » Structural repairs (chimneys, walls, floors)
- » Interior and emergency lighting
- » Security upgrades
- » Addition to new classrooms (middle school)
- » New locker rooms
- » New cafeteria and kitchen (middle school/high school)
- » Addition of outdoor courtyard learning spaces
- » New Innovation Center (high school and middle school) with recording studios, library, and think tank
- » New elevators (middle school/high school and early education center)
- » Renovated main offices and nurse's offices
- » Parking lot and play area upgrades
- » New kitchen facilities
- » Interior/exterior doors
- » Replace outdated/damaged furniture
- » Electrical, plumbing, technology updates







Berea City Schools Celebrates Opening of Two Newly-Constructed Schools

Amid a global pandemic, school closures, and the uncertainty of whether construction could even proceed as the threat of COVID-19 grew, the **Berea City School District** remarkably was able to hold two ribbon cutting ceremonies for the newly constructed Berea-Midpark High School and Brook Park Elementary School on Saturday, September 19. In 2016, voters passed a 4.2 mill bond issue towards the construction of the new high school and elementary school. Students in the cities of Berea, Brook Park, and Middleburg Heights were welcomed back to state-of-the-art and engaging classrooms in October.







Brook Park Elementary School





Brooklyn City Schools' Students Showcase Artistic Talents While Beautifying Community



Students in the mural class at Brooklyn High School in the **Brooklyn City School District** will have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to showcase their artistic talents and help to beautify their community by partnering with the City of Brooklyn and Sherwin-Williams to paint a mural on the wall located at the intersection of Ridge Road and Brookpark Road. The creative design process began at the start of the school year, as students were tasked with creating separate designs during remote learning. Upon return to in-person learning as part of the hybrid learning format on September 28, the class discussed and voted on key details of the forthcoming mural, including background, color palette, font and overall theme. Students then submitted an initial design featuring components of earlier drawings for review and feedback by the City of Brooklyn. The mural class finished the final design during the week of October 12 and have resubmitted it for final approval. Introduced at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, the semester-long mural class was created and is taught by instructor Chris Kaspar. To date, students who have taken the class have created

10 permanent murals along with a series of rotating bulletin boards that have been installed in various locations throughout the high school.

This real-world learning opportunity is made possible through the support of several public, private, and nonprofit entities. As an affiliated community with Keep America Beautiful and the related Keep Ohio Beautiful, both nonprofits dedicated to improving and beautifying communities, the City of Brooklyn received the opportunity to partner with Sherwin-Williams on various beautification projects, including the forthcoming mural. Sherwin-Williams will be donating all paint to be used as well as fixing and priming the wall that will be transformed by the students' artwork. The National Art Honor Society will be extending support and helping to finalize the details of the mural. The project start date has been rescheduled for spring 2021 due to the ongoing pandemic and weather concerns. Students will work with the City of Brooklyn and National Art Honor Society members to complete the mural once work begins.



Local School District Vocal Directors Utilizing Technology to the Fullest During Virtual Learning with Choirs

ESC's member school districts are utilizing technology to the fullest, especially vocal teachers with their performance art classes. This past September, two high schools, Cleveland Heights High School in the **Cleveland Heights University Heights School District** and Valley Forge High School in the **Parma City School District** were featured on News 5 Cleveland for their creativity in singing virtually during remote learning.

"There are numerous different ways to go about this, and you find the one that works the best and you roll with it," said Jesse Lange. "No one will tell you that this is easy, but it's not impossible and it's still worthwhile. Arts are important, and this space is important. We're going to do everything we can. It's hard, but it's not impossible."

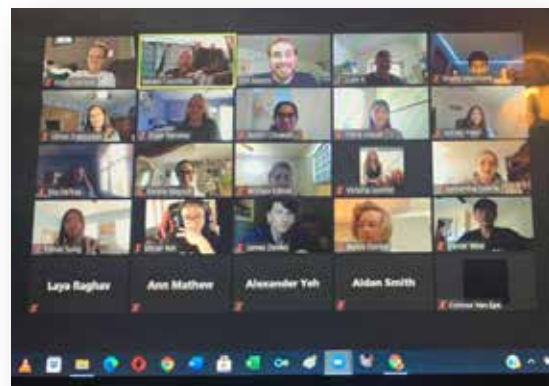
"We're still going to interact with music. We're still going to have those meaningful relationships. We're going to build that community that we know and love in our ensembles. It just might be through a

computer screen. It might be while we're wearing a mask," said Michele Haras, choir teacher, Valley Forge High School. "The

arts are going to find a way. Where there's a will, there's a way. What we do as artists is we create based on our environment. So even though our environment may be chaotic or different or digital, we still have that passion and we still have to find a way to channel that."

