



SPONSOR UPDATE MARCH 2025

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Mission

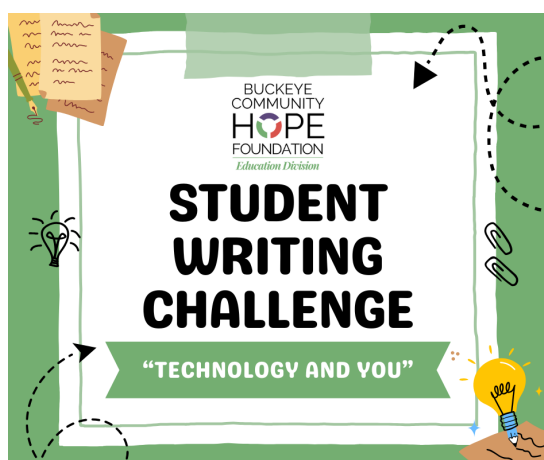
The mission of the Education Division of Buckeye Community Hope Foundation is to establish strong public community schools by adhering to quality authorizing practices, ensuring responsible oversight, and setting high standards for school performance.

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.



BCHF Writing Challenge



All schools are invited to have participants enter the 10th Annual Writing Challenge, sponsored by Buckeye Community Hope Foundation. The theme this year is "Technology and You" and asks students to write the types of writing that they will see on the Ohio State Tests. Each school is able to send one entry **per grade** (3-12) as their representatives. Many schools have their entire school participate and then have a contest to choose their grade level winners.

Below, you will find all of the information by grade bands (3-5; 6-8; 9-12). There is also a helpful teacher guide with strategies and suggestions for implementing a writing project for the entire class.

We'd love to see every school participate. **Entries are due by March 15, 2025.**

Entries can be submitted using this link: <https://forms.gle/2Eh6y4wQefg9cQYx8>

Grades 3-5: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Jl2ToA4StKvDzEFBvwwMKGqYm9CjE44P/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103554849579746543113&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Annual Needs Assessment

The Annual BCHF Needs Assessment is now open for your feedback. Please help us by accessing and completing the survey by **March 15, 2025**. We honestly use and value your input to plan our Leadership Summit and our work plan for the upcoming 2025-26 school year. If you have already completed the survey, thank you! If you have not, please access and complete the survey at the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YDTT8P7>

High Expectations and Respectful Work for All

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

Let us start with an understanding of correct terminology. In this refreshing age of people first language, there are no “Low Students” and there are no “High Students.” I think of my son when he was learning to play *Stairway to Heaven* on the electric guitar. He was a beginner, and this song did not come easily (early performances were *low*). Yet, he was determined, and he would get this amazing look of gritty purpose on his face when he practiced. At the dinner table, his fingers moved on imaginary frets. He eventually learned the song and played it over and over again.

All learners deserve a sense of gritty purpose. It is a down-deep sense of learning something hard, knowing we can do it, and finally getting there. Too frequently during school visits, though, we hear that students are too low to even attempt something hard. In fact, our team visited a school where educators had never unpacked expensive grade-level materials. Teachers felt the students needed lower content. So instead, they used activities on the internet for drilling and practice. This type of instruction is ineffective, *and it is disrespectful* (Schmoker, 2018). Students never see or hear the challenge of what they are supposed to learn. And much of what they experience is low in content and uninteresting. To add to the problem, educators place students in “low groups” where there are no role models of proficiency or response to challenge. Students recognize when they are “in a low group” and become discouraged. This is a recipe for continued limited performance.

Truly there are students for whom learning standards are incredibly challenging. There are some who lack underlying foundational skills and readiness. An effective instructional response, or winning recipe, is to realize that these students need more support. In other words, the student is more dependent on the teacher, *for now*, to learn the content, skills, or understanding. An effective teacher will expose every student in the classroom to challenging grade-level work. The teacher will provide explanations, examples, and shared practice to gradually release student dependency. Educators may incorporate foundational skills into relevant learning, or they may back up standards to earlier grade-level expectations through review or intervention sessions. This approach addresses gaps in learning while providing exposure for everyone to high-level, respectful content.

