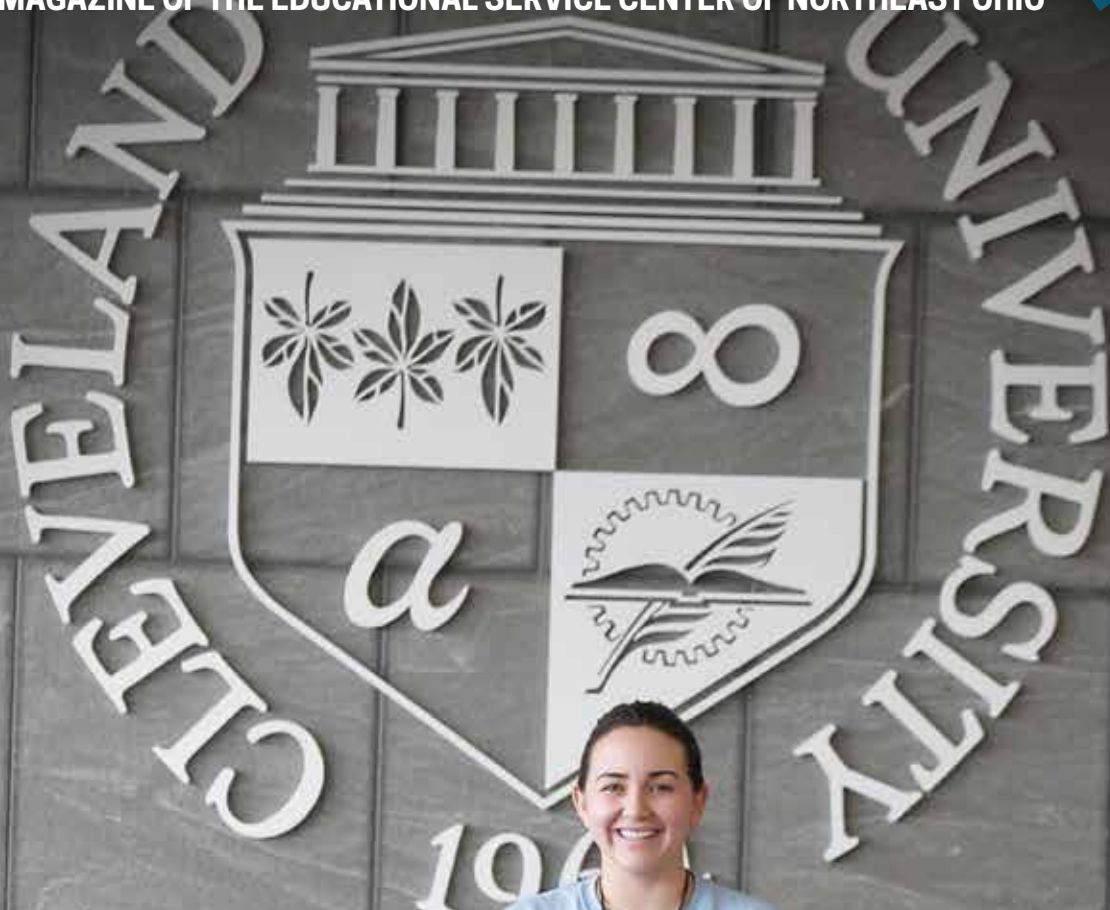


SPRING 2025

THE ESC CONNECTION

A DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER OF NORTHEAST OHIO



EMPOWERING HIGH SCHOOLERS TO IDENTIFY,
RESEARCH, AND SOLVE CRITICAL ISSUES

**FIRST RING STUDENT
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**



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Superintendent's Message

By Dr. Bob Mengerink

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As we transition into the spring of 2025, it's a time to reflect on the tremendous work our districts have accomplished and the exciting opportunities ahead. This

season brings renewal, and just as our schools and students continue to grow, we too at the ESC of Northeast Ohio are committed to adapting, improving, and empowering every educator and student we support.

We are proud of the initiatives and collaborations taking place across our region—from the impactful First Ring Student Leadership Institute to the innovative approaches in instruction, student wellness and career readiness. The achievements highlighted in this edition of The ESC Connection are a testament to the dedication of our educators, administrators, and community partners. I am constantly inspired by the creative solutions that emerge to solve new problems or create new opportunities.

Spring is a time for new beginnings, and we are excited to continue supporting you in ways that are meaningful and impactful. I encourage you to read through this newsletter and see how our collaborative efforts are making a difference in our schools. As always, we look forward to hearing from you—together, we can ensure that every student has the support and resources they need to succeed.

Thank you for your continued commitment to excellence!

Sincerely,

Bob

Cover photo: First ring high school students are participating in the First Ring Schools Collaborative's Student Leadership Institute this year. The cover photo features the students and advisor from Maple Heights City Schools at a recent meeting at Cleveland State University. The program culminates in a year-end presentation in May where students showcase their research and achievements.

Creating Career Pathways:

Northeast Ohio Business Advisory Council Explores Opportunities with State Agencies

The ESC of Northeast Ohio Business Advisory Council met on February 28 for its program, *Creating Pathways with Ohio's State Agencies*. Presenters included Aimee Cavazos, Career Technical Education Liaison for the Ohio Department of Administrative Services; Charity Armstrong, Safety Consultant/HCM Senior Analyst for the Ohio Department of Transportation District 12; and John Stoddard, Superintendent of the Berkshire Local School District.

Cavazos discussed the Governor's executive order on skills-based hiring for Ohio's 1,700+ job classifications. She highlighted how Career Technical Education (CTE) and pre-apprenticeship programs prepare students for jobs, internships, and apprenticeships within state agencies. These opportunities include part-time and summer positions for high school students that offer competitive pay and benefits.