The Brecksville Broadview Heights Chamber Orchestra of the **Brecksville Broadview Heights City School District** had the honor of talking with "Dear Evan Hansen's" guitarist Tim Basom via Zoom in November.

[CLICK HERE](#) for News 5's segment.





Mayfield City Schools

EVERY STUDENT. EVERY DAY.

Outdoor Classroom Gives Gates Mills Elementary Students in Mayfield City Schools a Serene Space to Learn

If everything happens for a reason, then **Mayfield City School's** Gates Mills Elementary School fifth graders last year must have known their outdoor classroom project was vital.

In September 2019, the fifth graders in Jocelyn McCullough's classroom voted to revive the school's outdoor classroom which had fallen away to overgrowth over the years. McCullough's class raised \$500 to return the outdoor classroom into an inviting rustic learning space nestled in the pristine woods. Together, they planned to give the restored space back to their school as an end-of-the-year gift. Like everything else, plans were halted in March 2020 when the school doors closed amid the COVID-19 quarantine.

"My heart broke for the fifth graders last year who were robbed of so many end-of-the-year activities," said McCullough. "I refused to rob my students of their end-of-the-year gift, so I rolled up my sleeves and got to work." With the help of her friends, an Amish mill and "anyone affiliated with Gates Mills School," McCullough began the labor of love in July and completed it just in time for the school year to begin.

"After buckets of sweat, back-breaking work and a few cuts and bruises, it was completed August 13," said McCullough, who has taught Environmental Science at the school for the past nine years.

The space, which is nothing short of Zen, is available for all Gates Mills Elementary students in kindergarten to fifth grade. It is located on the grounds of the school on the Trepal Trail, in honor

of retired Gates Mills Elementary teacher Jay Trepal who built the first outdoor classroom 20 years ago. The restoration plans for the outdoor classroom began long before the coronavirus appeared which makes it an even more welcome opportunity for students who need some quiet learning time outdoors.

"The students can't use technology there because there is no Wi-Fi, but it is a perfect space for writing and read aloud," said Gates Mills Elementary Principal Laurel Ravida. "It wasn't planned because of COVID, but it is a great place for students to learn and take a mask break. We got lucky to have it now."



When McCullough was arranging the outdoor classroom this summer, she had the forethought to space the outdoor desks, which are designed from tree trunks and circular wood slabs, six feet apart. "The students invested in the idea and have created a legacy for another 20 years. It wasn't built for or because of COVID. It just happened that way," she said.

Milestone Project Provides Trees to Every Kindergarten Student in Lakewood City Schools

Part of the mission of the **Lakewood City Schools** District's Green Team is to nurture good environmental stewards among students and staff. Like the development of any mindset, it helps to start young. The team's Kindergarten Milestone Trees Project will give our youngest learners a tangible reminder of not only the benefits of healthy trees in our community, but it will also allow them to watch those trees grow as they do!

The project was the brainchild of Green Team and Harding Middle School staff members Diane



Quimper and Laura Balliett as a great way to mark the milestone of our kindergarteners' educational journey and foster their connection with nature. Each kindergartener will receive a poplar sapling to plant at home. The trees and planting materials were donated by Lynn Yanyo, founder of tree4all.org, and

someone Balliett met thanks to common interests in raising awareness and educating people about environmental issues.

"We wanted to create an opportunity for positive childhood memories with trees so that the next generation will be inspired to connect with nature

and advocate for natural spaces in our urban community," Quimper said.

On October 20, Green Team members and other district staff members joined with student volunteers from Help to Others (H2O) as well

as some District families to plant and package about 300 saplings for distribution. Parents and their kindergarteners began picking up the trees at their buildings this week. Along with the tree, they received an adoption certificate, planting and care instructions, and an original comic created by Balliett showing the many benefits of trees. We hope to see some photos of the students with their trees not only after they plant them, but as they continue to both grow each year as well!

While this project started with our kindergarteners, the hope is to see the idea grow beyond our community.

"Planting trees is one of the easiest ways to help fight climate change, and when these little learners plant their trees, they will be making a difference," Balliett said. "I hope we can continue getting trees out there and rebuild the tree canopy not only in our district but in districts all over."