High expectations for all students are more than educational jargon. The phrase refers to a change of mindset. If you really want to move the school improvement needle, you need an action plan with high expectations. Here is how you develop one:

1. **Instill confidence.** Do not accept “I am not good at-----.” Respond by saying, “We just have to see how to make it click for you!” Students have marvelous talents, critical thinking potential, and creative skills. Encourage them.
2. **Ensure access.** Do not assume “some students can” and “some students can’t.” All students deserve access to high-quality instruction as well as opportunities for enrichment and advanced coursework. Examine existing biases, avoid labeling, and limit assignment of students to fixed groups.
3. **Review student learning data.** Are most students achieving in the limited range? The limited range means that students have limited knowledge of the expected learning standards. Students in the limited range of achievement need *more exposure* to grade level standards, not less. Teachers should teach and re-teach the most critical skills.

4. **Keep it interesting. Keep it real.** Research (Saphier, 2016) reports that disadvantaged students are more likely to engage in non-meaningful schoolwork, for example, having older students spend time coloring. Students will engage and achieve more if learning activities bring authentic, real-life tasks and interests into the classroom.
5. **Teach grit.** Grit means falling in love with challenges. As humans, we are afraid of what we cannot do, but we have all experienced times when friends convinced us to do something scary or hard. It was a “dare” or an “adventure,” but with a safe group. Teachers can bring a spirit of adventure and an assurance of safety to students when they face challenging material. “This is a bit of a stretch but let’s all tackle it together.”
6. **Put foundations in perspective.** Learning is not always sequential. Some students cannot spell “night” correctly, but they can spell “nitrogen.” Why? They are interested in science, or they are farmers or gardeners! On the stairway to achievement, we skip steps.
7. **Develop self-discipline.** Self-discipline is an executive functioning skill. Our thinking brain, or cortex, regulates executive functioning. This “inner voice” makes us get up on time, make our bed, exercise, and---very importantly--- practice or study. Teach students how to study and engage in spaced practice sessions. These days, students can use logs, timers, charts, chatbots and any number of interesting tech tools. With practice, difficult things become easy.
8. **Work toward fluency.** Fluency is when students experience success and joy in learning. They want to keep doing it; they practice guitar positions in thin air or recite complex formulae through rap chants. Students do not completely grasp a challenging concept until they approach fluency and the overlearning effect of doing something again, again, and again.

As we enter Spring and testing season in Ohio, every educator must think about high expectations for all students. There are many positive examples of this mindset in BCHF schools. Even young elementary and middle school students are winning state and national robotics competitions. All students in one school engage in performing arts, putting their confidence and skill out in public. In another, students exit high school as apprentices to skilled trades. And, finally, students at one school tackle complex issues to improve their own community through project-based learning. All our students are climbing a stairway to the future. They may be on different steps right now. But they should ALL be able to see a way to the top.

References:

- Saphier, J. (2016). *High expectations teaching: How we persuade students to believe and act on ‘smart is something you can get.’* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press.
- Schmoker, M. (2018). *Focus: Elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning.* Alexandria, Va.: ASCD.

Blues in the Schools Program

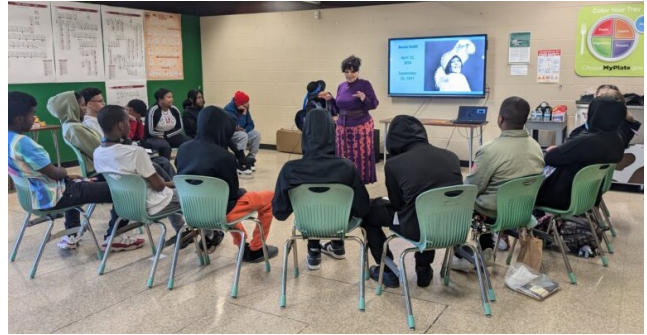
Students at Summit Academy Transition High School Columbus were in for a treat as guitarist Zayne Harshaw wowed the crowd with his performance of Jimi Hendrix’s Purple Haze. As an autistic musician, Harshaw shattered stereotypes, proving that passion and perseverance can turn obstacles into triumphs.

