

# SPONSOR UPDATE

## APRIL 2019

**Peggy Young,**  
**Director**

**Jennifer Schorr,**  
**Associate Director**

### OUR MISSION

The mission of the Education Division of Buckeye Community Hope Foundation is to establish strong public community schools by adhering to quality authorizing practices, ensuring responsible oversight, and setting high standards for school performance.

### OUR VISION

The Education Division's vision is strong communities of healthy, well-educated students, and a future in which all students have access to a high quality public education. Ohio thrives as increasing numbers of schools graduate students equipped to assume a positive role in society.

### *DeWine's budget adds funding for at-risk students*

Gov. Mike DeWine's recently unveiled state biennial budget plan calls for a 3.7 percent increase over General Revenue Fund (GRF) dollars for K-12 education foundation funding for Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021.

He also proposes a boost in K-12 education funds to support mental health and wraparound services for at-risk students. Beyond that additional funding, no changes are proposed for the state's funding formula.

The plan also calls for the creation of a new GRF line item to cover costs associated with helping high school students attain industry-recognized credentials, better positioning them as candidates for living wage jobs.

The governor also proposes increased support for charter schools "designated as a community school of quality."

The budget process begins with a bill introduced in the House, where it will likely under-go significant change — likely including a new approach to school funding based on recommendations of a bipartisan workgroup — before moving on to the Senate for further deliberations. The two chambers will then reconcile differences before passing final legislation to be sent to the governor by June 30.

### *JEOC to focus on state report cards*

The Joint Education Oversight Committee (JEOC) recently met to discuss members' recommendations for issues of primary focus during the 133rd General Assembly. The committee's top priorities will be using its research to identify ways in which to improve state district and school report cards, and studying other states' childhood education initiatives. Chairman Rep. Bob Cupp (R-Lima) said he plans to hold JEOC meetings one or two Thursdays a month.





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## NEXT UP: WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

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Congratulations to Horizon Science Academy (HSA) of Youngstown! Two of its robotics teams - one comprised of elementary students and one middle school students -- have earned the right to compete in the upcoming VEX Robotics World Championship.

The VEX Robotics World Championship is the largest robotics competition in the world, with more than 600 teams from 40 countries. The three-day event - sponsored by Google, NASA, Toyota and Tesla - will be held in Kentucky and is scheduled to begin April 28.



## Board member leverages expertise to support struggling students

When Constellation Schools Executive Director Becky Keeney emailed Eastside Arts Academy Principal Katherine Rybak about a board member interested in helping students struggling to improve their writing skills, Rybak jumped at the offer.

“Everyone has a special skill,” Rybak said. “Finding a skilled volunteer and connecting them with the right students leads to great outcomes. It seems there are never enough hours in the day, so our teachers welcome the assistance!”



Deborah Callen has served as a board member for Constellation Schools for about 13 years, including as president. She wanted to be a teacher when she was young, but her path led her in a different direction.

A retired banker, Callen is now settled into her “retirement job” as an adjunct professor teaching writing at Cuyahoga Community College and Baldwin Wallace University.

“My teaching schedule allows for outside activities, and I wanted to get more involved with the school and its students,” Callen said. “It’s rewarding working one on one with students and after a couple of months we’re starting to build a foundation of trust.”

She spends three hours at the school each week, working with about ten students in relatively short 15 to 20 minute sessions.

The difference between teaching writing to college students and fifth- and sixth-grade economically disadvantaged students seems significant, but Callen has experience teaching remedial English classes and working with disadvantaged youth.

“I tell Constellation students that I teach big kids in college the same skills they’re learning,” Callen said. “Writing is a life-long skill – not just an elementary school exercise.”

Callen encourages her Constellation students to write about themselves and things they’re most interested in. It helps her get to know them as individuals and to understand challenges they face in their daily lives.

