

# SPONSOR UPDATE

## SEPTEMBER 2020

**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.

### *School funding overhaul still in the works*

As previously reported, two members of the Ohio House of Representatives – representatives Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and John Patterson (D-Jefferson) – have worked together to develop a bipartisan plan for funding Ohio's K-12 public schools outside of the state biennial budget bill process and timeline. The plan has been slow to move due to concerns raised by Rep. Larry Householder (R-Glenford), who controlled the House as speaker until his recent indictment by the FBI and removal from his leadership position.



Selected by his colleagues to assume the top House leadership spot, Speaker Cupp is now positioned to have significantly greater control over House priorities, making it likely that the proposed plan will move forward more quickly.

Given his new responsibilities, Speaker Cupp will be less involved in moving the plan forward and has accepted a request from Rep. Gary Scherer (R-Circleville) to work with Rep. Patterson on H.B. 305 (which is commonly referred to as the Cupp-Patterson bill).

According to Rep. Patterson, “finishing touches” on changes that will be reflected in a substitute version of the legislation were in the works when the dramatic changes occurred in House leadership. He anticipates “a series of hearings” on the legislation when the House reconvenes in the coming weeks.

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## **RESTART READINESS ASSESSMENTS AVAILABLE**

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Ohio's education community is taking the necessary steps to begin the 2020-2021 school year, facing extraordinary challenges planning academic instruction during the COVID pandemic. Since some students have missed academic instruction, it's critically important that schools are able to benchmark progress reliably.

In addition to providing schools and districts with student readiness toolkits, the Ohio Department of Education, in conjunction with Cambium Assessment, Inc., is providing a suite of optional online assessments for educators to use in grades three through 12. The Restart Readiness Assessments, available for English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, are designed to help identify student progress early and receive actionable performance data.

Learn more and access resources online at:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Reset-and-Restart/Restart-Readiness-Assessments>



### ***School funding — continued***

The proposed methodology will be unveiled prior to release of district simulations.

The overall cost of implementing the new funding strategy would increase K-12 education spending by \$1.5 billion over a six-year phase-in period, which could be problematic against the backdrop of the pandemic and its negative impact on the economy.

### ***Changes to Title IX necessitate training for schools***

The U.S. Department of Education's changes to Title IX regulations became effective on August 14. Title IX is a federal statute that applies to education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance, including state and local education agencies. The law aims to protect people from discrimination based on sex.

The regulations require training for all entities to which Title IX applies. Most K-12 schools will now need to make substantial changes in how they address sexual harassment. For example, in addition to having a Title IX coordinator, schools must also have additional positions including investigators and two types of decision makers, one to make an initial determination of a sexual harassment complaint and another one to listen to appeals. Decision makers cannot serve as coordinators or investigators.

**TITLE IX: "NO PERSON IN THE UNITED STATES SHALL, ON THE BASIS OF SEX, BE EXCLUDED FROM PARTICIPATION IN, BE DENIED THE BENEFITS OF, OR BE SUBJECT TO DISCRIMINATION UNDER ANY EDUCATION PROGRAM OR ACTIVITY RECEIVING FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE."**

Title IX personnel – including faculty, staff and all mandatory reporters – must receive training on a variety of topics, including the new definitions, how to conduct an investigation and the grievance process.

Buckeye Community Hope Foundation will host an introductory training session on the changes to Title IX on September 24 at 3 p.m. See the program description and registration link on page 10.

### ***New resource for CCP delivery available***

The Ohio departments of Education and Higher Education have teamed up to provide new information to high school and postsecondary partners about how best to navigate College Credit Plus delivery. Following the *4 Cs of College Credit Plus*, partners can prepare to provide a clear and consistent experience to students. Learn more online at: [http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Ohio-Education-Options/College-Credit-Plus/CCP\\_4-Cs.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Ohio-Education-Options/College-Credit-Plus/CCP_4-Cs.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US)

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## **EXPERTS SAY MASKS OFFER THE MOST PROTECTION**

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Representatives of children's hospitals in Cincinnati, Columbus and Dayton joined Gov. Mike DeWine at one of his regular COVID briefings. All agree that ensuring that students, teachers and staff wear face coverings is the most effective way to reduce the spread of the virus in schools.