The event was part of the Blues in the Schools program, featuring blues legend Teeny Tucker and Columbus Blues Alliance volunteer Or Mars on harmonica. Together, the trio delivered an unforgettable musical experience filled with history, inspiration, and empowerment.

Tucker, a celebrated blues artist and 2025 nominee for the Blues Foundation’s Best Traditional Female Blues KoKo Taylor Award, guided students through the rich legacy of the blues. She spotlighted pioneering women like Bessie Smith, Big Mama Thornton, and Etta James, bringing their stories to life through song. After an overview of influential men in blues history, she introduced Harshaw.

Diagnosed with autism at age four and overcoming challenges with dyslexia, Harshaw took the stage with rock-star energy, captivating students with his renditions of Stevie Ray Vaughan’s Pride and Joy and Hendrix’s Purple Haze. Through his performance, he not only showcased his incredible talent but also inspired students to break barriers and embrace their own potential.

This event left students with more than just a love for the blues, it reinforced the message that with passion and determination, anything is possible.



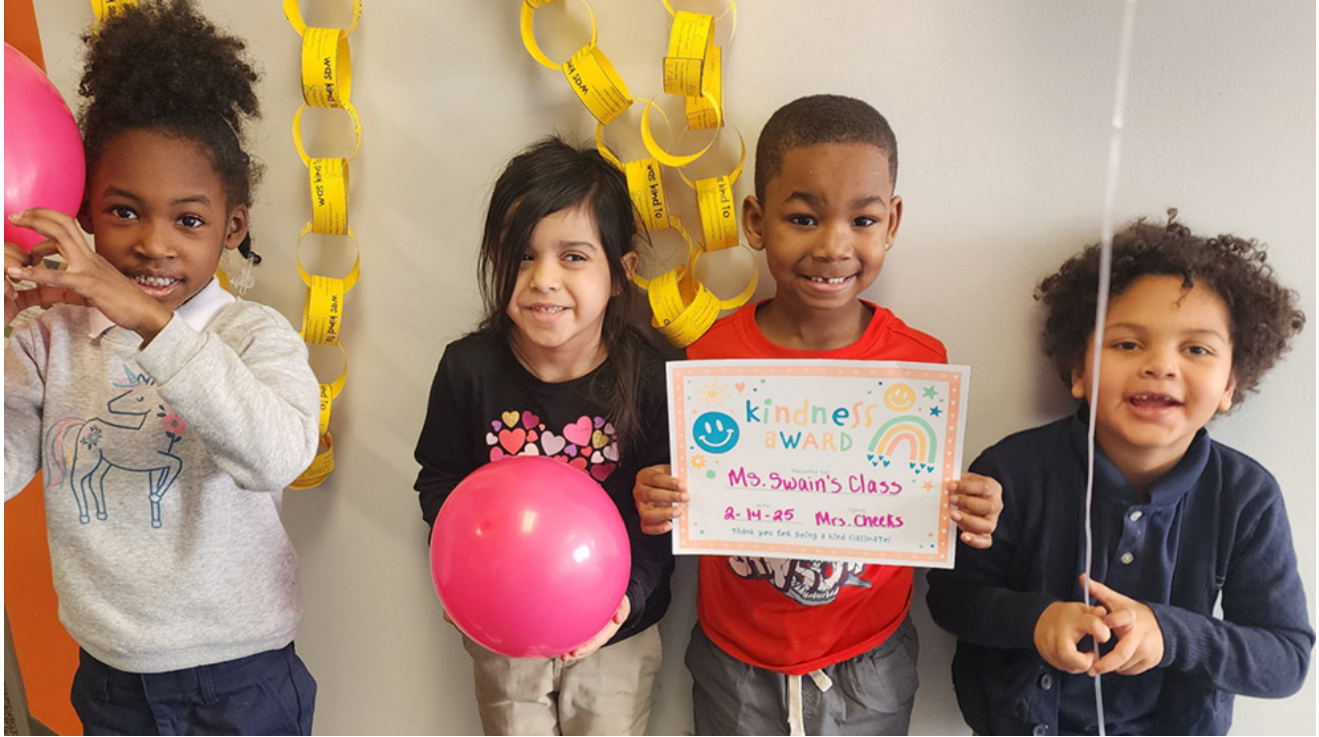
Celebrating National Random Acts of Kindness Day

National Random Acts of Kindness day is celebrated annually on February 17. At Bennett Venture Academy, kindness is a central focus throughout the first two weeks of February. Led by school counselor Brittany Cheeks, a kindness initiative encourages students to engage in and be recognized for their kind acts, which are then added to a growing kindness chain displayed outside classrooms.