“Two immigrant students who are siblings recently wrote about wanting to return home, which was somewhat therapeutic,” Callen

*Continued on pg. 4*

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## **BILL CALLS FOR END TO DISTRICT TAKEOVERS**

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A bipartisan bill (H.B. 127) sponsored by Rep. Steve Hambley (R-Medina) and Rep. Kent Smith (D-Euclid) has been introduced to prohibit the superintendent of public instruction from establishing new academic distress commissions.

House Bill 170, passed by the General Assembly in 2015, repealed the then existing law on academic distress commissions and replaced it with a new law requiring the appointment of a chief executive officer who has substantial powers to manage district operations. Under that law, the state superintendent was required to establish a commission for any school district that receives for three consecutive years an overall grade of "F" on the state report card or equivalencies prescribed for years for which there is no overall grade.

The legislative proposal would not impact the three districts already operating under academic distress commissions: East Cleveland, Lorain and Youngstown.

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### ***Board member supports struggling students — continued***

said. "Another student wrote about attending an event with lots of good food to eat ... it's likely that he is among the many students who have faced food insecurity."

Regardless of whether a student is a 12-year-old attending a public school or a 50-year-old nontraditional college student, many dread writing assignments. Callen reminds them that practice leads to improvement.

"Whenever I see progress, I make sure I praise it," she said. "Success begets success ... I'm already starting to see that with the young students I'm working with at Eastside Arts."

Rybak praises Callen. "Her work here is really awesome – she's such an asset to our school. She collaborates with our Title I, English language arts and math teachers, who appreciate her contributions as much as I do."

### ***E-school funding group to address final questions including treatment of DOPR***

The Joint Committee on E-School Funding created by legislation (S.B. 216) passed by the Ohio Legislature last fall continues its work to study a funding system "based on student competency" under the leadership of Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering) and Rep. Bob Cupp (R-Lima).

As the group's work draws to a close, it seeks answers to a handful of questions raised during its deliberations.

"One of the biggest to me is: Are we going to treat dropout recovery schools that are largely digitally-based differently than we are large, statewide e-schools?" Lehner said.

Some call for a hybrid funding system based on enrollment/attendance and course completion/competency. Others recommended providing weighted funding for students who need remediation (as e-schools are currently excluded from receiving much of the categorical funding – targeted assistance, limited English proficient, economically disadvantaged and K-3 literacy-- provided to brick and mortar schools).



***Don't miss the update on new teacher licensure guidelines that will hit charters next year on pg. 11!***

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## **LEGISLATION ADDRESSES DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS FOR EDUCATOR LICENSES**

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Legislation (S.B. 34) introduced by state Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard) would toughen disciplinary actions for educator licenses, adding to those that would be grounds for automatic denial or revocation.

In addition to specifying that a court finding of eligibility for intervention (in lieu of conviction) for criminal offenses specified in current law would trigger automatic denial or revocation, adjudication as a delinquent child for criminal offenses specified by the bill would, as well.

Some legislators are questioning whether a crime committed by a juvenile should later in life exclude them from the teaching profession.

Another key provision of the bill would end what some refer to as “passing the trash” in allowing school employees who have engaged inappropriately with students to move on to employment in another school or district. The proposal would require the Ohio Department of Education to share reports of teacher misconduct (now confidential) in response to requests by districts considering individuals for employment.

## ***Amazon’s Future Engineer program a great opportunity for AUS students***

The Academy for Urban Scholars (AUS) Columbus is one of just three central Ohio schools -- and of 34 schools nationwide -- participating in Amazon’s Future Engineer program.

Amazon’s Future Engineer initiative is a comprehensive childhood-to-career program aimed at inspiring, educating and training children and young adults from underserved and low-income communities to pursue careers in computer science.

AUS Development Director Derrick Hodge discovered the Amazon opportunity and immediately recognized the potential benefits to AUS students. Amazon provides curriculum, standards and modules all built into the systems participating students use.

“All we had to do was make sure the computers worked,” said Director of Curriculum and Instruction Kristen Muenster, who – along with two Information Technology (IT) professors employed part-time at AUS -- completed Amazon’s onboarding program.



