

Superintendent's Weekly Wrap-up: Mar. 7-14, 2014

ODE Picks Alternative Tests for Reading Guarantee - The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) this week picked alternative tests students can take to prove reading proficiency if they can't meet cut scores on state assessments set under the third grade reading guarantee.

Students need to score a 392 or better on the fall, spring or summer administrations of the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA) to be promoted beyond third grade, but the law creating the guarantee also allowed ODE to designate alternative tests. While they can be administered any time during the academic year, they can only be used for promotion if the student doesn't reach the needed OAA score. In other words, a student can't take an alternative test in winter and then skip the spring OAA in reading, said John Charlton, ODE spokesman.

The tests selected by ODE assessment staff following a "request for qualifications" process are the Iowa Assessments Form F Level 9 for third grade; Northwest Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Progress; and the Terra Nova 3.

Charlton said the tests measure comparable standards but provide some variation in format and can be administered outside normal testing periods, which can be high-anxiety times for students.

"It's not going to be any more or less rigorous, but it may be a better fit for the student," he said. "We always talk about the pressure of a one-day test. Now you have four opportunities."

Districts must pay for and administer the alternative assessments.
Provided by Focus Education, a service of Hannah News service.

Calamity Days Legislation Update - On Wednesday, March 12, both the Ohio House of Representatives and Ohio Senate took action following Tuesday's conference committee report on Amended (Am.) Substitute (Sub.) House Bill (HB) 416, the calamity days legislation.

Among the key provisions of Am. Sub. HB 416 are:

- a local option for adding four calamity days to the current five days that do not need to be made up, but to be used only after districts have used four of their required contingency plan days;
- permissive authority for boards of education to add 30-minute increments to existing school days to make up additional days;
- authority for a local board of education to include in its contingency plan, as a substitute for contingency plan makeup days, "blizzard bags" or online learning days in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.88 (a total of three days);
- authorization for the Ohio Department of Education to accept and consider applications for blizzard bags and online learning lessons at any time after Aug. 1, 2013;
- permission for a local board of education to update its contingency plan at any time during the 2013-2014 school year (rather than by Sept. 1, 2013);
- permission for local school boards to excuse graduating 12th-grade students

from attending any days they would otherwise be required to attend as a result of calamity days after the district's scheduled graduation ceremony in the 2013-2014 school year;

- authorizes a delay in reporting scores on the Ohio Achievement Assessments in grades three through eight by one week to reflect the delay in administering the tests that was recently authorized by the state superintendent of public instruction;

- an emergency clause.

Click [here](#) for a copy of the comparative analysis of HB 416 as passed by the conference committee. Once the governor signs the legislation, the bill will become effective immediately due to the emergency clause. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Broadcast Commission Hears Plans for School Broadband Expansion - The Broadcast Educational Media Commission heard about plans Thursday, March 6 for expansion of the state broadband network to hundreds more Ohio schools to enable greater technological access, online assessments and other advances.

Denis Walsh, chief relationship officer for the Ohio Academic Resource Network, or OARnet, said the state is pursuing \$50 million to \$80 million in Federal Communications Commission grant funding to defray last-mile construction costs for building connections between the school buildings and the system's backbone.

The goal is a minimum 100MB connection for every school and library in Ohio, he said.

Hamilton Local currently has a 100MB connection. Superintendent Lester is currently working with district Director of Technology, Lisa Buchanan, to increase the Hamilton Local District broadband from its current 100MB to 500MB speed. The planning includes a low rate loan of equipment and that will increase the district broadband to five times the current speed for Hamilton students and employees.

House Bill (HB) 393 Career Decision Guides Advances to Second Hearing - HB 393 would require public high schools to publish annually a career decision guide in its newsletter or on its web site.

[HB 393 Language](#)

[HB 393 Analysis](#)

House Bill (HB) 343 Heads to Possible Vote - HB 343 the Educational Programs For Citizens Without a Diploma Bill would change current law regarding educational programs for certain students and individuals who have not received a high school diploma. The bill specifies that a person who is at least 18 years old (rather than 19, under current law) may take the tests of general educational development (GED) without additional administrative requirements, if the person is officially withdrawn from school and has not received a high school diploma. This bill would also eliminate the current requirement to obtain approval from the school district superintendent.

