BCHF, DOPR schools engage with key legislators

Buckeye Community Hope Foundation’s (BCHF) Sponsor Update has reported about administrative rule changes proposed last year that raised serious concerns throughout Ohio’s dropout prevention and recovery school (DOPR) community.

Against that backdrop – coupled with creation of a State Board DOPR work group and proposed DOPR legislative changes included by the House in the state biennial budget bill – BCHF organized two days of meetings with members of the Ohio House and Senate who serve on education committees.

Associate Director Jennifer Schorr coordinated the participation of students, teachers, administrators and management company representatives from BCHF-sponsored DOPR schools in meetings with legislators and their staff.

The students who participated were outstanding advocates for their schools, helping lawmakers better understand the challenges DOPR students face and the important role DOPR schools play in their difficult lives.

Take, for instance, a young man we’ll call “Raul,” who shared his circumstances and recent life events. Raul’s father is in prison. His mother “isn’t around much.” He recently suffered the loss of his older brother, a victim of gun violence, and his grandmother, who died from a heart attack. He was suspended for three weeks by the last public school he attended because his hair color was deemed inappropriate.

Despite all that, Raul has found the support and sense of family in his DOPR school and is now working to earn his high school diploma.

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Upon graduation, Raul hopes to join the military, which he sees as a positive step toward his longer-term goal to become a law enforcement officer.

Legislators were interested in the stories BCHF and the various DOPR schools had to share, and were particularly appreciative of and respectful to the students, who all found the unique experience rewarding and worthwhile.

Thanks to all the schools that participated: The Academy for Urban Scholars; Achieve Career Preparatory Academy; Flex High School; Focus Learning Academies and Focus North High School; and, YB Columbus Community School. And a very special thanks to our best DOPR advocates: students!

Budget bill addresses charter policy issues

House Bill 166 – as approved by the House of Representatives and sent to the Senate for consideration – contains a number of policy provisions impacting charter schools, including one that would revise the automatic closure laws (with the exception of dropout prevention and recovery – DOPR) based on academic performance for the THREE (rather than two) most recent school years.

The bill also calls for changes to DOPR school report cards, including aligning expectations for students with those of schools, giving schools credit for students who earn passing cumulative scores of 18 on seven end-of-course assessments (rather than the current required score of 21).

It also requires the State Board of Education – which recently created a work group to study DOPR schools – to coordinate a committee to study DOPR schools that offer two or more of three models: blended learning, portfolio learning and credit flexibility. Additionally, the bill would prohibit the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) from issuing DOPR school report cards until the legislature takes action to address the classification, authorization and report card ratings of DOPR schools.

Under the House-approved version of the bill, ODE would evaluate sponsors with overall ratings of “effective” for at least three consecutive years every five years, rather than annually. It also would remove the requirement that sponsors annually verify that no findings for recovery have been issued against school boards, operators and employees.
STATE BOARD CONSIDERS INCREASE IN THIRD GRADE READING BENCHMARK

At its May meeting, the State Board of Education’s Teaching, Leading and Learning Committee approved an increase in the grade three reading cut score required for promotion to fourth grade from 677 to 683.

The full State Board – which last year unanimously approved an increase in the cut score from 672 to 677 -- is expected to vote on the matter at its June meeting.

Two members of the committee voted against the proposal, despite the fact that the State Board is required by law to increase the benchmark requirements on an annual basis.

Grad requirement plans considered

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Paolo DeMaria and State Board of Education President Laura Kohler presented new graduation requirement recommendations to the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education – two days after the Alliance for High Quality Education, Ohio Excel and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute presented a competing plan.

Kohler characterized the main point of disagreement between the two proposals as being over the State Board’s recommendation that students be permitted to complete a culminating student experience to demonstrate math and English proficiency. She also said that the competing plan retains too great of focus on standardized testing.

“There is no standardized definition of success,” Kohler told legislators. “Talent is jagged and our graduation requirements should support the workforce, academic, and life goals of each student. Legislation to enact this system will reduce the high stakes nature of state high school tests, return flexibility to local schools, and innovatively empower student learning.”

The Buckeye Association of School Administrators, Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators and Ohio School Boards Association support the plan developed by the State Board.

Deliberation and debate will continue, as Senate Education Committee Chair Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering) intends to establish long-term graduation requirements as part of the state biennial budget bill.