The program was launched in February with students spending two hours three times a week learning coding and programming skills. The initiative will allow students to pursue CompTIA A+ certification, or simply strengthen and expand their IT skills.

According to Amazon, students who take Advanced Placement (AP) Computer Science courses in high school are eight times more likely to take computer science in college. Among Black and Hispanic students, those who take AP computer science in high school are seven to eight times more likely to take computer science in college, and among women, they are 10 times more likely to do so.

The Amazon Future Engineer program seeks to dramatically expand access to high caliber preparatory courses, curricular resources, and programs for schools and districts to help prepare and propel high school students forward in their pursuit of computer science education.

*Continued on pg. 6*

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## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LINKED TO TECH SKILLS**

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Lt. Gov. Jon Husted recently spoke at a digital skills workshop sponsored by Google in Columbus, noting the link between boosting the technology skills of Ohio workers and the state's economic development efforts.

"It can't be just the people who have traditionally been in tech," he said. "It needs to be every single man, woman and child in this state preparing themselves for that future. If you want to work or you've planned on working, technology is going to interact with you in some way."

The DeWine Administration will work to foster collaboration between state agencies and the business community.

"Education can't do this in isolation. Business can't do this in isolation," he said. "The closer we build those partnerships together, the better chance we stand of helping actually to make sure somebody who gets the job skills has exactly what they need."



## ***Amazon's Future Engineer — continued***

Amazon pays up to \$10,000 in tuition assistance each year for up to four years for participating students who continue their technology studies.

Now that computer science is an option for meeting graduation requirements – an alternative to Algebra II – students are eager to participate in the Future Engineer program.

"Participation is capped at 11 students – and we currently have 11 students enrolled," Muenster said. "They're excited about it ... they see computer science as much more useful than Algebra and hope to eventually secure high-paying technology jobs."

The Digital Divide has been a barrier to technology for many low-income students and their families. Some AUS students have hot spots from their phones, which they use with the Chromebooks every student is assigned and may use at home.

"We have students asking every day if they can join the Amazon program," Muenster said. "Those who are participating are sharing their excitement with other students, and we've placed posters throughout the school promoting the initiative."

Representatives from Amazon recently visited AUS, spending time in the classroom observing students and offering tips to teachers. Their experiences in participating schools will likely lead to tweaks aimed at improving the program.

"We're grateful to Amazon for its outstanding support," Muenster said. "And we share our students' excitement about the outstanding opportunities the Future Engineers program provides."

## ***Bill introduced to expedite transfer of student records***

Rep. Catherine Ingram (D-Cincinnati) recently introduced H.B. 111, which would require public and chartered nonpublic schools to transmit a transferred student's records within five school days after receiving a request from the school or district the student is attending. If the district or school does not have a record of the student's attendance, it must provide a statement of that fact to the requestor.

Under current law, school officials must request a student's records from the public or nonpublic school that the student most recently attended within 24 hours after a student's entry into the new school. Both state and federal law permit the transfer of student records between schools for legitimate educational purposes. Currently, however, there is no statutory requirement that districts or schools must transmit a student's records to the requestor.

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## **INITIAL FEEDBACK ON FEDERAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM GENERALLY NEGATIVE**

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A plan backed by the U.S. Department of Education calls for investing \$5 billion annually in scholarship funds “to expand and improve education options available to students across the country.”

Individuals and organizations from both ends of the political spectrum have voiced concerns regarding the proposal that would match donations to scholarship granting organizations approved by the states with nonrefundable federal tax credits that could be used to offset homeschooling, private school and tutoring costs.

The Ohio Education Association and Ohio Federation of Teachers - which predictably criticized the voucher proposal - were joined by the conservative Heritage Foundation’s Center for Education Policy and Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom.

The plan is unlikely to be well received by Congress, which must approve it, with the Senate controlled by Republicans and the House by Democrats.