"As pediatricians, we do support and are biased in the direction of in-person education when possible," said Dr. Patty Manning, chief of staff at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. She recommended four key strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools: wearing masks; social distancing; promoting hand washing; and, sanitizing surfaces.

Dr. John Barnard, chief of pediatrics at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, offered a reminder that children are not immune from the virus.

"Let's be really crystal clear," Dr. Barnard said. "They (children) get the coronavirus infection and they get it not infrequently. Fortunately, most children are reasonably well with their symptoms of COVID-19."

But, he warned, "It can be a very serious disease in certain children."

## **Masks mandated for K-12 students**

Who knew masks could be so controversial? Apparently, Governor Mike DeWine did, as he originally recommended that students in grades three through 12 wear them before changing course last month to mandate facial coverings for K-12 students.

Citing their effectiveness in reducing the spread of COVID-19, the governor said, "The jury is back on the issue. There is broad, broad, broad consensus among experts in this country."



Children with severe autism, extreme developmental delays and facial deformities that cause problems breathing are among the exceptions to the mandate.

The Ohio Emergency Management Agency will distribute two million masks – which are not KN-95 or KN-90 medical grade – provided by the federal agency through Educational Service Centers.

Two legislators – Rep. Don Jones (R-Freeport) and Rep. Susan Manchester (R-Lakeview) have introduced legislation (H.B. 748) that would bar the Ohio Department of Health from issuing orders superseding local school decision-making during an epidemic-related emergency.

## **Governor okays fall sports**

Governor Mike DeWine announced that the state will allow schools to proceed with fall sports – both contact and non-contact – and the Ohio High School Athletic Association has given the green light to schools to move contact fall sports to the spring.

Generally, spectators at athletic events will be limited to "people very close" to student athletes with local officials to determine specifics. Decisions regarding whether athletes must wear masks will also be made at the local level.



Gov. DeWine faced the difficult task of balancing students' physical health and social-emotional wellbeing and could reverse his decision "if this goes the wrong way."

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## **STAKEHOLDERS ADVOCATE FOR ADDITIONAL FEDERAL K-12 AID**

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The Ohio Education Association and the progressive think tank, Policy Matters Ohio, seek additional federal funding for K-12 schools regardless of whether they choose to open with virtual, in-person classrooms or a hybrid of the two.

President Donald Trump has urged Congress to allocate \$70 million to support K-12 education, half of which would be reserved for schools that hold in-person classes. U.S. Senate Republicans support the president's proposal and have introduced the HEALS Act.

"There's so many strings on that, it really doesn't rise to the urgency of this crisis and, when you unpack it, the vast majority of that funding is limited only to schools that are going fully back in person," Policy Matters Ohio Executive Director Hannah Halbert said.

Union president Scott DiMauro also expressed concerns regarding the proposal, saying it "creates a horrible incentive for unsafe opening of schools."

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## **Member of BCHF family honored**

Congratulations to John Gregory – founder of the National Center for Urban Solutions, The Academy for Urban Scholars high schools (in Youngstown and Columbus) and the National African-American Male Wellness Walk – as a recipient of the Social Justice Award for Education Advocacy.

As a national recognized entrepreneur and motivational speaker, Gregory has inspired thousands of individuals with his message, "I'm a winner." He has dedicated much of his life to addressing the challenges of the community, empowering people of all ages to become self-sufficient. Known as the "Solutions Man," he has helped young people create more promising futures for themselves through education and employment.



Gregory is actively involved in the two dropout prevention and recovery schools, studying data, meeting with the leadership team, and engaging with students' parents.

He will be honored at Think Make Live Youth's 2020 Central Ohio Social Justice Awards Luncheon on Sept. 20 at 2 p.m. – a event hosted on the Whova Virtual Platform ([www.whova.com](http://www.whova.com)) as a fundraiser to support the organization's Columbus Community Action Team program.

Congratulations, Mr. Gregory, for this well-deserved recognition!