“It’s important that we get this issue settled before another school year goes on,” Lehner said.

Grad options resources released

Students in the class of 2020 may use a work or community service experience to satisfy a component of Ohio’s graduation requirements. For the class of 2020, state law directed the Ohio Department of Education to develop guidance for districts or schools to approve and verify students’ work or community service experiences. The Class of 2020 Work or Community Service Experience guidance and the Work or Community Service Toolkit are now available online at: http://education.ohio.gov/Media/Ed-Connection/May-20-2019/2020-Graduation-Options-Work-or-Community-Service
URBAN GARDEN TEACHES STUDENTS NEW SKILLS

Horizon Science Academy of Youngstown’s new urban garden was recently featured by WKBN27 First News.

Two of the school’s teachers – both home gardeners – spearheaded the effort to install raised growing beds and establish a garden club, which will serve as a unique student learning opportunity.

“It would be a great opportunity for them – especially in Youngstown – to actually work with the soil, work with their hands, learn agriculture skills, learn building skills,” Sara Polomski said. “It’s kind of like a trade. We’re starting them off early so that they can be successful in the near future.

The school hopes for a nice harvest late this summer.

Athletic extra-curriculars teach teamwork

There are a lot of good reasons for schools to offer athletic extra-curricular activities: they get kids moving and encourage healthy exercise habits, teach teamwork and discipline, build school spirit ... and kids love them!

Lincoln Park Academy (upper) – which serves students in grades six through eight – has provided opportunities for both girls and boys to play basketball for the past four years. The school’s basketball teams are part of the North Ohio Charter School League, practicing in Lincoln Park’s gym and playing games in the local Euclid Sports Plant facility.

Athletic extra-curricular activities have expanded to include girls’ volleyball and, this year, to include cheerleading and track.

“Our cheerleading squad started out last fall practicing every night,” said Principal Lisa Lyons. “They worked so hard to make up their own cheers and dance routines, put on a pep rally for the basketball teams, and cheered at all the Friday night and Saturday morning games. They’ve been dedicated!”

About a dozen track members have shown the same impressive level of commitment as the school’s first track team. They practice in the school parking lot and have already competed in two track meets held this year in Euclid.

“They’re learning to work as a team – and that’s so important,” Lyons said. “They are very supportive of one another and even of the other students on competing teams.”

It’s been a good year for the school’s athletics programs. Beyond expansion of its offerings, the school’s seventh- and eighth-grade boys basketball team won second place in the league tournament.

“I’m so proud of our students,” Lyons said. “And I give the coaches so much credit. They volunteer their time for practice, games and competitions – all for the love of the kids!”

Lawmakers form Children’s Caucus

State Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering), chair of the Senate Education Committee, recently announced the formation of a new bipartisan Children’s Caucus aimed at addressing issues impacting Ohio’s children. Goals of the new caucus include improving children’s lives, identifying and bringing together legislators who support policies and funding to benefit kids, and using research and experts to identify best practices for future action.
**NEW INITIATIVE FOCUSES ON LITERACY**

The founder of SMART Academy has created an initiative – Books, Bears and Blankets – aimed at integrated literacy into the homes of students and others in the community.

Families are invited to visit the Books, Bears and Blankets website to provide basic information needed to allow the school to send a free package – appropriately including a book, a bear and a blanket – to their homes.

“The second, and key piece to this initiative is that we will broadcast from our website each school night at 8 p.m. a reading – hosted by teachers and myself,” explained school Superintendent Robert Aitken. “Our goal is to provide children with the opportunity to be read to and to practice good sleeping routines.

The school and its initiative was featured on a local radio station – Cleveland’s Star 102, Cleveland Connection. Check it out online at: https://star102cleveland.radio.com/media/audio-channel/smart-academy

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**Students make great, fast progress in new initiatives**

Chapelside Cleveland Academy students seem able to rise to every challenge, performing well in chess and dance/cheer competitions, despite just being introduced to both activities during the last school year.

What began as an after school chess program has now become part of the school’s curriculum for third- and sixth-grade students. Chapelside now works with Progress With Chess – a non-profit dedicated helping students achieve better academic outcomes and improve self-esteem with skills developed through the game of chess.

“I’m surprised and pleased with how quickly our kiddos have embraced this challenge,” said Principal Anna Turner.