[HB 343 Language](#)

[HB 343 Analysis](#)

State Board of Education discusses increasing number of accountability measures into letter grades - The State Board of Education Committee assigned to refine Ohio's new A-F rating system for schools discussed Monday how to distill the increasing number of accountability measures into letter grades.

Ohio's new report cards launched last year with A-F grades on nine specific measures. Starting in 2015, those and additional measures will be used to calculate component grades in six categories: achievement, progress, gap closing, graduation rate, K-3 literacy and "prepared for success." Those six component grades will then be merged into an aggregate, overall grade.

Monday's meeting of the board's Accountability Committee focused on whether to weight certain measures more heavily in distilling component grades, and if so, to what degree. Ohio Department of Education (ODE) staff also presented proposals on providing differentiation within each letter grade, for example, to assign five points to a school scoring at the high end of the A range, but 4.25 points for the low range. When rolling more than a dozen measures into component grades and then into an overall grade, such differentiation could help in evaluating districts with numbers that are very close numerically but fall on different sides of the threshold for a letter grade, said Chris Woolard, ODE's director of accountability.

On the prepared for success category, Woolard presented a proposal for a two-tiered system. By earning an honors diploma, industry credential or a remediation-free score on the ACT or SAT, a student would meet the basic qualifying criteria for being college and career ready. Bonus points, which would give a student's achievement additional weight in calculating the prepared for success score, could come from participating in dual-enrollment, Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs. Woolard proposed setting the qualifying score of 3 on an AP test as the measure for earning bonus points, but said determining a threshold for dual-enrollment is trickier.

The committee also discussed how to weight -- or not weight -- measures in other report card categories. For example, Woolard asked the committee members if they'd like to see the performance index and the performance indicators be given equal weight in the achievement category, or if the index should be weighted more heavily.

In the value-added category, committee members asked Woolard to return with sample grade calculations based on different weighting scenarios for measuring performance of subgroups. Gunlock proposed that the overall value-added performance account for 55 percent of the grade, with the remaining 45 percent split equally among the three subgroups -- gifted students, students with disabilities, and students in the lowest 20 percent.

Committee members expressed a clear preference for weighting four-year rates more heavily than five-year rates in the graduation category.

Provided by Focus Education, a service of Hannah News service.

State Board President Terhar assigns ad hoc committee to develop recommendations for report card indicator on gifted education - Also at Monday's meeting, board President Debe Terhar announced she's assigning an ad hoc committee to develop recommendations for the report card's indicator on

gifted education, chaired by Chris Woolard, ODE's director of accountability. Other members will include Matt Cohen, Senior ODE research officer; Thomas Ash of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators; Michael Tefs, superintendent of Wooster City Schools; Jamie Meade, managing director for strategic measures at Battelle for Kids; Ann Sheldon of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children; a teacher with gifted education experience, to be named by Sheldon; and a designee from ODE's Office of Exceptional Children.

Provided by Focus Education, a service of Hannah News service.

Board Committee Asks ODE Staff to Look into 'Zero Tolerance' Options -

The Legislative and Budget Committee of the State Board of Education discusses the implementation of "zero tolerance" policies by the state's schools. Committee Chair C. Todd Jones brought the issue up, noting he monitors "what stupid things are done in other parts" of the country only to recently be dismayed to see where a school in Ohio suspended a student for pointing a "finger gun."

He suggested the committee look into the issue further, following up on a comment from Board Member Mary Rose Oakar that they should understand the Ohio incident better -- beyond the "television version." However, he said he would also like to see board staff lay out policy options for dealing with the issue, noting that he objects to those opposed to zero tolerance using the policies as "the basis for these kinds of actions."

Provided by Focus Education, a service of Hannah News service.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Building Operations - Mr. Morrison will begin building inspections this week. Each building receives a very thorough evaluation twice each year. This process provides direction to both custodial and teaching staff in terms of our expectations for classroom organization and cleanliness. A follow-up evaluation will take place during the last month of school.

Supplies for summer work and spring beautification are currently being ordered. Each building will place orders in the spring to have materials for their deep summer cleaning projects. Mulch and other outdoor supplies have been ordered and should arrive soon.