## **Green Ribbon Schools application available**

Ohio is again taking part in the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools program that recognizes buildings doing exemplary work to reduce environmental impact and costs, improve the health and wellness of students and staff, and provide effective environmental and sustainability education that incorporates STEM, civic skills and green career pathways. Ohio can nominate as many as four schools or districts for this national recognition. Applications are due Nov. 30. Learn more online at:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Media/Ed-Connection/Aug-10-2020/Green-Ribbon-Schools-application-now-available>



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**SUPREME COURT  
TO CONSIDER CASE  
ON ARMING  
SCHOOL STAFF**  
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Legal consideration of the lawsuit brought by a group of parents seeking to prevent the Madison Local School District from implementing a policy to arm staff without meeting training requirements outlined in state law continues, with the Ohio Supreme Court agreeing to review the case.

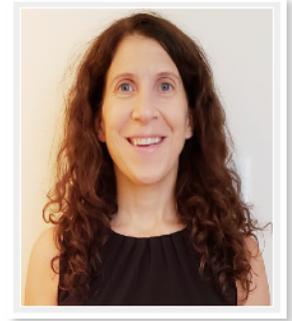
As previously reported, Senator Bill Coley (R-Liberty Township) introduced legislation (S.B. 317) that would exempt -- from a requirement that peace officer basic training be obtained -- certain employees that a school board authorizes to be armed in a school safety zone. The bill is pending in the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee.



***Klupinski joins Leadership Columbus Class of 2021***

Buckeye Community Hope Foundation's Vice President of Legal Affairs Stephanie Klupinski has been invited to be a part of Leadership Columbus' Signature Program as a member of the Class of 2021.

The program is a unique combination of relationship-building, learning, problem-solving, civic engagement and personal growth. Klupinski is one of 58 individuals selected from a pool of applicants to build a class representative of the Greater Columbus area. The result is a class of professionals who are ready to hone their leadership skills and talents and connect to community causes about which they are passionate. The 10-month experience is designed to give participants the tools they need to become active and influential leaders in the community.



"I am honored and excited to be a part of the Class of 2021," Klupinski said. "Our region and nation are grappling with two pandemics, COVID-19 and racism. The challenges are immense, but so are the opportunities to make Central Ohio a better, safer region for all people. I look forward to learning from and with my classmates as I share with them the work of Buckeye Community Hope Foundation and how our public charter schools are addressing education inequity by providing excellent opportunities for students across the state."

***2020 ACT, SAT make up testing opportunities available***

Due to Ohio's ordered school-building closure, some juniors were unable to participate in state-sponsored ACT and SAT tests in the spring of 2020. The Ohio Department of Education is making opportunities available for districts and schools to administer the ACT and SAT -- available in paper format only -- to students who were unable to take the test in the spring. Changes to testing dates have been subject to change. Learn more online at:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Media/Ed-Connection/August-2020/Update-and-Correction-Opportunities-to-make-up-sp>



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## COVID LIABILITY A CONCERN TO SCHOOLS, BUSINESSES

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Acknowledging that COVID liability is a key factor of concern to both businesses and schools, the DeWine Administration has pledged to share the need for legal protection with the Trump Administration.

"I've talked to a number of school superintendents who mentioned liability as one of the reasons for not going to in-person learning," said Lt. Gov. John Husted. "And while I don't believe that if schools follow the rules they have that liability, some of the legal advice they're getting suggests that it is important and I'll respect that. Bottom line is we've got to do something about it."

Governor Mike DeWine and 20 other governors signed a letter sent to congressional leaders urging them to "shield employers from legal risk when following the appropriate standard of care to protect employees, customers, and students."

He has also urged state lawmakers to pass civil immunity legislation.

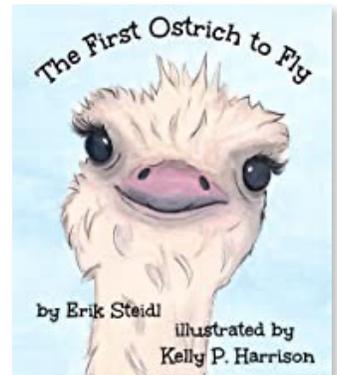
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## Reading teacher authors children's books

A shortage of books featuring characters that his students could identify with served as the motivation for Erik Steidl to write, starting with short stories.

Steidl, a Title I reading teacher for K-2 students at the SMART Academy in Cleveland, is now a published author. His first book -- *The First Ostrich to Fly* -- was self-published through Amazon in printed and electronic formats, and has already sold about 400 copies.