Armstrong outlined the variety of technical careers at the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), including highway maintenance apprenticeships, paid CDL certifications, mechanic training, and diesel and facilities management. She also emphasized office roles available at ODOT, such as IT, finance, human resources, environmental positions, and civil engineering.

Stoddard showcased Berkshire Local Schools' innovative student programs, including the transformation of an old ODOT building into a facility for diesel and bus repair training. This partnership with Prestone provides students with hands-on experience leading to well-paying jobs. Additionally, the district has developed manufacturing and agri-business pathways in collaboration with Great Lakes Cheese and other Geauga County businesses, further expanding career opportunities for students.

Dr. Jennifer Dodd *Recognized as* **Willoughby-Eastlake Citizen of the Year**



Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools has recognized Dr. Jennifer Dodd, Assistant Superintendent of the ESC of Northeast Ohio, as the 2025 Citizen of the Year. Dr. Dodd, dedicated alumna, parent and community member, was honored at the district's State of the Schools Awards Ceremony on March 13. The award highlights Dr. Dodd's commitment to education and her contributions to the community.

Math Intervention Recommendation Series

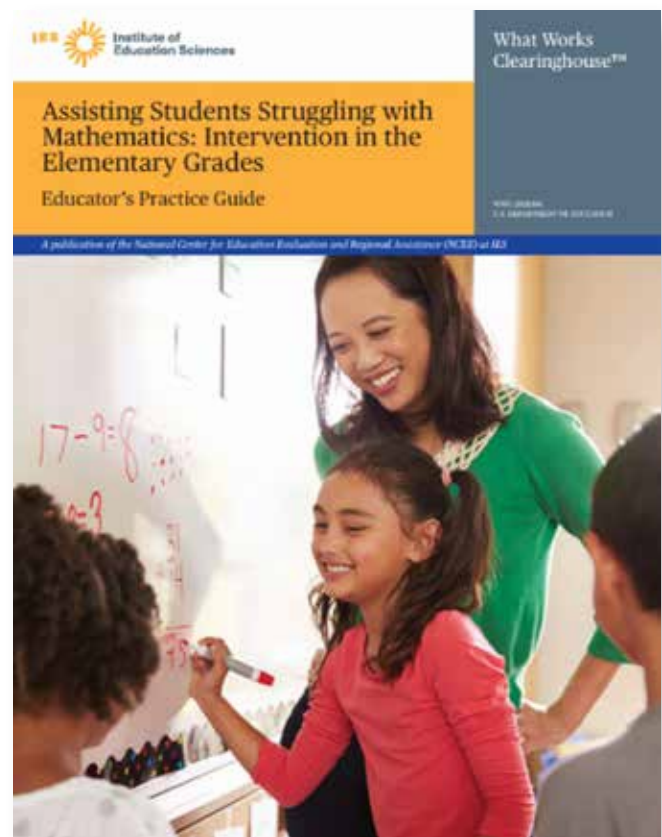
By Bob Glavan, Vickie Lewis, Alexis Volk, Maureen Wolfe

Since January, the ESC of Northeast Ohio has led 5 out of 6 sessions for the Math Intervention Series, bringing together 50–60 educators in each session to explore evidence-based strategies from the *IES Practice Guide: Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Intervention in the Elementary Grades*. Designed for school and district leaders committed to enhancing math instruction, the series provided a structured, research-backed approach to supporting students who struggle with mathematics.

Each session focused on one of the six key recommendations outlined in the *IES Practice Guide*, emphasizing systematic instruction, mathematical language, representations, number lines, word problems, and fluency-building activities. Participants engaged in collaborative discussions, analyzed real-world applications and shared insights on implementing these strategies in their own districts.

Educators appreciated the opportunity to engage in meaningful professional dialogue, reflecting on their current practices and refining intervention strategies to meet the diverse needs of students. The optional work session and Q&A time allowed participants to deepen their understanding, troubleshoot challenges, and collaborate with colleagues.

By the end of the series, attendees will leave with actionable strategies, practical tools, and a stronger network of peers, all committed to fostering math success for struggling learners. The ESC looks forward to continuing to support districts in implementing these evidence-based practices and ensuring all students have the foundation they need to succeed in mathematics.





English Learner Support Network for High School Educators

By Kory Jalowiec and Kristi Sacha

As many high schools across Northeast Ohio have seen an increase in students from other countries, one of our partner districts reached out to the Teaching and Learning Department with a request for more structured time to connect, collaborate, learn together and share ideas with other districts about the best way to serve and support these students. The English Learner Support Network for High School Educators was developed to help create these opportunities.



The network has met virtually and in-person throughout this school year. During the sessions participants have shared their current practices, celebrations, challenges and questions connected to scheduling, assessments, pacing, instructional strategies, translation tools, scaffolding resources, and grading practices. Participants also spent time investigating the wealth of resources within

the Instructional Roadmap, Family Roadmap and Administrator's Resource Kit on the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce site that was recently released. During our February session, Jason Scragg from ODEW's Office of Whole Child Supports, joined us to share current findings and recommendations on identification, enrollment and placement, supports and additional resources available.

Teachers and administrators who have attended the sessions have commented that they appreciate the time to discuss strategies, learn about resources and ideas that other high schools have been using, and share issues they are facing. They also appreciated the flexible, intimate space to ask questions, solve challenges and get feedback.

We look forward to continuing this network next year and hope to expand our participants to not only more EL Teachers and Tutors who directly serve English Learners, but also the content area, general education teachers who also support these students at high schools all across Northeast Ohio. As Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." By having time to share ideas and problem-solving together, we can find ways to ensure all of our English Learners are engaged in learning and achieve their full potential.