Cheeks emphasizes that kindness extends beyond actions to include positive language. She notes the impact of encouraging words, sharing an example where one student told another, "That was a good job. You did awesome." Such simple gestures, she explains, have the power to brighten someone's day.

Teachers have incorporated various activities to reinforce kindness, including a "Kindness Jar," where students write down positive kind acts they have witnessed. Parents are also encouraged to support these efforts by making kindness part of daily conversations at home. Cheeks suggests asking children, "What did you do today to be kind?" to prompt reflection on their actions.

Every day is a good day to be kind!



Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant

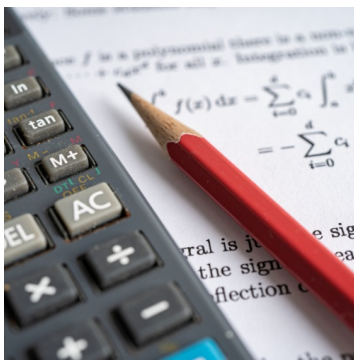
In 2024, Ohio was awarded a \$60 million Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This grant will support teaching and learning opportunities to help more Ohio students advance their literacy skills, with a focus on those who have been traditionally underserved.

The Request for Applications for kindergarten - grade 12 subgrants is now available. The Department of Education and Workforce will release the subgrant application process for birth - kindergarten separately later in 2025.

The application due date has been extended to April 8, 2025.

[More Information](#)

Math Minds Monthly



Check out the latest edition of Math Minds Monthly, your monthly dive into the world of mathematics, created by Brit Seward. Feel free to share with math teachers, leaders, coaches, paraprofessionals, and anyone else who can come alongside us as we work to improve mathematics culture.

[Latest Newsletter](#)

Board Member Spotlight



Buckeye Community Hope Foundation (BCHF) recognizes the important work that governing board members do in supporting their school community. In recognition and support of this hard work, BCHF highlights one board member each month in our sponsor newsletter.

This month we are featuring Lanee Williams, who serves on the Promise Academy board. The mission of Promise Academy is: *Promise Academy recognizes that all students have the right to, and deserve, an education that prepares them for the post-secondary success of their choosing. We educate and graduate students that have not found success in a traditional high school and have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out.*

Lanee was introduced to Promise Academy in 2023 by a friend. Wanting to expand her leadership experience, she reached out and soon became involved, attending task force meetings and engaging with other board members before officially joining in March 2024. "I

wanted to expand my horizon in leadership, and I really appreciated what the school stood for. So, I reached out, and here we are!" she said.

Outside of being a board member, Lanee works full-time as a Program Coordinator for Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services while also balancing life as a full-time mom and graduate student. In her free time, she enjoys reading, spending time with family and friends, watching movies, financial planning, and exploring new activities with her son. While travel has been on hold, she hopes to embark on new adventures soon.

Lessons Learned in Board Membership

Being part of a board comes with a learning curve, and over time, Lanee has come to appreciate the dynamics of governance. "I have learned that it is okay to have healthy disagreements. Everyone is not always going to agree, but once business proceedings are done, none of it is personal," she shared. Additionally, she has embraced the formal processes of board governance, including voting procedures and operational structures. "I literally learned how to properly vote here!"

Ensuring Efficiency in Meetings

While Lanee has not introduced official policies, her approach to board participation plays a key role in maintaining efficiency. Consistent attendance, preparedness, and active engagement have been instrumental. "I try my best to be at every meeting, in person, and on time. I understand how important it is to make quorum. And you can't vote if you attend virtually, and I like to vote!" she noted. Her commitment to presence and participation ensures smooth and productive meetings.

