

SUMMER 2024



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ESC SUPERINTENDENT JOINS LEADERS FROM LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS AT CUYAHOGA VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE STATE OF THE SCHOOLS

The Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio has been actively expanding its services and partnerships to better support school districts and students in the region. During the Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce State of the Schools presentation this past May, Dr. Bob Mengerink, superintendent of the ESC, joined Matt Young, next superintendent of Cuyahoga Heights Local Schools; Mike Janatovich, principal of Independence High School; and David Mangas, superintendent of Cuyahoga Valley Career Center in a panel discussion that showcased the state of their school districts and institutions.

The insightful presentations from the school leaders showcased the outstanding achievements and vibrant communities fostered within each district and institution. After the panel discussion, attendees expressed their appreciation for the dedicated educators and administrators who continue to prioritize student success, both inside and outside the classroom.

The Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce meeting served as a testament to the region's commitment to providing exceptional educational opportunities that prepare students for future endeavors while instilling values of community service and inclusivity. The collaborative efforts of these educational institutions undoubtedly contribute to the growth and prosperity of the communities they serve.



NEW ONLINE VERSION OF 2024 Summer and Beyond DIRECTORY IS NOW AVAILABLE!

State Support Team–Region 3 (SST3) offers the 2024 Summer and Beyond Directory as a resource to parents, family members, and school district/community school personnel about extended opportunities around the Cuyahoga County area. Each school year, SST3 collaborates with local agencies, camps, and community partners around summer activities for students with disabilities. Many of those agencies and organizations offer continued academic skill-building, therapeutic and social-emotional supports throughout the year to assist students with disabilities to become independent and self-sufficient.

To view the 2024 directory, go to <https://sites.google.com/escneo.org/2024-summer-and-beyond/home>



Pictures taken from our local agencies, camps and community partners website.

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Educators | Districts | Agencies | Organizations | Universities & Colleges | Students | Adult Learners | Families & Communities | Businesses

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CUYAHOGA HEIGHTS AND RICHMOND HEIGHTS LOCAL SCHOOLS PARTICIPATE IN FIRST RING SCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

First Ring Student Leadership Institute

Through the First Ring Schools Collaborative, the First Ring Student Leadership Institute (FRSLI) is a three-year program that empowers Northeast Ohio high school students to lead change in their schools and communities.

Participants build leadership skills and broaden their awareness of community issues while engaging in student-driven activities and student-centered experiences. This year, the Institute brought together more than 100 high school sophomores, juniors and seniors, 16 first ring districts, and more than 30 district leaders. Participants attended several working sessions held remotely and at both Cleveland State University and Ohio State university. Sophomores from both Cuyahoga Heights High School and Richmond Heights Secondary School participated.



FRSLI uses Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) that recognizes students as experts in their own experiences and emphasizes student-adult collaboration in effecting change. Each district team worked to complete a project guided by

experts from Cleveland State University's Center for Urban Education and their advisor. The teams identified a pressing issue in their school and conducted research to better understand the issue's nature and develop potential solutions.



Li, Andrew Kurta, Aurora Robinson, Samantha Vallee, and Jackie Chen. Halle McPherson was the advisor. Richmond Heights students addressed school spirit. Participating students included Breanna Kern, Kingston Jackson, and Zahirah Bowden. Jasmine King was the advisor.

On May 6, all teams shared their findings and recommendations to First Ring superintendents and high school principals at an end-of-year meeting and celebration. Students also had the exciting opportunity to collaborate with students from The Ohio State University Student Leadership Research Collaborative (OSUSLRC). Serving students in the Columbus area, OSUSLRC is also focused on youth empowerment and teaching leadership skills.

First Ring Leadership Academy

The First Ring Leadership Academy (FRLA) is a year-long professional development and leadership training program for new and emerging leaders in the 16 districts contiguous to the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. Participants are nominated by their superintendents in the beginning of each school year to become part of the cohort. The FRLA provides participants with an expanded knowledge base and skill set foundation to prepare them to assume additional leadership roles within their districts and continue improving district and individual outcomes to serve all levels of students within Cuyahoga County.



The Academy meets for nine sessions throughout the academic year with a focus on building leadership skills and district capacity to address the unique challenges of first ring, urban schools. Participants engage in a variety of learning activities

including leadership trait analyses, case studies, readings and reflections. Sessions are held at either the ESC of Northeast Ohio or First Ring districts.



This year, 14 district leaders participated in the program including Elena Scotton from Cuyahoga Heights Middle/High

School. Scotton's project was planning an Inclusion Day awareness event in March to promote inclusiveness and acceptance of all individuals, especially those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It aimed to rally the school community around an increasingly inclusive culture and their core mission of "Empowering Students to Reach New Heights."