The school’s third- and sixth-grade students participate in chess one hour a day, two and three days a week, respectively. Those that have a passion for the game also participate in the after school program which the school continues to offer.

Progress With Chess describes the benefits of the program best: Chess participation develops critical thinking skills such as concentration, memory, and pattern recognition, and promotes healthy social interaction between people of different ages and diverse cultural, racial and economic backgrounds.

“Chess helps your brain function at a higher level,” Turner said. “It’s a game of skill … thinking ahead and planning for what’s to come and how best to tackle it. It empowers our students and helps build their confidence.”

Progress With Chess instructors who work with Chapelside students encourage and help facilitate participation in various competitions. Despite typically being one of the only urban schools at competitions – and the short period of time in which students have been exposed to the game – Chapelside is performing well. A sixth-grade Chapelside student who recently won a chess tournament was featured on Progress With Chess’ website.

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CRITICISM OF STATE REPORT CARDS CONTINUES

A variety of education stakeholders – including a former Worthington City School Board of Education member, representatives of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), and the executive director of achievement and leadership services at the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio – recently voiced their concerns over state school report cards in testimony before the Joint Education Oversight Committee (JEOC).

Critics pointed out the predictability of student performance on tests based on the income level of the district in which the school and students reside. Beyond the discussion of whether the Performance Index metric is really valid, BASA questioned the appropriateness of using letter grades on report cards and described the gifted indicator cut score as “unrealistic and nearly unattainable.”

Rep. Don Jones (R-Freeport), a longtime educator who serves on the House Primary and Secondary Education committee and as a JEOC member, said that one of his key goals is to find a replacement for the current letter grade system. “People do not understand the letter grade,” he said.

New initiatives — continued

Turner is also justifiably proud of the school’s dance/cheer team created last school year by the school’s office manager, Alexandria Hibler, who serves as its coach. The team performed well at a recent competition, earning two second-place trophies and two third-place trophies.

“This has been a real confidence builder for our girls,” Turner said. “It’s also a great team building experience. I’m so proud of Ms. Hibler and the girls – they’ve been so dedicated, practicing before and after school and on weekends.”

Morning Journal features Kindergarten STEAM Fest

“Little scientists, engineers and innovative thinkers sported lab coats and conducted experiments April 25 during Horizon Science Academy of Lorain’s first ever Kindergarten Fest.”

That was the lead to a very positive story published in The Morning Journal newspaper, which also printed adorable photos of students engaged in various science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) activities.

Horizon Science Academy (HSA) Lorain kindergarten student projects – which included transmitting electricity through fruit, bouncy bubbles, robotics, shrinky dink projects, slime and creating instant snow – were shared with family members, who also participated in the event.

“Kids learn better with hands-on activities,” explained Elif Polat, a high school teacher at the K-12 school. “This way, they can learn faster and it makes them get excited to learn.”

Participation in the STEAM Fest also provided kindergarteners with the opportunity to practice presentation skills, and encouraged their interest in STEAM learning.
SECOND ANNUAL W82TXT TEEN VIDEO CONTEST ANNOUNCED

The Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission has kicked off its second annual W82TXT Teen Video Contest. Students in grades 9-12 are encouraged to create a video message advocating for distracted drivers to kick their dangerous habits. The commission will share videos on social media to help raise awareness about this deadly issue. The contest corresponds with what has become known as the “100 Deadliest Days” – the time between Memorial Day and Labor Day when new teen drivers between 16 and 17 years old are three times more likely than adults to be involved in deadly auto accidents.

By producing and submitting W82TXT videos, students can have fun, help spread awareness about the dangers of distracted driving and compete for great prizes, such as a GoPro, an Apple iPad and a $250 Amazon gift card. The Ohio Turnpike also will donate $500 to the grand prize winner’s booster club of choice.

Learn more online at: http://www.ohioturnpike.org/media/w82txt

UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

LAST CALL for Annual School Leader Summit: (3R)² = A Formula for Success!
The insightful feedback from school leaders has helped Buckeye Community Hope Foundation (BCHF) plan an amazing, upcoming School Leader Summit! The Summit is scheduled for June 18-19 at Quest Conference Center in Columbus. Curious about the title? The Summit will explore more deeply the social-emotional learning concepts of Relationship, Responsibility and Regulation (the first set of 3 Rs). In addition, the Summit will feature a second strand of study sessions dealing with other topics requested by our leaders (we call this the Reading, ‘Riting and ‘Rithmetic strand, or the second 3 Rs).