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## **Annual literacy event celebrates Dr. Seuss**

Columbus Crew player Frankie Hejduk, State Senator Andy Brenner and former Ohio State University football player James Cotton were among members of the local community who participated in Horizon Science Academy (HSA) Primary’s recent Read Across America event.

Read Across America is a literacy initiative created by the National Education Association. National Read Across America Day is one aspect of the initiative, which is held on the school day that coincides most closely with Dr. Seuss’ birthday.



Spearheaded by Community Outreach Coordinator Valerie Anderson, the school’s annual event is a big hit with its K-1 students.

“Students don’t always know who our guest readers are, but they recognize and appreciate that each one has taken the time to visit and read to them,” Anderson said. “We tie the event to a Concept-wide reading competition that’s a component of our literacy plan.”

Anderson is always on the lookout for opportunities to engage individuals and organizations in support of the school.

“I never hesitate to ask folks to visit our school and engage with our students,” Anderson said. “The worse they can do is say ‘no.’ So, whether I’m introducing myself to a local celebrity at the state fair, reaching out to a key legislator to congratulate them following a successful election campaign or using social media, I’m always looking for ways to promote the school and its students.”

Also among the readers this year was Alissa Henry from Ohio Cash Explosion.

“The first time she read for us was on the day she announced she was pregnant with her son,” Anderson said. “This year, she brought him with her to the event.”

Members of the Buckeye Community Hope Foundation School Improvement Team also read to students.

“Our invitation to recruit readers pointed out the giving one hour of their time would have the potential to impact 75 students,” Anderson said. “Most classrooms welcomed three readers during the day-long event.”

## BILL PROPOSES TAX CREDIT FOR TEACHERS

Legislation (H.B. 121) recently introduced by Rep. Tim Schaffer (R-Lancaster) calls for an income tax credit of up to \$100 for teachers who purchase classroom instructional materials, including materials for home schooling.

The tax credit would be nonrefundable, meaning that if the credit is more than the net amount of tax due with the teacher's annual tax return, the difference is not refunded.

To qualify for the credit, a teacher must be licensed to teach a grade between kindergarten and 12th grade (or be a home school teacher qualified to provide home instruction under Ohio law) and must use the materials for classroom instruction.



## Monthly events linked to academy's three pillars



The SMART Academy's foundational philosophy is based on three pillars essential to student success -- school, families and community -- and its monthly events have served to link the three together.

The school's focus for March was on literacy, which Superintendent Robert Aitken recognizes as essential to student success.

"We've raised money to increase literacy awareness and improve our school library to serve as a tool for students and the community," Aitken said. "We currently work with the Cleveland Book Bank, which provides us with hundreds of free books each month."

The school's theme for March was Literacy Matters, with a full week dedicated to a favorite author: Dr. Seuss.

Monday's featured book was *Cat in the Hat* with students encouraged to wear a fun hat! Students were invited to wear something red or blue on Tuesday, when the featured book was *One Fish, Two*

*Fish*. Wacky mismatched, inside out or backwards clothes were the dress code for Wednesday, when the featured book was, of course, *Wacky Wednesday!* Crazy or fun socks were appropriate for Thursday when the book of the day was *Fox in Socks*. And for Friday's great read – *Oh, The Places You'll Go* – students wore college t-shirts or jerseys.

Families and others from the neighborhood were invited to the school for an evening event featuring snacks, crafts, book giveaways, reading and lots of fun activities.

"Another successful community event – great turnout and a free book for every kid," Aitken said.

The SMART Academy team is small, but mighty.

"We share a commitment to our students and the community," he said. "We believe that our strong literacy focus will position our students to live fulfilling lives, improve their communities and become productive citizens of society."



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## **HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS QUESTION CHARTER, REPORT CARD FUNDING**

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Early discussions of Gov. Mike DeWine's budget proposal have already begun in the House Finance Committee.