Expanding Access to Career Readiness: First Ring Schools Collaborative Tackles Transportation and Early Awareness



Ensuring equitable access to career exploration opportunities was the driving force behind the latest First Ring Schools Collaborative Communications/PR Network Meeting, held on February

20. The meeting brought together communication directors and career readiness specialists to tackle two critical challenges: transportation barriers and early career awareness.

The discussion began with an in-depth look at a key barrier to student career experiences—transportation. Co-facilitator Tippi Foley shared insights on how logistical hurdles prevent many students from participating in job shadowing, internships, and industry visits.

“When students can’t physically get to these opportunities, they miss out on valuable hands-on learning that could shape their futures,” said Foley.

“Solving this isn’t just about transportation—it’s about equity and access.”

Attendees shared strategies their districts have explored, including partnerships with local transit authorities, ride-sharing initiatives, and coordinated employer transportation programs.

The conversation then shifted to introducing career awareness earlier in students’ education. Co-facilitator Charlene Paparizos emphasized that waiting until high school is too late—career aspirations are often shaped in elementary and middle school.

Attendees shared best practices, such as embedding career-related themes in elementary curricula, hosting career days featuring local professionals from diverse backgrounds, and using digital content, videos, and social media to showcase different career pathways.

Disrupting Poverty in Ohio Network: Defining and Advancing Student Success Systems



Dr. Robert Balfanz, distinguished professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education, co-director of the Center for Social Organization of Schools,

and Director of the Everyone Graduates Center, led the presentation for *Defining and Advancing Student Success Systems*, the third session of the ESC’s Disrupting Poverty In Ohio Network 2024-2025. He emphasized that strong relationships among adults and students help students feel

connected to their school, a prime universal prevention strategy against absenteeism and behavioral and academic risks. The 3 ABCs of **A**ttendance, **B**ehavior, and **C**ourse Performance can be enhanced by the 3 ABCs measures of student well-being—**A**gency, **B**elonging, and **C**onnectedness. Dr. Balfanz shared resources from [The Grad Partnership](#) to support student success systems within districts seeking to reduce chronic absenteeism, to close learning gaps, and to increase college and career readiness.

Youth Advisory Councils Shaping Health Initiatives in Schools



The Ohio School-Based Health Alliance hosted their Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio on January 30. Maddy Moser of the ESC's Student

Wellness Department moderated a panel discussion on Youth Advisory Councils (YACs) in School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs).

Panelists from MetroHealth, Akron Children's Hospital, and Nationwide Children's Hospital shared successes and challenges from YACs at their SBHCs. Highlights included organizing community food drives, hosting mental health fairs, and preparing students to advocate for health resources before school boards—demonstrating how youth leadership can drive meaningful change in school wellness initiatives.

For more information, contact:
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Student Wellness Department
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Empowering Student Success:

Dr. Leah Euerle and Christina Delaney Share Best Practices at Leadership Showcase

On January 28, Dr. Leah Euerle and Christina Delaney, consultants in the ESC Student Wellness Department, presented at the Accelerated Leadership and Learning Showcase in Columbus.

Their session, “Systematic Tier 2 Behavior Supports: Best Practices & Practical Application Strategies,” explored essential components of Tier 2 behavior systems, offering practical solutions and actionable strategies to enhance student support.

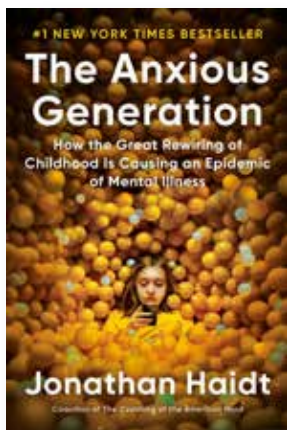
They shared effective interventions, valuable resources for implementation, and innovative approaches to help educators and support teams meet the needs of students requiring targeted behavioral supports.

For those who couldn't attend, we're excited to share their insightful presentation — [Click here](#) to view it.

This session helped educators deepen their understanding of Tier 2 supports and foster a more inclusive, supportive learning environment for all students.



Exploring 'The Anxious Generation' to Address Student Mental Health and Promote Play-Based Learning



During the 2024-2025 school year, the ESC of Northeast Ohio and the State Support Team Region 3 (SSTR3) completed a book study exploring the educational implications of Jonathan Haidt's book, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring*

of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness. The social psychologist examines the alarming rise in mental health issues among youth, and attributes the surge to the pervasive integration of smartphones, social media and addictive technology/algorithms. Haidt further describes a generational shift to overprotective parenting in the real world and underprotection online that has halted successful transition from adolescence to adulthood.

The Anxious Generation challenges schools, legislators, parents and caregivers to reconsider how we approach education, mental health, and student well-being. To meet these challenges, all must take a proactive, supportive, and inclusive approach to address the mental health needs of students by encouraging phone free schools, creating more opportunities for play, and promoting autonomy and assigning responsibilities that require real-world problem-solving. In doing so, Haidt suggests that students will have the opportunity to develop skills to cope with conflict, manage frustration, and navigate social

relationships with peers and adults. Lastly, the author proposes that community-wide agreements on technology use, such as pledges to delay the introduction of smartphones until high school, can alleviate social pressures and create a supportive environment for child and adolescent development.