*A young child has had a rough day at school. His grandmother takes him outside where they look at the stars. He asks his grandmother why he is different and can't do the things that all the other kids can. Instead of simply answering him, she tells him a story of when the world was young and ostriches could fly. They could, that is, until someone told them their wings were too small. Then they stopped trying to fly. Through his grandmother's story, the young child realizes that the only one who can limit his potential is him.*



With six years of teaching experience at another Ohio charter school, Steidl begins his first year at the SMART Academy during unusual times. The school is set to begin the new school year with students physically in the classroom five days a week, with a virtual option also available. Among the K-4 school's goals is to read -- and livestream to students' homes -- five books every day in every class for a total of 25 books each week.

Since his first publication, Steidl has written two additional books, both based on stories from the Bible.

"My wife and I are active in our church," Steidl explained. "At the beginning of the pandemic we were looking for ways to stay connected with youth. The Bible is generally about adults, for adults ... I took creative liberties with stories from the Bible, told from the perspective of young minor characters."

First released in chapters on the church's blog, *Ayal the Arrow Boy* is being published by Crosslink Publishers, with expected release in January. It's based on the story of David and Jonathan in the first book of Samuel, 18-20.

"I sent *The First Ostrich to Fly* to about 100 publishers -- none of whom expressed interest," Steidl said. "I didn't let that discourage me and

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## **OHIO SENATORS DISAGREE ON FEDERAL AID PROPOSAL**

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U.S. senators Sherrod Brown (D-Cleveland) and Rob Portman (R-Terrace Park) disagree on whether to use federal aid funds to incentivize schools to begin the new school year with students physically in the classroom.

Sen. Portman agrees with President Donald Trump, who wants K-12 students back in the classroom.

"In terms of whether a school that goes remote should get the funding or not, I think they should, but they won't need as much of it," Sen. Portman said. "That, I think, is widely acknowledged. If you go remote you do have expenses, but it's not the same."

Sen. Brown believes that districts should make the call on whether it's safe to open in person and that they shouldn't be penalized for opening virtually to help ensure student, teacher and staff safety.

"We need to trust superintendents and school boards and mayors and councils and county commissioners," Sen. Brown said. "We need to trust them, not to put strings on the money."

### ***Reading teacher — continued***

sent *Ayal the Arrow Boy* to five publishers. I was pleasantly surprised when I heard back from Crosslink."

Steidl's third book, *Emilian the Jailer's Son*, is currently underway. It's based on the story of Paul and Silas in Acts 16:16-40 and is being released by chapter on his church's blog.

"There is clearly a need for good books featuring stories that appeal to middle school readers," Steidl said. "Based on the positive feedback I've received I'm inspired to keep writing and encourage other teachers to give it a shot. Write for the fun of it and see what you can contribute to the world of literature and your classrooms."

### ***Perkins grant to fund unique IT initiative***

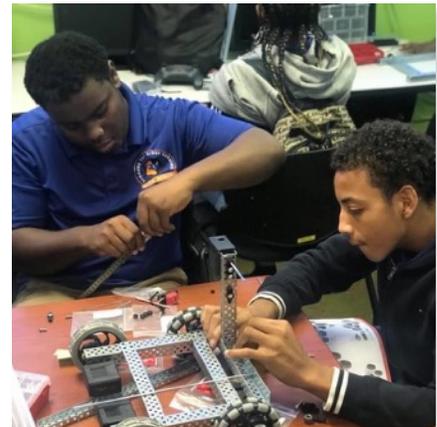
Congratulations to The Academy for Urban Scholars (AUS) Columbus and Youngstown as one of just seven recipients of Perkins "Equity for Each" Funds!

The Carl Perkins Grant provides federal funding to states to improve both secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs. The amount given to each state responsible for allocating the funds depends on factors like population in certain age groups and per capita income.

AUS has a long history of working with community partners to provide opportunities for the students they serve. The Educational Service Center of Central Ohio will act as a consultant on the Information

Technology (IT) Pre-Apprenticeship Program funded through the grant. The schools' management company – the National Center for Urban Solutions (NCUS), which provides workforce development services to individuals in need of skill development – will also be a partner.