Recruiting and Retaining Board Members

Bringing in new board members is a priority, and Lanee takes a hands-on approach to recruitment. By sharing her positive experiences and inviting others to events, she successfully introduced a new board member, ironically, the same person who originally told her about Promise Academy. "I told her about how much I enjoyed what the school was doing, and I invited her to graduation. I gave her name and information to the President, and I formally introduced them via email," she shared. "I also went with her to her first meeting with the Executive Director and asked her how she felt about what she heard. She then started attending task force meetings with me (with approval of course) and before you know it, she was in! So, I would say for me, I have a very hands-on approach with my solicitation and retention. It's a process, but it allows me to see how serious people are about being a part of such a wholesome opportunity."

Proudest Moments as a Board Member

One of the most rewarding experiences for Lanee is attending graduations. Seeing students walk across the stage, receiving their diplomas, is a great reminder of the impact Promise Academy has on young lives. "It makes me feel good inside like: 'yes! I am a part of this. I am doing something that I believe in and giving back to my community in a way I never thought possible.'"

A Connection to the Mission of Promise Academy

Of the school's mission statement, one phrase stands out the most to Lanee: "Promise Academy recognizes that all students have the right to, and deserve, an education..." She strongly believes in the power of education and appreciates the school's unconventional yet effective approach to helping

students who need alternative pathways to success. As a current Master of Social Work student at Cleveland State University, she sees herself reflected in the mission, acknowledging that education is a right, not a privilege. "I believe that Promise Academy takes an unconventional, yet powerful approach to assist young adults in Cleveland's community who desire the same success as anyone else, but they need an alternative way of doing it," she said.

Advice for New Board Members

For those considering board membership, Lanee offers straightforward advice: "Make your presence known. If you are serious about pursuing a board, be present. Be active! If you are invited to an event, attend. If you are asked your opinion, speak up. Do not be afraid to showcase yourself as the asset that you are."

All of us in the Education Division of BCHF appreciate the commitment to students Lanee Williams has shown. We hope, in sharing these stories, others will consider serving as community school governing board members.

March Compliance Update

Food Service Licenses

Food service licenses expired statewide on March 1st. Updated licenses for schools and vendors/caterers should be uploaded to Epicenter and posted in the school food service area.

OEDS- Primary Email

Reminder- Each staff member listed in OEDS must have a valid email address marked as "Primary" to receive critical communications. Those with the role of OEDS Organization Administrator can update staff members' contact information for their organizations by logging in to their [OHID portal](#) accounts. Those who are not OEDS Organization Administrators can follow [these instructions](#) to update their own contact information.

School Highlights

A representative from Chase Bank came out to [The Academy for Urban Scholars](#) to share valuable financial literacy skills with students! Learning smart money management skills today helps build a brighter financial future.

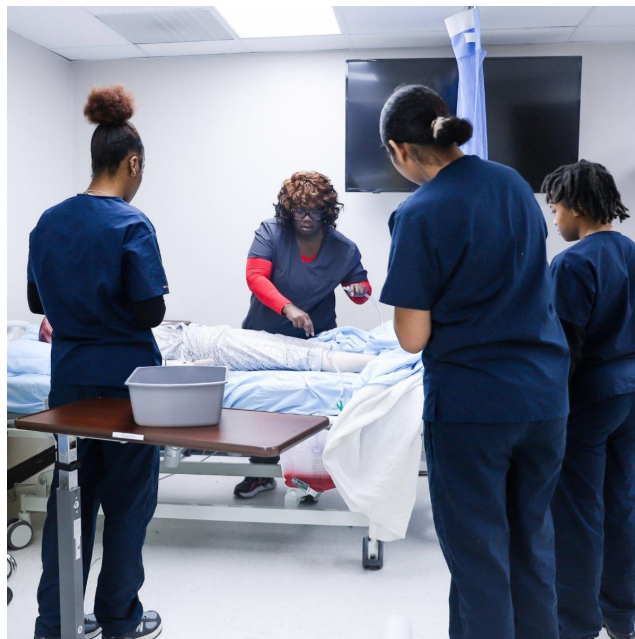


Focus Learning Academy Southwest CTE Students attended a Construction Career Fair with NSTN- National Skilled Trades Network. Students were able to listen to speakers and meet with representatives from NSTN, Turner Construction, Columbus Landmarks, Elford, and Blind Eye Restoration.