Student Athletes from Kirtland Local Schools and Shaker Heights City School District Partner to “Build the Bridge” Towards Racial Equality

Student athletes from **Kirtland Local Schools** and **Shaker Heights City School District** are partnering to “build the bridge” towards awareness of social justice and race relations this school year. They are participating in the Build the Bridge program, established by Cleveland Heights coaches Mac Stephens and Kahari Hicks and Beachwood Head Coach Damion Creel, to create a coalition of coaches, players, parents, administration and community members to foster the success of student athletes through social-emotional, educational and athletic advancement. The program creates opportunities for all team members to build relationships and mutual respect between diverse communities, regardless of their race, class or creed.

The two districts are planning several joint initiatives focused on creating personal connections by conducting collaborative discussions on social justice and race relations, in addition to competing with one another on the field. Some of the possible ideas being discussed include both virtual and potential in-person activities that follow local social distancing guidelines and health and safety protocols amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the meetings and events, coaches and athletes will remain in regular contact throughout the year to spark additional dialogue and strengthen team bonds.

On Wednesday, September 2, Cleveland Heights-University Heights High School assistant football coach and one of the creators of the Build the Bridge program, Kahari Hicks, visited with the Kirtland football players at their practice to

talk about the program. “We want to take this opportunity to educate our student athletes and increase their awareness of others from diverse backgrounds and communities,” said Varsity Football Coach Tiger Laverde, Kirtland High School.

At the September 5 varsity football game, the Kirtland players, coaches and administrators wore T-shirts with the word “equality” on the front and a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. on the back stating, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

“We see this partnership with the Shaker Heights student athletes as a great opportunity and learning experience for our students,” said Superintendent Chad VanArnhem, Kirtland Local Schools. “Building the bridge and being a part of the solution is extremely important. Our goal is to have well-rounded, educated and empowered citizens leaving the halls of Kirtland when they graduate from our district. Having empathy and understanding of others is an important part of being educated and prepared to make a positive difference in the world.”

The Cleveland Browns and 850 ESPN Cleveland are also working side-by-side with athletic teams throughout the area, in support of this Build the Bridge program by highlighting teams, athletes and coaches participating in this initiative to empower, develop and unify high school football teams through meaningful interactions between programs of different racial and/or socio-economic demographics.



SENIORS

56

11

13



I HAVE A DREAM THAT MY FOUR
LITTLE CHILDREN WILL ONE DAY
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WILL NOT BE JUDGED BY THE
COLOR OF THEIR SKIN, BUT BY THE
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- Martin Luther King, Jr.



BUILD
THE
BRIDGE



Dr. Robert Hunt, Superintendent of Chagrin Falls Schools Named 2021 Ohio Superintendent of the Year

Superintendent Dr. Robert Hunt, **Chagrin Falls Schools**, has been named the 2021 Ohio Superintendent of the Year by the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA). His application will now be placed into the competition for the American Association of School Administrators National Superintendent of the Year.

“Dr. Hunt joins a very distinguished list of talented superintendents as he becomes this year’s Buckeye Association of School Administrators’ Ohio Superintendent of the Year,” said Deputy Executive Director David E. Axner, Ed.D., BASA. “His ability to always make decisions based on what is best for students, representing the Chagrin Falls Schools’ community with grace and drive, along with demonstrating a team approach to success contributed to this honor. Dr. Hunt was selected by a group of his superintendent peers and is maybe the most rewarding honor a superintendent can receive.”

Dr. Hunt was nominated by Director of Curriculum Becky Quinn on behalf of the District’s central office directors for this recognition. His nomination indicated, “Dr. Hunt is an incredibly talented, forward-thinking, courageous, and inspirational leader. He is a true visionary who places the needs of all students first. His commitment to moving our District forward to be a leader across the state as evidenced via achievement scores is surpassed only by his drive to provide holistic learning opportunities designed to grow, develop, and empower all students. During his tenure as



Superintendent, state test scores have dramatically improved, AP tests scores have improved while participation has increased, STEM programming has been developed, programming options for gifted and advanced learners have been developed across grades 2-12, unique options to provide real-world experiences and individualized supports for special education students has evolved, a 1:1 Chromebook Initiative including all K-12 students and 100% Google Level I Certification of all staff has occurred, and flexible learning options have been designed to meet the learning preferences and interests of our students.”