Transportation - Our transportation department will continue to look for local drivers to join our team. If interested, please contact Mrs. Barbara Haughn at 614-491-8044 ext. 1238.

OFFICE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

State Testing Update - HTHS students took the Ohio Graduation Test this week. Students who missed a testing day will take make-up tests next week. The Alternative Assessment for Students with Cognitive Disabilities is currently being administered to students in grades 3-8 and 10 on an individual basis. Students for whom English is a second language just completed the Ohio Test of English Language Achievement (OTELA) and online results will be available on May 7. And the Ohio Achievement Assessment for grades 3-8 will be administered the week of May 5, 2014.

Summer Camps - Ohio State University has a longstanding tradition of offering Buckeyes of all ages and abilities vibrant summer experiences. From active sports camps to hands-on educational experiences, there is something for everyone. The university's [P12 Initiative](#) offers an [Ohio State 2014 Summer Camp Guide](#) to help families find the best type of camp for their children. Also included are programs that help pre-college students transition smoothly to a university setting.

HAMILTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Ohio Graduation Test Preparation - Students huddled around tables as electric probes attached to metals or dipped in ionic solutions light up; buzzing foam balls whizzing past peoples heads mimicking the whine of fire engines; teachers furiously writing on whiteboards as students balance equations and count protons and electrons in Bohrs Models...it can only be the annual Science Department OGT break-out session. Each year, the members of the Science Department hold a final study session the night before the Science OGT. The Department provides last minute help, pizza, and refreshments while the students provide a willingness to be attentive for at least 2 full hours, inquiring minds, and big appetites. The amount of students that attend the sessions has grown each year showing a parallel growth in student attitudes towards high achievement. What started out as just a handful of students sitting around a table to get in those final practice problems turned into nearly 100 students eager to do whatever it takes to ensure high performances on the exam. Students participated in rotating group sessions headed by the various members of the science department. Each Science Department member used their expertise in a particular field to review as much material as possible about different topics ranging from plate tectonics to Newton's Laws, to genetics. After two intense hours of review, the students were rewarded with pizzas and soda. Spirits were high and most students stuck around asking each other last minute questions well in the early evening.

Students Seek Extra Assistance - While HTHS tenth grade students are taking the OGT in the afternoon this week, our ninth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students are being given a rare opportunity to get caught up on any incomplete work they have. We need nearly our entire teaching staff to administer the state test, but we have used the rest of the staff, including aides and administrators, to monitor and assist students with their assignments. The National Honor Society has provided student tutors to assist, as well. This week when students have completed their outstanding obligations, they have been welcome to an early daily release. We are pleased with how these students have approached their work this week and are happy to have provided the opportunity for them to improve their academic standing.

HAMILTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Science of Life - 7th graders have been busy studying biotic and abiotic factors as well as biomes and human interactions within the biomes. In order to show what they have learned, students were to research the biotic and abiotic factors of a specific biome and share their information during a 3-5 minute presentation. Students were able to present their information through a PowerPoint, video, trifold display, or diorama.

The students got very creative during this project and made some very nice visual aids to go along with their presentations!

Music in their Feet - The MS Physical Education Department started the annual dance unit this week. Dance benefits students in numerous ways. Just a few are learning new movement styles, internal counting on a timeline, and enhancing mood and motivation. At first the students are shy and apprehensive about dancing in front of each other. As time moves forward, they soon realize the movements and timing are easy and they feel good about mastering the two. Most importantly dance is a lifetime activity that will benefit the mind, body and soul for years to come.

HAMILTON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Buzzing In - Fifth grade students recently attended the annual Battle of the Books competition. Students competed in a buzzer-style competition against five local Franklin County schools: Canal Winchester, Bexley, Olentangy, Groveport, and Columbus. Students prepared for the competition with their coach, Mrs. Smith, by creating questions and quizzing each other during after school study sessions. Congratulations to Jacob Chapman, Erica Bush, Brandon Donaldson, Heidi Kondrath, and Endia Berger who received special medals for reading all 14 books!