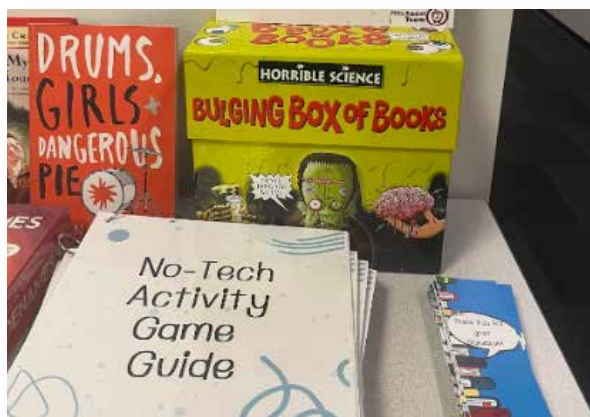
To more widely share these ideas and promote free play among students, consultants from the ESC of Northeast Ohio and SSTR3 engaged in the following activities and professional development:

- » Toy Donation Drive: New and gently used toys, books, and games were collected and distributed to local schools by SST and ESC consultants. School counselors and social workers from across the region were provided the opportunity to select items at a recent networking meeting.
- » No Tech Play Kits for Schools: A comprehensive activity guide was developed as an accessible resource for educators and families to engage in interactive activities to promote free play.

- » Strategies to Combat Trauma, Anxiety and Chronic Absenteeism: Key learning from the Anxious Generation was embedded into existing professional development highlighting research related to social media and mental health as well as the link between effective classroom and school engagement and student attendance.
- » Emphasis on Early Education and Play-Based Materials: There was an intentional focus on defining play for explicit, common understanding within Early Childhood offerings. Orange City Schools Early Childhood team received donations of play-based materials for their program during a professional development session.

If you are interested in learning more about what schools and educators can do to restore the “play-based childhood,” check out <https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/take-action#schools>. Additionally, parents can access resources [HERE](#) to establish healthier norms, strengthen family dynamics, and safeguard their children’s mental well-being.

Contact Director of Teaching and Learning, Kelly Stukus, at kelly.stukus@escneo.org to find out how the ESC of Northeast Ohio and the SSTR3 can support your school today.



SIGN UP TO RECEIVE OUR STUDENT WELLNESS E-NEWSLETTER!

Contact Nyeshja Malone at nyeshja.malone@escneo.org to sign up.

[View archived issues](#)





Sparkler App Boosts Early Developmental Screenings for Ohio Families

The Sparkler: Play for Parenting app, Help Me Grow's new digital platform for families and program partners to complete Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) developmental screenings, has received enthusiastic participation since its launch in September. The Sparkler app provides a quick and easy way for parents and caregivers to screen children from birth through age 5 for free. Early screening is essential in helping parents determine if their child is meeting key developmental milestones.

When a parent completes an ASQ screening using the Sparkler app, a Help Me Grow developmental screening specialist (DSS) is notified and reviews the results. Each child's results fall into one of three categories:

- » On track
- » Monitor
- » Refer for supportive services

The DSS then recommends appropriate resources or referrals based on the child's needs. Once the DSS gathers all relevant information, they contact the family to discuss results. These specialists are specifically trained for these conversations, listening carefully to families and connecting

them to additional supports through the Help Me Grow Community Resource Directories. Support can include access to food, clothing, mental health services, and more—tailored to family needs beyond what the screening reveals. Families are always free to accept or decline any recommendations.

Since Sparkler's launch, the impact has been significant:

- » For children birth to age 3, about 6% have accepted referrals for additional services such as Home Visiting (HV) and Early Intervention (EI).
- » For children ages 3 through 5, 2.2% have been connected to local school district preschool special education programs.

Remarkable Growth in Screenings

Before Sparkler, Help Me Grow offered the ASQ via its website beginning in May 2022. Between July 2022 and June 2024, a total of 1,404 screenings were processed. However, from Sparkler's launch to February 24, 2025, 5,754 screenings were completed—a 244% increase in participation!



Partnering for Greater Impact

Early Care and Education providers who join as Help Me Grow Sparkler Program Partners receive a unique access code families use to connect directly with them. This partnership allows providers to:

- » View screening results
- » Complete screenings for children in their care
- » Share messages with families
- » Access play-based activities to support development

The goal is to strengthen communication and collaboration, ensuring each child receives the best possible support.

Additionally, Sparkler and ASQ help providers meet Ohio's revised Learning & Development quality rating standards for developmental screenings.

Become a Program Partner

Steps for creating a Sparkler account and becoming a PROGRAM PARTNER are available at helpmegrow.org/ASQproviders. For additional information or to ask questions, please email asq@helpmegrow.org.

Bright Beginnings serves as the Help Me Grow Central Intake & Referral contractor for Ohio and, along with its regional partners, acts as the single point of entry for the Help Me Grow system of supports.

CAPSTONE ACADEMY

For information, contact:

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Celebrating Creativity: Capstone Integrated Arts Program Inspires Expression Through Music, Dance, and Visual Art

The Capstone Integrated Arts program offers students the opportunity to explore a variety of music, visual art, and dance activities. This integrated experience is designed to foster sensory integration, relaxation, and personal expression. Classes are held weekly with our Art Specialist, LaSontia Sharlow, MA, ATR-P, LPC, who incorporates content, concepts, and activities that promote cognitive development through the integration of multiple modalities, allowing students to experience success. Mrs. Sharlow uses developmentally appropriate strategies to actively encourage independent, creative, and critical thinking. A variety of instructional techniques, materials, and artistic styles are incorporated into projects to stimulate and challenge students.

This semester, the visual arts classes are learning about Judith Scott, an Ohio-born fiber artist who was both deaf and had Down syndrome. Judith began creating art at the Creative Growth Art Center, a day program and art studio, after a couple of years of attending. Her inspiring journey as an artist with a disability has deeply resonated with our students. The students also learned about International Dot Day, a global celebration of creativity, courage, and collaboration, based on Peter H. Reynolds' book *The Dot*. What begins with a simple dot on paper becomes a

breakthrough in confidence and courage, igniting a journey of self-discovery. The students' artwork is proudly displayed throughout the school hallways, with new displays featuring Dot Day projects and Judith Scott-inspired fiber art.