"Underserved students are often unaware of career opportunities in IT," explained Roger Fox, who serves as NCUS' director of education. "The Digital Divide also serves as a barrier, limiting economically-disadvantaged student awareness and experiences. We expect that through this initiative – new in the 2020-2021 school year – more students will graduate with IT credentials."



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## **RESET AND RESTART ADDRESSES FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

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Family engagement is a key strategy to enhancing student engagement and achievement, especially when learning remotely.

By ensuring families are receiving consistent communication, necessary supports for at-home learning and connections to key community partners, schools and districts can best support families' unique needs during the re-opening of schools.

Access the Ohio Department of Education's guide with resources, strategies and best practices in three areas of family engagement that are critical to student success -- communications; supporting learning at home; and, engaging strategic community partnership -- online at: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Reset-and-Restart/Family-Engagement>

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### **Perkins grant — continued**

The AUS schools will target 40 students to complete the IT Pre-Apprenticeship Program. Each will receive post-secondary credentials and will connect with an employer while a student, and hopefully as an employee after graduation.

“This is an exciting initiative that will support students’ short- and long-term goals,” Fox said. “It’s important that the technology culture and community grow within underserved populations. We’re eager to move forward with the implementation of this unique career training program.”

### **Mindy's top 20 list: Effective remote teaching**

David Letterman – with his Top 10 lists -- has nothing on BCHF's Mindy Farry! Over her 40+ years of teaching, she's compiled the following Top 20 list pulled from various sources and her own personal experiences.

1. Lessons are organized into clearly visible modules or sequences (visual differences like color coding are helpful).
2. An overall set of instructions is posted for using the modules
3. A specific set of instructions is posted for each module
4. Modules follow a predictable sequence of varied activities per day
5. Synchronous learning emphasizes rich discussion and engagement
6. Modeling and demonstrating are delivered via media
7. All modules should include practice in tier 2 and 3 vocabulary
8. Multi-disciplinary approach is used to make assignments meaningful
9. Teachers closely collaborate to determine how power standards will be taught
10. Students are engaged weekly in all areas of literacy (reading, writing, speaking and listening)
11. Each module includes formative and summative assessments
12. Incorporate play and off-computer learning
13. If digital curricula are being used, teachers make specific assignments and monitor progress closely with deadlines and check points
14. Use a standards-based grading system that emphasizes teachers monitoring student progress on a set of standards
15. Select a limited amount of “tech tools” – don’t overwhelm your students or their parents
16. Have students help you develop the rules and procedures for online learning
17. Use discussion groups or breakout rooms to further rich discussions. — always let students know that you will randomly select someone in each group to “share out”
18. Always make connections with students throughout the day – if asynchronous learning is happening, be sure to set up student conferences, office hours, etc.
19. Spend time in the beginning of the year to review, practice and perfect all of your procedures and processes (breakout room behavior; how to submit an assignment; how to access recorded lessons; how to ask a question)
20. Most importantly, choose the technology that enhances what you already do – don’t let the technology determine the teaching



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## **CHECK OUT REDESIGNED OH/ID PORTAL**

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The OH/ID portal, used to access applications such as Educator Licensure and Records (CORE), the Ohio Educational Director System (OEDS) and Learning Management System (LMS), has been redesigned.

The updates provide users with more control over privacy and security, and features a modernized design that includes an app “store” and user dashboard.

Learn more online at:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Media/Ed-Connection/July-27-2020/Redesigned-OH-ID-portal-improves-user-experience-a>



## **UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS —continued**

### **BEST PRACTICES IN REMOTE LEARNING 2 –**

**September 22, 4 to 5:30 p.m.**

BCHF’s “Best Practices” series of workshops will assist school leaders in overseeing delivery of instruction through remote learning options in the 2020-2021 school year. We will focus on security, organization and pacing. Join us as we navigate the new frontier of remote learning and get better at it together!

**Register online at:**

<https://remotelearning2.eventarc.net/e/44352>

### **STUDENT VOICE BOOK SERIES Educator Roundtable –**

**September 23, 4 to 5:30 p.m.**

Secondary students and teachers are invited to join in a combination book talk/writing challenge with books that focus on the important conversations in our country regarding equity and race. Online sessions will include guidance on BCHF’s upcoming writing challenge focusing on one of the book choices, as well as discussions and conversations about the books. Students may only attend with their teachers. This initial session will bring educators together to plan for the book study.