Among the items questioned in the Ohio Department of Education's operating budget was funding of \$15 million over the biennium for district and school report cards, which one legislator described as "fatally flawed." State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria acknowledged that "many people agree" that changes need to be made to state report cards, but noted that ditching Ohio's state-level accountability system without replacement could result in the loss of billions of federal education dollars.

Some lawmakers also questioned DeWine's plan to provide \$30 million annually to "quality" charter schools. DeMaria explained that "quality" has yet to be defined.



## **UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS**

We hope that you can work around the busy testing season to join us for a few network and professional development events. Please also plan forward and register now for our School Leader Summit in June – it is going to be an *awesome* event!

### ***Spring Dropout Recovery Roundtable – April 30, Columbus***

The Spring Dropout Recovery Session will be a combination of "best practice" ideas, information about BCHF's involvement in a dropout grant opportunity, and supports for ongoing improvement plans as a Priority school. In addition, we invite you to submit discussion topics to us! The session will be from 5 to 7 p.m. with dinner provided.

Register online at:

<http://register.eventarc.com/41048/spring-drop-out-recovery-roundtable>

### ***Non-violent Crisis Intervention Refresher – May 2, Columbus***

This refresher is a follow-up to the August 23 annual "full" training in Crisis Intervention Strategies utilizing CPI protocols. The refresher will permit school staff to renew credentials in non-violent crisis prevention techniques for the subsequent school year. The session is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a light lunch provided. Special education coordinators, school leaders and assistant leaders, and teachers and staff assigned to intervention teams will benefit from this refresher training. *Please note that this session is not intended for faculty or staff who have not been previously trained.*

Register online at:

<https://register.eventarc.com/41117/nonviolent-crisis-intervention-refresher>

### ***Spring English Learner Update and Focus on Identifying and Serving Learners with Special Needs – May 9, Columbus***

This session will be hosted from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a light lunch provided. The morning will consist of our typical "roundtable" discussion of English learners (EL) updates, concerns, issues, and best practices. The afternoon will be devoted to discussion of identification and services for EL who may have special needs. This network is of interest to EL teachers, school leaders, special educators, and curriculum/academic coordinators.

Register online at:

<https://register.eventarc.com/41112/spring-el-update-and-special-needs>

*Continued on pg. 10*

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## COMPLIANCE UPDATE

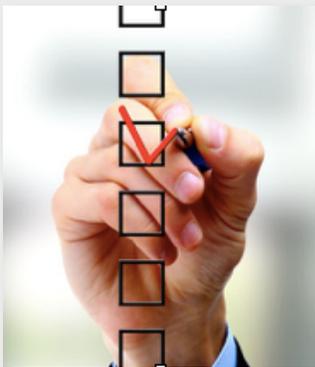
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### Food service licenses

Food service licenses expired statewide on March 1, 2019. Updated licenses for schools and vendors/caterers should be uploaded to SharePoint and posted in your buildings.

### Board training reminder

If your governing authority has yet to complete board training for school year 2018-2019, it is imperative that it is completed soon. Board training is a contractual obligation. Students are better served when boards stay current in the knowledge of policies, fiscal responsibilities and school culture. BCHF offers online training modules that satisfy this requirement. Please contact Anita McCarty at [amccarty@buckeyehope.org](mailto:amccarty@buckeyehope.org) or your sponsor representative for more information.



## UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS — *continued*

### SCHOOL LEADER SUMMIT

Based on *your* recent feedback, the School Leader Summit, scheduled for June 18-19 at Quest Conference Center in Columbus, is going to be better than ever! You, as school leaders, have challenged us to collaboratively dive deeper into Social-emotional Learning and Trauma-informed practices. Thank you so much for your practical suggestions about possible speakers and sessions!

The Summit has always been a unique opportunity for school leaders to network, work with teams from your school or other schools, and acquire best practices knowledge to kick-start planning for the 2019-2020 school year. We will offer some time during the event for individualized school planning.