In music and movement classes, students are exploring the rich traditions of powwow festivals, including indigenous drumming, singing, costumes, and dances like Jingle, Fancy Shawl, and Hoop dances. They have enjoyed watching performances and learning about these dance styles.

Student Dot Day artwork



Student Judith Scott inspired fiber artwork

For information, contact:

Lisa Adler, Supervisor

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Winter Learning and Fun Flourishes at Passport School

Passport School, located in the Metzenbaum Center at 8200 Cedar Road in Chesterland, serves students ages 5–22 with multiple disabilities and significant medical needs. The dedicated facility provides intensive educational, behavioral, and medical programming tailored to each student's unique needs.

This winter, students embraced the season through engaging educational activities and festive holiday celebrations. The school's specialized programming created meaningful learning experiences using seasonal themes designed to support students with multiple disabilities.

Classes explored how animals like polar bears and penguins adapt to harsh winter climates. Audrey's class delved into Inuit culture, using maps to locate Arctic settlements and creating cultural art projects. Connor designed a colorful Inuit anorak while learning about traditional lifestyles.

The holiday season brought festive activities, including cookie decorating, where Ja'Meela expressed creativity through unique shape and



color choices. Both classrooms crafted personal placemats and pine cone turkey centerpieces for a traditional Thanksgiving luncheon.

Daily routines continued to build essential skills. Activities included calendar time using communication devices, physical education sessions featuring yoga and scooter boards, and therapeutic games such as bowling and bingo to strengthen social and motor skills.

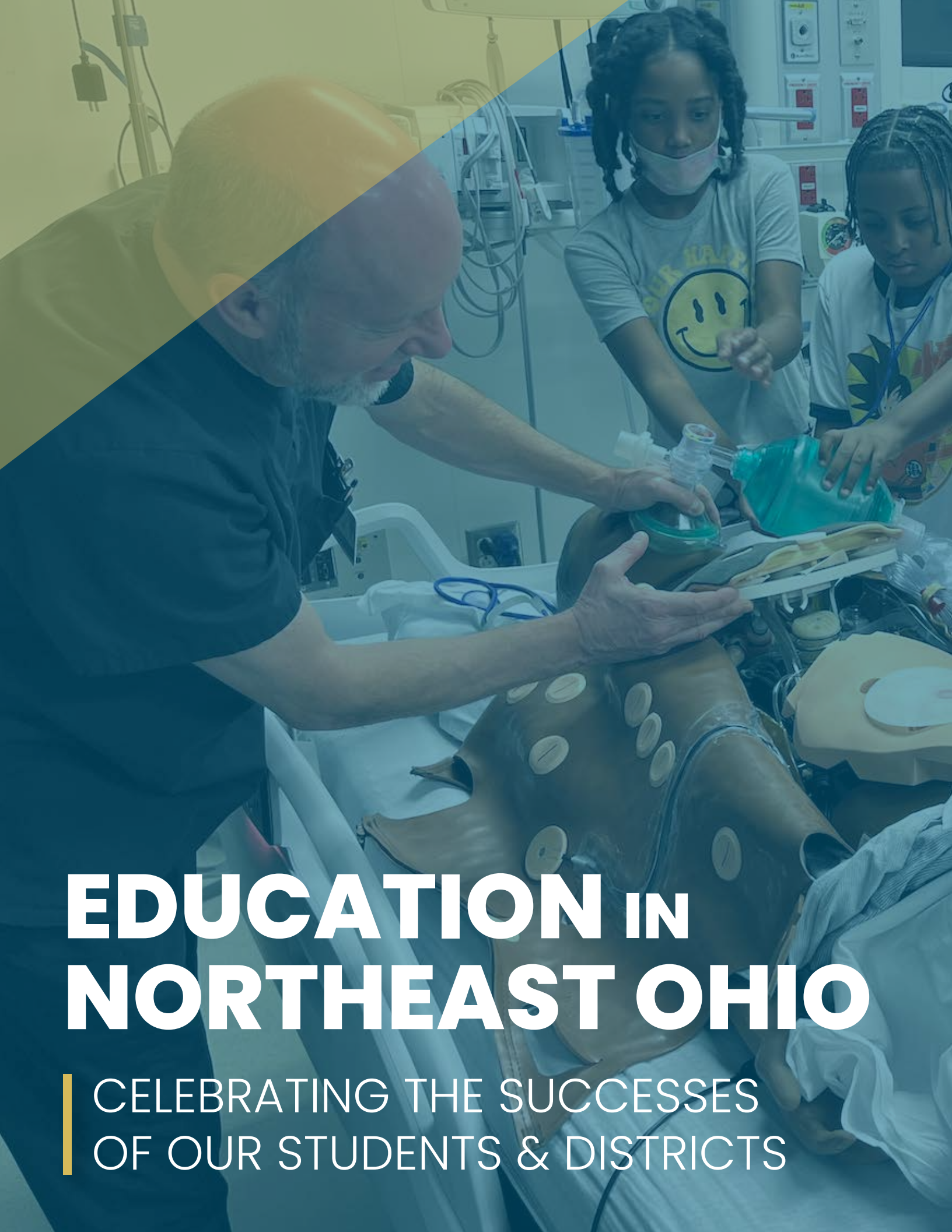
The school also welcomed Alona, a new third-grader, and celebrated senior Dae'Shon, who will graduate in May 2025 with a diploma from Garfield Heights City Schools—a testament to the school's dedication to helping students achieve their educational goals.