CTE attends 2025 Construction Career Fair

Check out some behind the scenes from the STNA Cohort at [Focus North High School](#). These students are gaining valuable skills and hands-on experience as they work toward becoming State Tested Nursing Assistants.



[Horizon Science Academy Columbus Middle School](#) students recently showcased their hard work and dedication at the science fair held at COSI. Under the guidance of 8th-grade science teacher Dr. Latifah, students impressed the judges with their presentations.

"Each student did an excellent job presenting their hard work to the judges," Dr. Latifah shared. "Every presentation was evaluated by at least two judges, and some by three. We had a total of 16 participants, and I'm proud to report that all received some form of recognition!"

Gold Medals: Khalidah K. & Ayuub H.

Silver Medals: 10 students

Bronze Medals: 4 students

Congratulations to all the young scientists on their achievements!



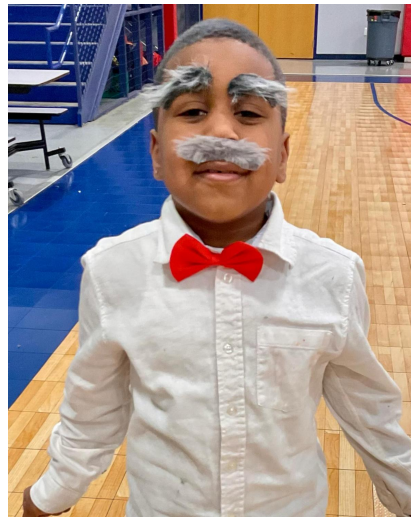
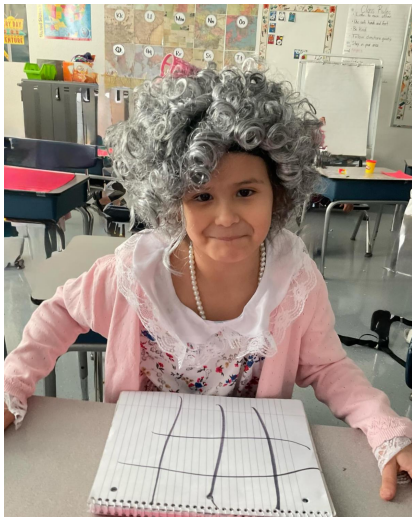
Horizon Science Academy of Lorain students had an incredible opportunity to attend Mayor Jack Bradley's Lorain Mayor's Address! Over breakfast, they listened to the mayor's speech, gained insight into local government, and even had the chance to ask him questions. Experiences like this empower students to stay civically engaged, deepen their understanding of leadership, and discover ways to contribute to their community.



In celebration of Black History Month, **Imagine Akron Academy** welcomed talented dancers who brought the beauty, energy, and storytelling of traditional African cultural dances to life! Students experienced an unforgettable performance that honored heritage, rhythm, and the power of movement.



Students at **L. Hollingworth** celebrated the 100th day of school in style!





Save The Date - BCHF Leadership Summit

Reserve the dates of June 9 and 10, 2025 for BCHF's premier professional development event of the 2024-25 school year! More details will become available as we plan throughout the year.

Register

Upcoming Events

BCHF is happy to “March into March” to prepare educators in our schools for the challenges of the Spring season! As you know, the year starts to get away from us as soon as better weather comes. Reinforce your information and your support through professional development. Register for sessions via the link in the title, or go to BCHF’s Professional Learning Opportunities Catalog, [available here](#).

HOW TO TEACH KIDS TO THINK: PART 2 – March 6, 2025 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. - Online via Zoom

Will the thinking skills of our students keep pace with artificial intelligence? Critical thinking skills are more important than ever as we look into the future for our students. A technology-based and technology-dependent world requires its people to be able to analyze, evaluate and create information. How may teachers best prepare students for this world and for the rigorous demands of their futures? Join us as we discuss the development of critical thinking skills necessary for all ages of students.