The Summit has always been a unique opportunity for school leaders to network, work with teams from their own school or others, and acquire best practices knowledge to begin planning for the new school year. The session will offer flex collaboration time and an “ask the experts” workroom! Please join us because, with all of you there, the Summit will be a truly GREAT experience!

Register online at: https://register.eventarc.com/41120/leadership-summit

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Please mark your 2019-2020 academic calendars and plan to attend these upcoming events:

July 31, 2019:
BCHF Corrective Action Seminar

August 1, 2019:
New School Leaders Orientation

September 17, 2019:
Fall Dropout Recovery Roundtable

September 18, 2019:
Annual All Schools Meeting

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**COMPLIANCE UPDATE**

**2018-2019 ODE School Compliance Review**

✦ Buckeye Community Hope Foundation (BCHF) recently completed SharePoint documentation reviews for items that must be submitted to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) for the compliance portion of the ODE sponsor evaluation. A detailed list of items that were not compliant, or not yet received, will be provided to each school leader and/or management company representative. Any items not received by June 22nd will result in the school being placed on a compliance corrective action plan (CAP) for 2018-2019.

✦ Schools must be current and compliant with all other SharePoint items by June 15, as well. Although all SharePoint items are not submitted to ODE, BCHF must attest to ODE that non-submitted items are compliant (or not compliant). BCHF’s attestations are determined by the evidence in SharePoint.

**Year-end submission of safety drill logs**

✦ Please note that there is a NEW email address for use in submitting school evacuation and drill logs: sfm_codeenf@com.state.oh.us

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**UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS — continued**

**School PD Requests for 2019-2020**

BCHF's Accountability and School Improvement Department is happy to assist with schools' professional development plans and seminars for the 2019-2020 school year. Please be reminded that time slots fill up quickly, so send in requests as soon as possible. A request for professional development form can be obtained from any member of the School Improvement Team.

**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 if 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.
“I can shake off everything as I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn.”

— Anne Frank

The fifth annual Buckeye Community Hope Foundation (BCHF) Writing Challenge is “in the books.” This year’s theme was “Will Technology Take Over the World?” Writing entries were accepted in three grade level bands.

Grades 3-5 writers defended whether or not robots should be used to grade state assessments — a topic that has been hotly debated among educators this past year.

Grades 6-8 writers wrote about the pro’s and con’s of self-driving cars and whether they were the future of the world.

High school writers wrote about the dangers and benefits of virtual reality, a subject near and dear to every video gamer’s heart!

Entries were scored by members of the BCHF School Improvement Team, using the state rubrics — the same ones used to score students on state assessments. Each essay is scored a minimum of two times, and scores averaged together.

Winners were recognized in each grade (3-12), each grade band, as well as an overall winner.

BCHF is pleased to announce the following winners of the 2018-2019 BCHF Writing Challenge.

Congratulations to each on a job well done!

3rd grade: Chloe Jones — Constellation Schools: Westside Community School of the Arts
4th grade: Kesiah Tolbert, Tobi Ajayi and Sharmake Ali — Horizon Science Academy Elementary (Columbus)
5th grade: Thana Hassan — International Academy of Columbus
6th grade: Danielle Blackstone — Horizon Science Academy Columbus Middle School
7th grade: Elizabeth Davis — Constellation Schools: Old Brooklyn Community Middle School
8th grade: Maeve Vana — Constellation Schools: Puritas Community Middle School
11th grade: Emily Schnaufer — Flex High School
12th grade: Melissa Pareja — Focus North High School

Overall elementary: Thana Hassan — International Academy of Columbus
Overall middle: Elizabeth Davis — Constellation Schools: Old Brooklyn Community Middle School
Overall high school: Melissa Pareja — Focus North High School

Overall winner with a perfect score: Thana Hassan — International Academy of Columbus

Left to right: 3rd grade, 4th grade and 5th grade winners and their supporters

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Writing Challenge — continued

Left to right: 6th grade, 7th grade and 8th grade winners and their supporters

Left to right: 11th grade and 12th grade winners and their supporters

Next year’s writing challenge will begin in November of 2019. We hope to see every school participate to make it bigger and better than ever!

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