Dr. Hunt’s nomination cited that while his ability to lead the District staff and students and collaborate with parents/guardians and the community has

always been very apparent over the years, the recent challenges related to continuing instruction for all students through the COVID-19 pandemic have truly exemplified his leadership ability.

He was referenced as, "...a beacon of hope across the community, leading the district to be a stable and dependable force to support families and students." His leadership during the pandemic has included not only the development of multiple learning environments to meet the needs of our K-12 students, but also strategies to support the social and emotional needs of district students and families. Dr. Martin Luther King once said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." In a time of crisis resulting from the pandemic, Dr. Hunt's outstanding leadership ability has truly been showcased.

"The Chagrin Falls Board of Education is extremely proud of Dr. Hunt and his accomplishments and this recognition which places his leadership at the top in the State of Ohio," said President Phil Rankin, Chagrin Falls Board of Education. "It is no coincidence that Dr. Hunt is being recognized this year amidst all of the challenges and hurdles of 2020. He has shown particularly strong leadership as he continues to deliver educational excellence to our students. Dr. Hunt and his staff have created a learning environment where students can learn at their own pace with technology interlaced into every student's experience. His foresight, along with strong community support, enabled the students of Chagrin Falls to continue their education whether in-person or remotely at home."

"As with most recognition achieved within our School District, this is a reflection of the collaborative efforts of our students, staff and community," said Superintendent Dr. Robert Hunt, Chagrin Falls Schools. "I am fortunate to work in this School District."

Teachers Recognized with Outstanding Educator Award

Chagrin Falls High School teachers Carolyn Petite and Kenneth Kasee were selected for University of Chicago's Outstanding Educator Award. Petite was nominated by Parker Broz, Class of 2020, and Kasee was nominated by Maggie Mills, Class of 2020. Students accepted into the University of Chicago Class of 2024 were asked to nominate an educator whose guidance has helped them along the path toward intellectual growth.

Mills wrote, "Mr. Kasee remained a steadfast mentor, always there to guide me and answer any questions that I may have had. It was through his teaching and coaching that I learned the importance of hard work, creativity, and confidence. Mr. Kasee goes above and beyond what is expected from 'educators' because he does not merely 'educate' his students. He cares about them, believes in them, and inspires them to attain their full potential."

Broz wrote, "I am glad to have had a teacher so committed to her students. Mrs. Petite showed us the importance of passion and character. She was a caring mentor as well as a phenomenal educator. Mrs. Petite helped make computer science a life-shaping passion for me."

Bay Village City Schools Second Graders Work With Award-Winning Children’s Author to Create Books