Register online at:

<https://register.eventarc.com/41120/leadership-summit>

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### ***Important information about professional development sessions offered by BCHF:***

**Email settings** – Don't let reminders go to your spam! Remember to make eventarc a trusted site in your email in order to receive confirmations and email updates on our workshops. Upon registering for an event, you will receive specific location information.

**Trouble registering** - Please email Dr. Carol Young, [cyoung@buckeyehope.org](mailto:cyoung@buckeyehope.org) should you have any difficulty registering. Please include names and email addresses of all registrants in the text of your message.

**Workshop Offerings and Registration** - BCHF provides all workshops and seminars without cost to personnel *from its sponsored schools*. However, a minimum number of registrants may be required in order for a seminar to proceed and BCHF reserves the right to cancel or postpone programs due to low enrollment. BCHF also reserves the right to invoice a school for meals or other costs associated with registrants who fail to attend.

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# LICENSURE UPDATE

## *New teacher licensure guidelines will hit charters next year*

*By Carol S. Young, Ph.D., Department Lead Accountability and School Improvement*

Ohio's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan places emphasis on "assuring a high-quality teacher in every classroom." This language and concept replaces the former "HQT" terminology and its requirements that became familiar to schools under the former No Child Left Behind Act. Ohio's requirements under the "high-quality teacher" language become effective July 1, 2019. The new requirements will significantly affect how charter schools staff their schools.

Since the beginning of charter schools in Ohio, one allowable latitude in law has been the ability to employ teachers with long-term substitute licenses. As of July 1, this allowance will no longer exist. In order to be employed and legally compensated as a teacher in a charter school, teachers will need to hold standard or resident educator licensure. The specific directive by the Office for Community Schools reads as follows:

*Effective July 1, 2019, school districts, **community schools** and STEM schools are prohibited from employing teachers of core subject areas unless they are "properly certified or licensed teachers." Per the statute, being properly certified or licensed means the teacher has completed all certification or licensure requirements applicable to the subject, grades and type of students being taught. (ODE, August 2018)*

Schools need to begin *now* to prepare for a change that will affect current employees holding either long-term substitute or international licenses. The change does not mean that these teachers necessarily have to leave their schools. But the change does mean teachers with these credentials must pursue an acceptable form of licensure under ESSA in order to remain employed in their schools.

The Ohio Department of Education now offers teachers a pathway to alternative resident educator licenses. This pathway is a viable option for most candidates who have content knowledge or successful career and life experience in their teaching assignment area. Many of these candidates currently hold long-term substitute licenses.

Current faculty who may be eligible for alternative resident educator licenses should begin taking steps *now*. These steps involve requesting an alternative educator license review, taking the licensure test in the assigned area, enrolling in an approved alternative licensure institute, receiving a statement of eligibility, applying for the alternative license, and then following a series of steps over the next few years to progress toward standard licensure.

The steps are more fully described on ODE's website:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Licensure/Resident-License-Options/Alternative-Resident-Educator-Licenses>

The following guidance document may also assist schools in determining which form of licensure may be most accessible to teachers: <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Teaching/Licensure/Licensure-Update/Proper-Certification-Guidance.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>

For further technical assistance, schools are advised to contact their regional representative from the Office of Educator Licensure. Many schools have already found these regional contacts helpful in resolving individual licensure issues.

# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

## *Curriculum: The power of simplicity*

By Carol S. Young, Ph.D., Department Lead Accountability and School Improvement

You know you're getting older when you realize some things never change. Years ago, when I was superintendent of a rural school district, our two best first-grade teachers came to me with tears in their eyes. They had been working most of the summer to plan lessons around new Ohio Academic Content Standards. "Did you know," they asked, "that there are 654 standards for first graders to master? How are we going to do that?"

A quick mathematical calculation prompted my answer, "That would mean we would give students only about a quarter of a day to learn and practice any standard," I said. "No, we need to whittle this down. Teach directly to the *important* standards and practice and practice those essentials. Keep it simple."