**Register online at:**

<https://voiceroundtable.eventarc.net/e/44353>

### **THE NUTS & BOLTS OF THE NEW TITLE IX REGULATIONS: WHAT K-12 SCHOOLS NEED TO KNOW TO COMPLY – September 24, 3 to 4:30 p.m.**

This webinar is the first in a series of training for school personnel to comply with Title IX. The session will provide a broad overview of the central obligations that K-12 schools have under these new regulations, including a highlight of the most significant changes. This webinar will also address how compliance is impacted by the recent Supreme Court decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*.

Register online at:

<https://newtitleixnutsandbolts.eventarc.net/e/44606>

### **EARLY LITERACY NETWORK Session 1 – September 24, 4 to 5:30 p.m.**

The Early Literacy Network is an opportunity for K-5 teachers, coaches, reading specialists and educators to share best practices in literacy education. Each network session will be devoted to a pertinent topic in literacy. In addition, discussion will share strategies for improving English language arts instruction in your classroom and your school! Join us as we kick off Early Literacy in 2020-2021!

**Register online at:**

<https://earlyliteracy1.eventarc.net/e/44354>

### **FALL DROPOUT RECOVERY ROUNDTABLE – September 29, 4 to 6 p.m.**

The Roundtable is an opportunity for BCHF’s dropout prevention and recovery schools to come together (virtually, of course) and share

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## COMPLIANCE UPDATE

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### Annual board member training

The contract between the board and sponsor requires that all continuing board members complete a total of two hours of training per academic year. All new board members must complete a total of four hours. All board members must take training on open meetings and public records annually. Boards may schedule training sessions or attend conferences to satisfy the requirements. Please contact your sponsor representative for more information on training opportunities including a session hosted by BCHF on Nov. 7.

### Annual review/approval of policies and procedures

There are several policies that require annual board review including:

- ◆ Academic prevention/intervention policy
- ◆ Health and safety policies
- ◆ Conflict of interest policy

Additionally, all EMIS/SOES coordinators must be approved or re-approval by the board. Also, please check your Safe Schools account for expiration dates on your school's emergency plan. If you have any questions, please contact your sponsor representative.

## UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS —*continued*

### DROPOUT RECOVERY ROUNDTABLE — *continued*

ideas and solutions. We will explore a topic in depth and provide other updates pertinent to achieving graduation and post-secondary success for our dropout prevention and recovery students. Join us for this initial chat as we set the agenda for this school year!

**Register online at:**

<https://falldropoutrecovery.eventarc.net/e/44355>

### K-8 MATHEMATICS NETWORK – *September 30, 4 to 5:30 p.m.*

The K-8 Mathematics Network is a community of educators sharing best practices in mathematics education. This network will discuss updates, trends and practical strategies for mathematics educators. A portion of each meeting will focus on sharing ideas and relevant topics to the world of mathematics. This network is open to anyone affiliated with BCHF that works with students in grades K-8 in sponsored schools.

**Register online at:**

<https://mathnetwork1.eventarc.net/e/44356>

### SCHOOL LEADERS' NETWORK 1 – *October 6, 4 to 5:30 p.m.*

This support network will walk a school leader through the year, covering topics of interest. The following are samples of the topics suggested by school leaders: testing; legislation; culture; special education; teacher evaluation; data; and recruitment and retention of staff. Plan to attend any or all sessions; register for sessions individually.

**Register online at:**

<https://newleadersnetwork1.eventarc.net/e/44360>

### SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE 2 – *October 7, 3 to 5 p.m.*

Update sessions are a networking opportunity for special education practitioners. Come and share in dialogue about high quality services. A portion of the update session will be devoted to new information from the Ohio Department of Education Office for Exceptional Children, or other sources. Time will also be given to more in-depth discussion of high-interest topics, and to sharing of information among participants. An emphasis will be placed this year on high-quality, specially-designed instruction through remote learning and/or onsite instruction.

**Register online at:**

<https://spedupdate2.eventarc.net/e/44361>

**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 for a seminar to proceed and BCHF reserves the right to cancel or postpone programs due to low enrollment.

# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

## *Culturally relevant classrooms*

*By Mindy Farry, School Improvement Representative*

The children in our classrooms are living in unprecedented times, not only with a global pandemic looming over them, but conversations about equal rights, equal freedoms and equal opportunities have dominated conversations among young people and adults. The time has come to be cognizant and aware of ways in which we can ready our classrooms to be more inclusive of the children in our charge.

There are a number of areas that teachers and administrators can take serious consideration of as they plan on the opening of the year. The basic driving question in all of our minds should be whether our students see themselves represented in every aspect of their day at school or online.

One of the first things students will notice about us and our classrooms is whether the environment represents the cultures of all children. If your students are in your classroom or only seeing your classroom or home office online, do the physical aspects of your room represent all? Look at your posters, the work you display and the academic displays. This is not a “Black History Month” moment — it is comprehensive and filtered seamlessly throughout the year. Elementary teachers — the alphabet chart could feature persons of color, items in the community (S with a picture of the local neighborhood STORE), your own children’s faces (M is for MOHAMMED) underneath the letters on the chart. Secondary teachers can make sure that pictures of famous mathematicians, scientists, writers and artists represent all of the children in our rooms.

Language and body language are often keys to establishing relationships with students. If names are unfamiliar to you, ask the student how to pronounce his name. Ask, “Tell me how your mom says your name.” Never Anglicize a name so that it is easier for you to pronounce. Even if a child Anglicizes it herself, say, “Your name is so beautiful. Tell me what it means.”

Know what some of the hidden signals might be as you watch the engagement of your students.

Sometimes, nodding heads and smiling is merely politeness and not an affirmation of learning. Looking down and not making eye contact might actually be a sign of respect and shouldn’t be seen as a sign of disrespect merely because that is what our culture normalizes.

Make no assumptions that children just automatically understand what your cultural norms and expectations might be. Every process and procedure in your classroom needs to be explicitly demonstrated to students, explained why there is a need for the process, and then practiced and repeated. Your first few weeks of school should be filled with practicing (a few at a time) those mundane procedures in your classroom. Those might include online etiquette, how to submit assignments, what group discussion times should look like, etc. In your face-to-face classroom, those procedures will include walking to specials, recess behavior and what to do when you’re absent.

Create activities and experiences in which children can celebrate their own cultures. All of the content standards can easily be adapted to include literature, writing, activities and projects that reflect what is occurring in children’s lives. Relevant content, activities and projects that can be adapted to students’ interests, culture, religion, gender and race will help engage students in ways you have never seen. What better time to set students loose on a project addressing an issue of social justice that includes reading, writing, math, social studies, art and music? Look at your standards and organize numbers of standards in all content areas under a thematic umbrella. Likewise, research and compile lists of books, texts and websites which showcase persons of color and an array of cultural diversity.

Assessments in a culturally relevant classroom (especially in an online environment) can look much different and can aid students in really showing you what they know. Often teacher-made tests ask

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**Culturally relevant classrooms— continued**

what students in minority cultures know. Can students demonstrate their mastery by doing a project, staging a debate, participating in a discussion (think Socratic Seminar), writing a song or performing a dance? Giving students a choice of how they will be assessed gives them a sense of control as well as comfort.

Giving students a sense of voice and choice whenever you can greatly alleviates the alienation that many students feel in classrooms, especially if they do not feel represented in the texts or content of the lessons. Teachers can easily provide a few simple choices for students in terms of what text they read, how they show you their work, with whom they work and how they will demonstrate mastery. Any choice you give a student makes their experience in the classroom something less oppressive and less “do as I tell you to do.”

As we enter this school year with many unknowns, one of the things we do know is that all of our students deserve to feel wanted, safe and included in every aspect of their day at school. The only way to change the future is to teach the future in a way that includes everyone.

<b>How culturally responsive is your classroom?</b>		
Cultural images & artifacts (historical & contemporary)	Learning centers focused on different modalities & multiple intelligences	Opportunities for interactions that create a sense of family & community
100% engagement for all lessons	Provide big picture (conceptually based teaching/ learning	Multiple opportunities for practice
Sage on the stage or guide on the side???	Effective question techniques or co-dependent for the right answer	Incorporate music, fine arts and culturally responsive literature

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