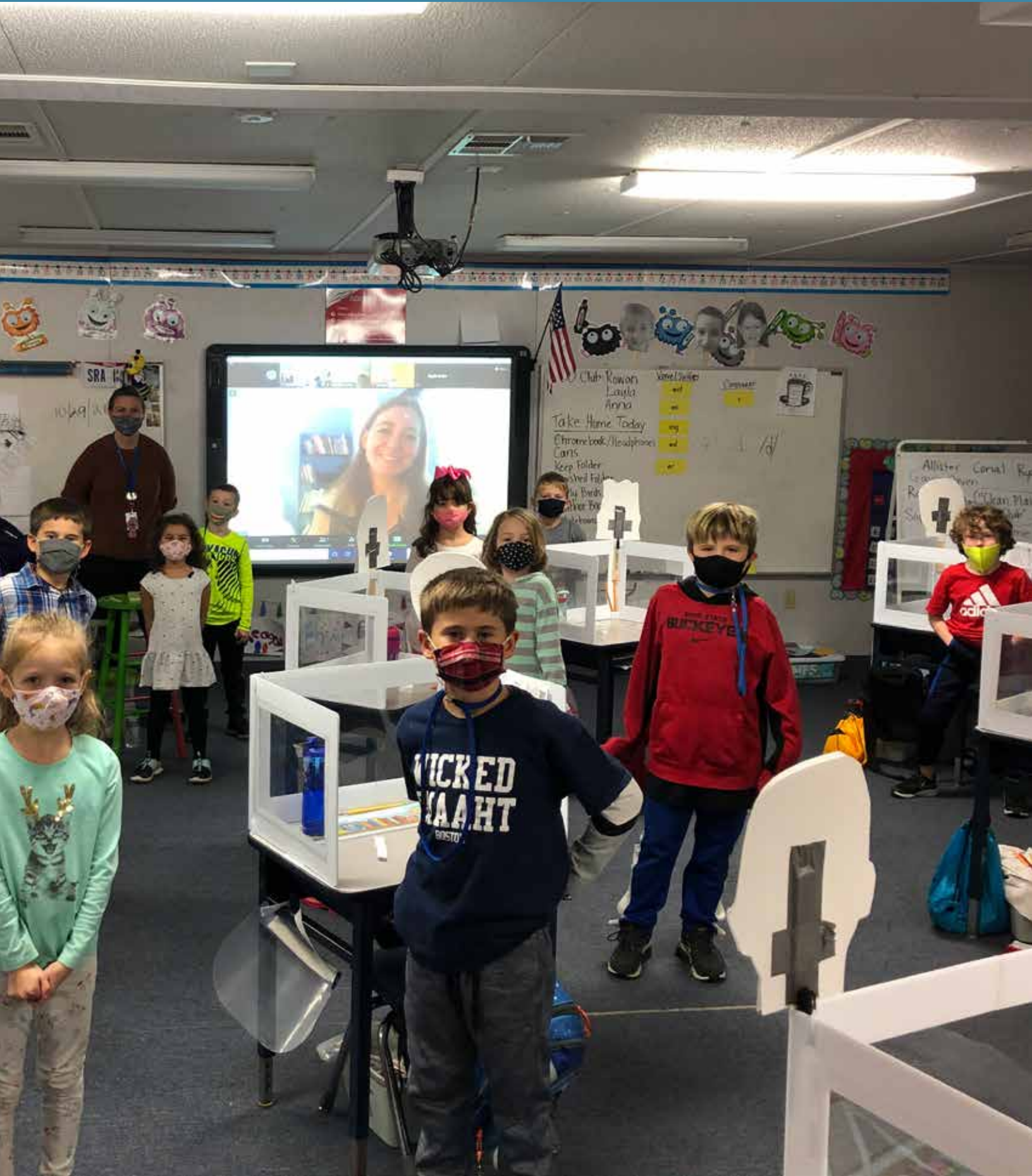
Budding authors in Kelsy Hoy’s second-grade class at Normandy Elementary School in **Bay Village Schools** had the rare opportunity to confer with children and young adult author Rachel Vail late last month via Zoom. The award-winning author joined the class for a brainstorming session and discussed Vail’s “Elizabeth” book series, about a second grader and her experiences growing up.

Hoy said that there are a lot of things in school that aren’t normal right now, so she welcomed the opportunity to have her students work on a unique project. “I thought having these discussions would be fun and engaging for our students and would really make these books come alive,” said Hoy.

Students worked on their ideas with Vail and will turn them into book covers that they’ll present to her before Thanksgiving break. Then the 16 students will write their stories for their books. Vail said she may even consider using one or more of the student ideas as the basis for her next storyline.

Bay Village Schools is only the second group of students Vail has spoken with. Hoy hopes this project will spark her students’ creativity and have a lasting impact on how they read and write.







Riding the Waves of Change at Independence Local Schools

This year, Independence Middle School in the **Independence Local Schools** has I-Pride “team time” built into the schedule to focus on relationships, social emotional skills and life skills. The sixth-grade team of Ken DeAngelis, Alicia Hannah, Michelle Koussa, Tari Mackanos, and Thomasina Slivka knew this would be a very different start to the year, but regardless of the changes, a great start. They wanted to focus on the positive and give students skills to navigate difficult situations and times of change. They chose to read “The Shark and the Goldfish” by Jon Gordon, a favorite author among the team and also a book they all read in a staff podcast crew.

The book follows Gordy, who lived a wonderful safe life as a goldfish. Sammy Shark led Gordy through “Shark School” to learn ways to embrace change, overcome adversity, stay positive and ultimately take control of his own destiny. As Gordy learned lessons from Sammy, he wrote them on rocks in the ocean so he would remember them when times get tough.

Each day in class, teachers read the story to the students and discussed the lessons from “Shark School.” At the end of the book, students chose their favorite lessons from Gordy and Sammy and they painted their own rocks. Students will create a positive meditation garden in the Independence Middle School Courtyard to remind all students to stay positive and never give up. Students also created locker posters with the lessons to blanket the sixth-grade hall with positivity and encouragement for the day.



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Chardon Local Schools
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