Discussion with these wonderful teachers, and the practical "KISS" plan they later developed, was my introduction to standards-based curricula. For educators, curriculum defines *what* we are to teach. But, to truly guide instruction, that "what" needs to be do-able -- clear, concise, simple.

Educators who develop standards have failed to learn what good heart surgeons and neurosurgeons already know. If you can open up major arteries in any vital organ, other blockages will be alleviated through collateral circulation. You don't have to fix every capillary. Yet, the standards movement has teachers attending to every capillary. As a result, teachers search constantly to find worksheets, Teachers Pay Teachers hints, and Pinterest designs to address the distinction between "determining the theme of a story" and "summarizing the text, incorporating a theme" (R.L.4.2). Marzano (2003) summarizes, "Many curricula contain more

standards than can be meaningfully taught in a 180-day school year."

School leaders can provide teachers and students with a major gift next school year – a curriculum that can actually be taught. In his case for "drastically reducing content standards," Mike Schmoker (2018) advises teaching a reduced number of standards with "*adequate intellectual depth*." He also provides a series of steps that I would urge school leaders to consider:

1. Determine the number of days (or hours) that teachers actually have available to instruct. This means taking the total hours in the school year, subtracting things like state testing and assembly days, and arriving at realistic time frames.
2. Determine the time to be devoted to core curricula and the time left to intervention and discretion. Schmoker cites a suggestion by late educator Rick DuFour (2007) that teachers should have about two weeks of discretionary time sprinkled

within each semester. This way, teachers and students can explore topics of interest in greater depth.

3. Using standards documents, focus on the topics and contents that are essential for life, for example, breaking the literacy code, essentials of mathematics, essential content and academic vocabulary in each discipline. Divide these standards up within available time frames. Add in other standards where time permits to create a meaningful whole.
4. Apportion standards by grading period in a logical progression. Allow for sufficient practice time on new and reviewed standards. Distributed practice is the key to mastery.

*"A 'guaranteed and viable curriculum' may have more effect on achievement than on any other factor."*

*– Robert Marzano  
2003*

## Curriculum simplicity — continued

5. Match essential standards to texts and key resources. Schmoker (2018) recommends using texts that emphasize meaningful reading, discussion and writing assignments. He advises that topics in content areas like science, social studies, art and music should incorporate far more full-length texts than has been the practice in the U.S.
6. Add focus to the curriculum by identifying guided questions for each major topic.
7. Where possible, measure mastery of standards by having students write extended responses to guided questions.
8. Refine your curriculum continuously. Add support documents including model unit and lesson plans that have worked especially well with your student population.

In a recent, unsettling study of urban schools, Molnar (2018) found that many urban schools use curricula and key resources that lack research support or that are least-aligned to current standards. Schomoker (2018) echoes this concern, stating that the most inane standards are covered repeatedly in instruction of

students with disabilities and students with poverty backgrounds because educators assume these students cannot master more in-depth topics. More relevant, in-depth topics are usually those that engage students the most!

The impetus behind the charter school movement was to find better educational solutions. One of these solutions is having a truly workable curriculum plan, a viable roadmap for your teachers and students. With this simple innovation, perhaps we in the charter movement can prove that some things *can change* and truly better the lives and achievement of our students.

DuFour, R. (2007). Clarity is the key to skillful leadership. *Journal of Staff Development*, 28(2), 69.

Marzano, R.J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, Va.: ASCD.

Molnar, M. (2018). Highly rated curriculum are not the norm in more than a third of large districts studied. *Edweek Market Brief*, August 29, 2018.

Schmoker, M. (2018)<sup>1</sup>. *Focus: Elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning*. Alexandria, Va.: ASCD.

<sup>1</sup>This book is a “must read” for any school leader!

**BUCKEYE COMMUNITY HOPE FOUNDATION**  
**3021 East Dublin-Granville Rd; Columbus OH 43231**  
**(614) 942-2030 [www.buckeyehope.org](http://www.buckeyehope.org)**