RECOGNIZING STUDENTS, PEERS AND EDUCATORS AT THE 45TH ANNUAL EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AWARDS

On May 17, students, family members and staff gathered for the 45th Annual Excellence in Education Awards. This awards ceremony recognizes students with special needs, peers and educators. It was held at Corporate College East in Warrensville Heights. Each year, the event is planned by the State Support Team Region 3. Cuyahoga Heights and Independence Local Schools recognized several individuals.

Cuyahoga Heights Schools

Sofia Fullmer, a student at Cuyahoga Heights Middle School, received the Outstanding Student Achievement Award. This award acknowledges achievements of school-age children and youth with special needs in Northeast Ohio. Fullmer shines brightly in her academic endeavors. Amidst her busy life as one of three triplets and her love for her pet cats (Pepper and Indie), Fullmer has embarked on a path of academic excellence. Her dedication has paved the way for inclusive learning experiences alongside her general education peers. With a compassionate heart and unwavering determination, Fullmer consistently embodies care, honesty, motivation, and success, setting a remarkable example for her peers. Through her daily interactions with students and staff, she naturally teaches lessons of empathy, fostering a school environment centered on community and understanding. Fullmer’s resilience in overcoming challenges inspires, contributing to cultivating a school culture rooted in respect and inclusivity.



Lyndsey Wisniewski, an intervention specialist at Cuyahoga Heights Schools, received the Outstanding Educator Achievement Award. This award honors educators who are the exemplars in designing instructional strategies and programs. Wisniewski stands out for her exceptional ability to foster inclusivity and support for students with disabilities. Through her empathetic approach and strong relationships with students, staff, and families, she creates a nurturing environment where every student feels valued. Utilizing data-driven decisions and research-based practices, Wisniewski tailors her instruction to meet the unique needs of each student, ensuring they receive personalized and effective support. Her involvement in extracurricular activities and dedication to implementing extended standards showcase her commitment to providing comprehensive opportunities for her students’ growth and integration into the school community. Wisniewski’s Innovative strategies and high expectations for all students not only help them overcome barriers but also empower them to reach their full potential, making her an invaluable asset to her school.

Independence Local Schools

Cameron Dalrymple, a student at Independence Primary School, received the Outstanding Student Achievement Award. This award acknowledges achievements of school-age children and youth with special needs in Northeast Ohio. Dalrymple is a standout individual in the classroom, whose innate goodness shines through in both his academic achievements and personal interactions. While excelling academically, it is his exceptional qualities beyond grades that truly distinguish him. His positive attitude, coupled with an extraordinary work ethic and tenacity, inspires those around him to strive for excellence. Cameron’s kindness and willingness to help others exemplify his outstanding character, earning him respect from peers and educators alike. Despite his successes, he remains humble and grounded, always eager to learn and grow. Cameron embodies the qualities of a true role model, leaving a lasting impression on all those fortunate enough to interact with him.

Stephanie Roberts, a general education teacher at Independence Primary School, received the Outstanding Educator Achievement Award. This award honors educators who are the exemplars in designing instructional strategies and programs. Roberts is an exemplary general education teacher at Independence Primary School. Throughout her years at Independence Primary School, she has provided quality evidenced-based instruction to all of her students, across different grade levels, with compassion and dedication. During the 2022-23 school year, Stephanie taught a specialized general education kindergarten classroom that included students with disabilities in the areas of executive functioning, behavior, communication, and social-emotional development. She has worked and continues to work collaboratively with support staff to implement strategies and instructional opportunities grounded in evidence and best practices. She implements supportive strategies within her classroom environment and teaching practices. She is an advocate for science-based instruction within grade-level and building-level teams and works tirelessly with each of her students to maximize growth, meeting each student where they are.

Casey Conte, a recent graduate at Cuyahoga Heights High School, received the the Outstanding Peer Achievement Award. This award recognizes students without disabilities who have established positive relationships and who have assisted other students with disabilities, serving as exemplary role models. Conte was a standout student in the Education Professions program at the Cuyahoga Valley Career Center. She is known for her exemplary dedication to fostering inclusive and supportive educational environments. Beyond fulfilling her program requirements, she has actively contributed to her school and community through educational placements, specialized support for students with diverse needs, and volunteer initiatives. Her unique ability to connect with and uplift students, coupled with her innovative approach to involving parents and the community, through such initiatives as social media safety, underscores her leadership and role-model status among peers. Her commitment to the holistic development of students and her passion for education will enrich her future plans to study elementary education at Michigan State University.