Each morning, Audrey's class starts the day with a variety of activities that help build communication skills & foster social interaction. Students use communication devices to participate in calendar routines.



Incorporating physical education activities like yoga, scooter board, and music is a fun and engaging way to help students develop motor skills, fitness and team work.



EDUCATION IN NORTHEAST OHIO

CELEBRATING THE SUCCESSES
OF OUR STUDENTS & DISTRICTS



Cover Picture: Euclid's Early Learning Village Third Graders Visit Cleveland Clinic Classroom (story on p.22-23)



Personal Financial Literacy Class Equips Berkshire High School Students for Future Success

Effective money management and financial planning are essential skills that can have a lasting impact on young graduates. Berkshire High School is ensuring its students are well-prepared for financial independence through the Personal Financial Literacy (PFL) course—a semester-long class required for all students starting with the Class of 2026.

Aligned with Ohio's Learning Standards for Financial Literacy, the course focuses on helping students read, analyze, manage, and communicate about personal financial matters that affect their overall well-being. Key topics include financial responsibility, planning and money management,

informed consumer practices, investing, credit and debt management, and risk management and insurance. The ultimate goal is to empower students to make informed financial decisions, act responsibly as consumers and investors, and manage their resources wisely.

To make these lessons practical and engaging, PFL instructor Ms. Hannah Bomback uses project-based learning experiences that incorporate real-life scenarios. Throughout the semester, students participate in activities such as a career exploration project and the “Collage of My Life” assignment, where they align personal values and goals with sound financial planning strategies.



Students also explore the Money Management Process, gaining hands-on experience with key financial tools, including:

- » Statement of Financial Position (Net Worth)
- » Income and Expense Statement (Net Gain or Loss)
- » Spending Plan (Budgeting and Balance Sheets)

The course further immerses students in practical financial skills through simulations. For example, the investment portfolio simulation allows students to use a portfolio visualizer to predict outcomes for diversified investments. They then craft professional emails to hypothetical clients, explaining how their chosen portfolios align with the clients' needs.

In a separate credit report and score simulation, students tackle real-world borrowing scenarios, such as purchasing a home or car or funding a business. Using loan comparison calculators, they select optimal loans and present their decisions to the class, demonstrating a clear understanding of credit and debt management.

The curriculum also emphasizes community impact. Just before Thanksgiving break, students participate in a “Giving to Others” project, where they work in teams to support local causes. Past

projects have included aiding Rescue Village’s animals and participating in food and toy drives. Students outline action plans, set timelines, and reflect on how their contributions enhance the community.

Another highlight of the course is the “Life in the United States” project-based learning activity. This comprehensive assignment requires students to create budgets for hypothetical families. Students apply money management strategies—such as distinguishing between wants and needs and adopting a “pay yourself first” savings philosophy—to select appropriate housing, transportation, groceries, and insurance that align with their families' short- and long-term goals.

Through these dynamic learning experiences, Berkshire High School’s Personal Financial Literacy course equips students with the knowledge and confidence to make sound financial decisions, preparing them for successful, financially secure futures after graduation.



Pilot Chromebook Repair Program Teaches Students Skills, Saves District Money

What do you do when Chromebook repairs become a costly line item in the school district's budget? If you're Bay Village Schools, you turn Chromebook repairs into an opportunity for students to learn a valuable skill, while being efficient and saving the district money. We sat down with Bay Village Schools' Superintendent Scot Prebles and Director of Technology Brian Reynolds to learn more about the district's Student Chromebook Repair Program.

According to Director Reynolds, an analysis of Chromebook repairs during the 2022-23 school year showed not only an increase in repairs, but also an increase in the cost of those repairs since most broken Chromebooks had to be outsourced to a third party. Costs for those Chromebooks to be fixed were incurred by the district and some of those costs were passed along to district families, depending on the repair.

"Besides being costly, the turnaround time for repairs was slow and inconvenient, with only so many loaner Chromebooks available," said Director Reynolds. "The fact that the program is in house allows it to function efficiently, shortening the repair time."

Superintendent Prebles said that Director Reynolds and his team saw the need, knew the capability of Bay students, and had the vision to make this an experiential learning opportunity for students, while saving the district money.

During the 2023-24 school year, 19 eighth-grade Bay Middle School students and one Bay High School senior completed an online course to become certified in Acer Chromebook repairs. Those numbers increased for the 2024-25 school year, with 13 high school students involved since a "Tech Apprentice" independent study course was added at Bay High School.

The volume of broken devices and repairs fluctuates, but there is never a day when devices aren't in need of repairs. These students and the repairs they perform are done under the guidance of professional technicians and teachers. Director Reynolds serves as the teacher of record for both the middle and high school courses.

"This is a great opportunity for students who are interested in earning specific certifications for repairs, and who are interested in a potential career in Information Technology (IT)," said Director Reynolds.

So how much money is the Student Chromebook Repair Program saving the district?

"With the Student Chromebook Repair Program, we were able to eliminate the need for an outside Chromebook repair contract, which saves the district nearly \$40,000 annually," said Superintendent Prebles.



“Instead, we now only use this vendor on an ‘as needed’ basis if breaks exceed our in-house capacity, or if the Chromebook is beyond repair,” added Director Reynolds.

Students work on repairs that run the gamut, from motherboard malfunctions and battery issues, to broken screens and hinges, but Director Reynolds said he most common fix is probably missing keys.

“I am proud to say that many of our neighboring districts have reached out to learn more about our successful pilot program, and we are sharing our model with them,” said Director Reynolds. “We even had an Acer Chromebook representative

request a conference call with us to learn how and why our program has yielded so much success.”