LEVEL UP! Practical Strategies for Adding Rigor to Instruction – March 13, 2025 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. - Online via Zoom

In this session, educators will learn how to elevate their instruction by incorporating Depth of Knowledge (DOK) and increasing rigor to foster deeper learning. We will explore the four levels of DOK and discuss how to design lessons and assessments that encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and application of knowledge beyond surface-level tasks. Participants will gain practical strategies for

creating challenging, yet accessible learning experiences that promote student engagement, creativity, and higher-order thinking. Attendees will also learn how to scaffold instruction to support diverse learners, ensuring all students can rise to the challenge. This session is ideal for educators looking to refine their teaching practices and create a more rigorous, meaningful classroom environment.

COHORT: LEADERSHIP - Special Considerations for School Leaders in a Time of Teacher Shortage – March 19, 2025 – 2:00 to 3:30 P.M. - Online via Zoom

This space is especially for leaders to talk and debrief issues of mutual concern and support. Our March topic is “The Leader's Role in Special Education!” Come to this session with every question you ever wanted answered about special education and what a school leader needs to do to enhance support for and high achievement of students with disabilities. See you there for another good conversation!

RESET AND RECONNECT: Proven Strategies to Revitalize Motivation – March 25, 2025 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. - Online via Zoom

Re-ignite your students' drive with tried-and-true strategies that foster motivation and connection! If you're looking for a way to help students shake off the winter doldrums and finish the school year on a high note, this session will equip you with practical tools to re-engage students who may feel disconnected or discouraged. You'll learn techniques to spark interest, boost confidence, offer empowering choices, and create a classroom culture that keeps students invested in their learning.

THE FOUNDATION: Bricks and Mortar to Building Academic Vocabulary – March 26, 2025 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. - Online via Zoom

Words Matter! Intentional vocabulary instruction equals successful learning. This session will cover strategies for increasing academic vocabulary instruction and will discuss the research behind the connection between "intentionality" and student success.

ETHICS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION - Asynchronous 4/1/2025 to 5/1/2025

May teachers accept holiday gifts from parents? Should they drive students home? Let's examine these and other questions about educators and the licensure professional code of conduct. This interactive session will examine the licensure standards and discuss scenarios that challenge us as ethical dilemmas as we teach. You will receive your asynchronous materials if you register by April 1, 2025 - you must submit your post-test by May 1, 2025 to receive credit.

RECONNECTING DISENGAGED STUDENTS: Bridging Learning Gaps – April 2, 2025 – 3:00 to 4:00 P.M. - Online via Zoom

When students fall behind, they often lose motivation-but with the right support, they can reconnect with learning. This session is ideal for educators working with students who struggle due to learning gaps. Participants will explore strategies to re-engage these students, including differentiated instruction, targeted interventions, and building strong teacher-student relationships. Learn how to create an inclusive classroom where each student feels valued and capable, no matter their starting point. You'll leave with practical tools to identify learning gaps early and foster resilience in students, helping them regain confidence and actively participate in their educational journey.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SUMMITS

Ohio K-12 educators and administrators are invited to join the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce in partnership with aiEDU, Innovate Ohio, and the Ohio Educational Service Center Association during **five upcoming AI Summit events in 2025**.

These free summits bring together educators, district and building K-12 leaders, and educational service center employees from across the state to connect, learn, and collaborate on AI literacy and innovation in K-12 education.

2025 Ohio AI Summit Dates and Locations

Southwest Ohio AI Summit – April 22 at Xavier University in Cincinnati

Northwest Ohio AI Summit – May 1 at Glass City Center in Toledo

Northeast Ohio AI Summit – May 6 at Mid-Ohio ESC in Mansfield

Southeast Ohio AI Summit #1 – May 7 at Indian Creek School District in Wintersville

Southeast Ohio AI Summit #2 – May 8 at The ECO Center, Ohio University Eastern Campus in St. Clairsville

Registration is open and capacity is limited. Don't miss this opportunity to explore AI's impact on teaching, learning, and workforce readiness. (DEW, February 18, 2025)

BUCKEYE COMMUNITY HOPE FOUNDATION

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