Julia Grzincic, a student at Independence Middle School, received the Outstanding Peer Achievement Award.

This award recognizes students without disabilities who have established positive relationships and who have assisted other students with disabilities, serving as exemplary role models. Grzincic has been an outstanding role model for creating an inclusive culture within her classroom community. When Julia was in third grade, two students with autism moved into the district. She immediately welcomed them, sat with them at lunch and recess, and did her best to connect with and get to know them. As a result of her authentic interest in inclusion, she has inspired many classmates to follow suit by getting curious about and befriending neurodivergent classmates. Now that Julia is in sixth grade, she continues to be a leader of what it means to be a caring, supportive classmate who is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment. She is a very impressive young lady who also volunteers as a peer model/helper at an ice skating program for kids with special needs. She is an inspiring young lady who has already made a great impact in her sixth-grade class community.



HUMANITARIAN AWARD RECIPIENTS RECOGNIZED

The ESC of Northeast Ohio named several 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 2023-24 school year. One student from each middle and high school in the communities of **Cuyahoga Heights, Independence,** and **Richmond Heights Local Schools** received scholarships and awards. In addition to a cash award, students receive a personalized plaque, starfish pin, and starfish bookmark. The starfish is the symbol of a story of the impact one person can make in a community.



Cuyahoga Heights Middle School
Sophia Birth, 8th grade

Sophia Birth displays kindness on a daily basis throughout the middle school. She is a sincere and considerate young person. Sophia is also a loyal friend. Several of Sophia’s classmates seek her company throughout the school day. She has an easy rapport with her teachers, often asking, “How is your day going?”. Sophia has responsibilities at home which she is able to manage along with her schoolwork completion. She is passionate about playing softball. Sophia’s teachers are proud of her academic growth, the pride she displays at Cuyahoga Heights Middle School, and the loyal friendships she has created.



Independence Middle School
Thomas Graham, 8th grade

Thomas Graham is a leader and works diligently in all of his academic classes. He is involved in many activities including volunteering at his church for the local shelter, WEB (Where Everyone Belongs), tutoring, band, Drama Club, IMS newspaper, WIMS, Builder’s Club, Hope Squad, Mock Trial, and is an officer of the Student Council. He is kind, compassionate, friendly, and caring to both peers and adults alike. He is respectful, loyal, and helpful to any adult or student in need. His conscientious and empathetic nature makes him wise beyond his years.



Richmond Heights Secondary School
Theodore Ginn III, 8th grade

Theodore Ginn III is an invaluable asset, displaying exceptional leadership as the Middle School Student Council President. He organized bake sales, led concession stands, participated in community service, and assisted with the Junior Prom and sports banquet. Theodore’s humility stands out. He prefers working behind the scenes, allowing others to shine. His thoughtfulness, hard work ethic, and mature approach make him a respected role model. Theodore’s endless patience, kindness, and encouragement create an environment conducive to growth and success for all students at Richmond Heights.



Cuyahoga Heights High School
Francis Connors, Senior

Francis Connors has consistently shown concern for the well-being of others, regardless of their background or circumstances. Most recently, he assisted at the inclusive sports day field trip for students with special needs. The teacher who didn’t have Francis in class reported, “Francis has been a genuine and loyal friend to my students based on the way their faces lit up every time they would talk about him. Francis has done everything from joining them at the lunch table, meeting them in the morning before convocation, supporting them on the sports fields, and giving high fives in the hallway.” Francis has demonstrated acts of kindness like this throughout his time at Cuyahoga Heights and never expected anything in return.



Independence High School
Wyatt Snyder, Senior

Do a good turn. Do your best to help others. Leave things better than you found them. All quotes here are based on scouting, all are related to acts of kindness, and all of these can be used to describe how Wyatt Snyder conducts himself. He gives of himself through time, attention and effort to teach young scouts the basics of survival and outdoor safety and fun, he serves at Kiwanis functions, volunteers at Stearns Farm with landscaping and other outdoor tasks that need done, and helps friends and classmates without hesitation. While these manual tasks take his energy, he is generous in spirit, and leads with the tenet that serving others is second nature and his first priority.



Richmond Heights Secondary School
Dolceanna Crosby, Senior

Dolceanna Crosby has dedicated her time to extracurricular activities that help promote school spirit and leadership. As president of Student Council, Crosby has had the opportunity to plan events and promote opportunities to her peers that allow them to be engaged within the school and community. She works hard to balance her academics with extracurricular engagement along with her family commitments. Her passion for the arts shines through, as she hopes to pursue a career in this creative field after graduation. With her well-rounded involvement and artistic talents, Dolceanna Crosby is sure to make a lasting impact wherever her path leads.