“Director Reynolds and his team have done an incredible job engaging our capable and talented students, teaching them a viable skill they can take into the real world after graduation,” said Supt. Prebles. “This program is being talked about throughout the state and beyond. In fact, we have created a presentation about this initiative that is being shared at upcoming statewide, and even national, conferences so other districts can empower their students with skills and experiential learning opportunities, while simultaneously saving taxpayer dollars. It’s a win-win!”



Early Learning Village Third Graders Visit Cleveland Clinic Classroom

This past February, third graders at Early Learning Village in Euclid went on an exciting field trip to the Cleveland Clinic where they discovered the fascinating world of medicine and medical technology. The students had the unique opportunity to learn about a variety of essential medical tools, including ultrasounds, stethoscopes, while also learning about lifesaving techniques like CPR. The visit offered a hands-on experience, connecting classroom lessons with real-world applications in healthcare.

At the Cleveland Clinic, the young learners were greeted by a team of friendly healthcare professionals who led the engaging demonstrations. Students observed how ultrasounds generate real-time images of internal organs, allowing doctors to monitor health without invasive procedures. They also learned how stethoscopes are used to listen to heartbeats and lung sounds, giving them insight into the diagnostic process.

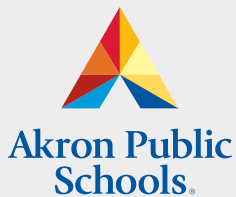


The instructors also explained the critical role of CPR in emergency situations and how chest compressions can help people survive when they stop breathing or their heart stops beating. Using CPR mannequins, the students learned and practiced proper technique for chest compressions, gaining confidence in a skill that could one day help save lives.

Throughout the day, the students eagerly asked questions and interacted with the clinic staff,

deepening their understanding of medical science and its practical applications. Teachers emphasized that early exposure to healthcare concepts can spark an interest in STEM and inspire future careers in medicine.

The visit to the Cleveland Clinic not only educated the students about crucial medical tools and procedures but also inspired them to consider the impactful field of healthcare.



Akron Public Schools Honored with Prestigious National STEM Mentoring Award

Akron Public Schools (APS) has been recognized on the national stage for its exceptional contributions to STEM education. The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), in partnership with the National Science Foundation (NSF), has named APS's Science and Health Department as one of just five organizations to receive the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM).

This prestigious award honors individuals and organizations that have demonstrated outstanding commitment to mentoring the next generation of innovators and fostering a diverse and inclusive STEM workforce. As part of the recognition, APS will receive a \$10,000 award, with arrangements being made by the PAESMEM Team at NSF and OSTP.

"This honor is a testament to the hard work of our educators, the dedication of our students, and the

unwavering support of our community," said APS leadership. "We are deeply grateful to our teachers for their trust, our scholars for believing in our mission, and the broader Akron community for standing behind us."



The district was nominated for the award by Jonathan Simmons of Christopher Learning Tree Academy, highlighting APS's impactful mentorship programs that inspire and equip students to excel in STEM fields.

APS remains committed to empowering students through innovative learning experiences, ensuring they are prepared to lead the future of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.



South Euclid-Lyndhurst Schools Embraces Artificial Intelligence

This February, South Euclid-Lyndhurst Schools took an important step into the world of artificial intelligence (AI) during our Continuous Improvement Day (CID).

AI has been described as an “arrival technology,” much like the internet—there’s no decision to be made about whether or not it enters our schools. With this in mind, SEL Schools is committed to embracing AI as a tool to empower teachers, staff, and students, not a challenge to overcome.

As part of this commitment, the February CID featured teacher-led learning sessions focused on several innovative tools, including ChatGPT, MagicSchool, Brisk, and math-specific AI applications (taught by Frank Carraher of the ESC of Western Reserve). Staff were able to build or expand their AI skills in an interactive environment, providing them with practical strategies they can immediately apply in their work. Building secretaries received tailored training on Google and Gemini to help them better organize their work and more efficiently complete tasks.

The feedback was positive. Teachers had an opportunity to engage in roundtable discussions with colleagues after their learning sessions. There, they shared use cases, what they were most looking forward to, and helped colleagues work through concerns. One teacher said, “I wish we would have known how to use [Brisk] earlier,

honestly...it will make life so much easier.” Teachers and staff left the sessions feeling

confident and excited to explore the potential of AI in their classrooms and workspaces.

By staying ahead of advancements like AI, SEL Schools is ensuring their students are ready to meet the technological expectations of the world they’ll enter after graduation.





Westshore Young Leaders at Rocky River Middle School Complete Service Projects

Members of the Westshore Young Leaders Network (WYLN) at Rocky River Middle School recently completed two service projects to help spread joy and kindness throughout the community.

During the holiday season, the leadership group organized and carried out this year's RRMS food drive. More than 20 students participated, successfully collecting 10 large moving boxes of food and an additional two large boxes of toiletries.

In another effort, the group worked on a Motivational Mural and Mailbox for cancer patients at the Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center in Sandusky. The final project featured more than 300 Post-it notes with inspiring messages for patients to read during their treatments.



The Cleveland Clinic expressed gratitude in a letter to School Resource Officer Chris Camp, WYLN advisor, and the students. The letter noted:

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your incredible contribution in Harnessing Positive Thoughts by creating the Motivational Mural and Mailbox for our patients. Your dedication and creativity have brought a significant positive impact on our community. The mural and mailbox have not only brightened our environment, but also provided a source of inspiration and encouragement for our patients. Your efforts have truly made a difference and we are deeply appreciative of your support.

The WYLN offers students in grades 6-12 leadership skills development, social activities, and strategies aimed at preventing alcohol and drug abuse among teens. Students gain these valuable skills at monthly network meetings with peers from other Westshore schools. Through student-planned programs and social activities, Westshore students work together to learn team building and leadership, get support for making healthy choices and have fun connecting with other teens in a positive environment. WYLN helps develop youth into community leaders with essential life skills for success.



Berea City Schools Launches “Grow Your Own” Program to Build a Sustainable Pipeline of Educators

The Berea City School District is taking proactive steps to address teacher shortages and support the next generation of educators. Through the “Grow Your Own” program and the introduction of the InspireEd Pathway, which offers two college-credit education courses at the high school, the district is investing in developing local talent and promoting the teaching profession.

The Grow Your Own program, supported by the Department of Higher Education, aims to identify and support both students and existing district staff interested in pursuing a career in education. By expanding opportunities, the program not only inspires students to consider teaching but also empowers current staff members, such as paraprofessionals, aides, and other non-certified employees, to take steps toward earning their teaching credentials.

As part of this initiative, the district is offering two new courses at the high school level: EDB 242: Education and Social Change and EDB 202: Inquisitive Minds and Learners. These entry-level College Credit Plus courses, offered through Cleveland State University, will allow students to earn college credits toward a teaching degree while still in high school.

“This is a win-win for our students and our staff,” said Tracy Wheeler, Superintendent. “Not only will students save time and money by getting a head start on their college education, but our dedicated staff members will also have the chance to advance their careers and make an even greater impact in our schools.”

The district is working to ensure a seamless transition for students and staff interested in pursuing teaching degrees. Additionally, the Grow Your Own scholarship will provide financial support to help students cover the cost of their education.

“Our goal is to build a robust pipeline of future teachers from within our own community,” explained Dr. Tiffany Stropko, Director of Personnel. “By exposing students to the education field early on and providing our staff with pathways to certification, we hope to address our teacher shortage and strengthen the teaching profession as a whole.”

This initiative aligns with the Berea City School District’s Portrait of a Titan competencies, fostering critical thinking, adaptability, and leadership skills among participants. By preparing students and staff for the dynamic challenges of teaching,

the district aims to develop educators who are innovative and empathetic leaders in the classroom.

The Grow Your Own program is designed to attract a diverse group of participants, ensuring representation and inclusivity in the future teaching workforce. By reaching students and staff from all backgrounds, the district seeks to strengthen the teaching profession with educators who reflect the community they serve.

The district's focus on mental health and wellness extends to this initiative, equipping participants with tools and resources to navigate the challenges of the education field. By emphasizing the importance of wellness and self-care, Berea City Schools is preparing future educators for long and fulfilling careers.

To measure the program's success, the district will track key metrics, such as the number of students and staff who enter teaching programs and eventually return to Berea City Schools as educators. This data will guide ongoing refinements to ensure the initiative remains effective and impactful.

The new high school courses and the Grow Your Own program are just the latest in the Berea City School District's comprehensive efforts to support staff wellness, professional development, and student success. With these initiatives, the district is cultivating a thriving, sustainable teaching workforce that can provide the best possible educational experience for all Titans.



Director of Personnel Dr. Tiffany Stropko meeting with BMHS seniors to identify their “Difference Makers.”



Mayfield City Schools Launches Telehealth Mental Health Support Services for Students

At Mayfield City Schools, the safety and well-being of our students remain the top priority. Recognizing the increasing need for mental health, counseling, and intervention services, the district launched a new partnership with Hazel Health, a free, confidential telehealth service available to all Mayfield students beginning February 3, 2025.

Thanks to the support of the community during the district's November 2024 levy request, this partnership allows Mayfield students to access high-quality telehealth care at no cost to their families. Through Hazel Health, students can receive teletherapy sessions with a licensed therapist either at school or at home using any smartphone, tablet, or computer. All appointments are private and completely confidential.

Teletherapy services are now available to all Mayfield students in grades K-12. With parental consent, students can choose their therapist based on gender, race, or language preferences to ensure a comfortable and personalized experience.

According to mental health experts, more than 20% of children have a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder, yet only 1 in 5 who need support receive care from a mental health provider.

Additionally, 44% of teens report feeling persistently sad or hopeless. This new initiative aims to bridge that gap by providing accessible and immediate support to students in need.

"We are committed to ensuring our students have the resources they need to thrive academically and personally," said Superintendent Dr. Michael J. Barnes. "This partnership with Hazel Health represents a significant step in prioritizing student mental health and well-being."

Community members and stakeholders have expressed their support for the initiative, recognizing the impact it will have on students' overall well-being. "Having access to confidential and professional mental health support is a game changer for our students and their families," said mom, resident and Lander Elementary Guidance Counselor Rebecca Schmidt.

As the program rolls out, district officials encourage families to explore the benefits of telehealth services and reach out with any questions.

For more details on how to access Hazel Health services, visit www.mayfieldschools.org or www.hazel.co

MAYFIELD MAIL: Plenty of Mayfield Mail postcards to our students from their teachers have been stamped and delivered over the last few weeks to remind all of us that “psst...you’re pretty awesome!” Keep up the good work, Wildcats!



MINDFUL MONDAYS: Over the month of February, Superintendent Dr. Michael Barnes shared inspiring words with teachers and staff to thank them for their work and talent and remind all of us that the brighter days of spring and the conclusion of another successful school year are just around the bend.





We build bridges for ...

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

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Brooklyn City Schools
Chagrin Falls Exempted Village Schools
Chardon Local Schools
Cleveland Heights-University Heights
City Schools
Cleveland Metropolitan Schools
Cuyahoga Heights Local Schools

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