Angles Everywhere - In Mrs. Seiler's math class, students are connecting math to real life by finding angles everywhere! Students participated in a "Mystery Angle Find" where they listed right, obtuse, and acute angles found in the room. They then shared their ideas with the class. They connected other fifth grade indicators by labeling the vertices, rays, interiors, and exteriors of these angles. Students had fun searching for angles and sharing them with their peers!

HAMILTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Columbus Zoo Visits HES - Hamilton Elementary played host to the Columbus Zoo this past week. During the in-house field trip, the Columbus Zoo presented their "Habitat Heroes" show, where students learned about the fascinating characteristics and behaviors that help animals survive in their natural habitats. Animals on display included a Madagascar hissing cockroach, an owl, an alligator and an opossum to name a few. The assembly allowed students to gain exposure to a variety of life science standards, such as investigating observable features of animals that help them live in different kinds of places, and explaining why organisms can survive only in environments that meet their needs.

HES Partners with the South High Library to Increase Student Achievement – Mr. Tyler and Mrs. Dixon met with representatives from the South High Branch of the Columbus Library to explore ways in which the library could benefit students at HES. The group discussed several partnerships but is particularly excited about the library's new Reading Buddies Program. The Reading Buddies Program is designed for Kindergarten through Third-grade students to help support the Third-grade Guarantee. HES students can attend special tutoring sessions at the South High Branch free of charge every Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 5:00pm to 6:00pm. As a special incentive, students can earn Ranger Bucks for each session they attend. HES Students can also earn Ranger

Bucks for attending the long standing Homework Helper Program at the South High Branch. Homework Helper is held every Monday through Thursday from 4:00pm to 7:00pm and Friday from 3:00pm to 6:00pm.

HAMILTON PRESCHOOL

Winter Fundraiser - A very special thank you to all the preschool families who helped make this fundraiser so successful! This was our preschool's biggest fundraising event ever! We will use the money for library materials, center activities, and family events we have planned for the spring. Our Preschool Make the Difference! Our top seller and winner of the Toys R Us gift card was Emma Davis in Mrs. Davisson's classroom. Here is the list of top sellers in each class each winner will receive a gift card!

Mrs. King: Josh Murphy, Konner Stover

Mrs. Yates: Olivia Starkey

Mrs. Davisson: Emma Davis, Austin Batchelder

Mrs. Moore: Shawna Ward, Anesia Langston

Mrs. Colby: Shalya Mecum, Emily Foraker

DINO Week! - Last week in Mrs. Yates' class, the students had some fun center activities with DINOSAURS! They wrote sentences about dinosaurs, made dinosaurs in art, read many dinosaur books, put together a four foot dinosaur floor puzzle, wrote around the room finding sight words on dinosaurs, practiced matching upper and lowercase letters with dinosaurs, and even caught some dinosaurs! The students read number words on little cages and had to trap that amount of little dinosaurs. New to our classroom is the question of the day. Students read and answer the question of the day on large chart paper. Students had to graph, journal, or illustrate their responses to the question. Students look forward to writing on a piece of paper as big as they are! In our small reading groups, we have been reading our new little emergent readers and CDs from Scholastic that our Preschool Boosters purchased for us. Thank you to the Boosters and all of those who were able to place an order for our fundraiser to help raise money for all of our new books.

OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Texting Tool Proves Useful for Communicating with Students and Parents -

The Alternative Academy is now using Remind101, a free one-way text messaging and email tool to help keep students and parents informed. The Academy staff will be using this to update those enrolled in the program about delayed start, testing dates, closures, no school days, etc. Please contact our alternative academy main office, if you are interested in signing up for this notification service.

DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS

Niemann Places Third at OATCCC Indoor Track and Field State

Championship Meet - HTHS Senior Austin Niemann competed this past weekend at the OATCCC Indoor Championships at the University of Akron. In the Division I competition, Austin ran a personal best 1:55.53 in the 800m run. This performance marks the fastest time in HTHS track and field history. The next fastest 800m time in our school history was an outdoor 2:01.30 ran by Paul

Gentile in the 880y in 1975, and our fastest indoor runner was Ron Shelton, a state placer, at 2:02.95.

Austin's time was the 16th fastest time ever recorded indoors by an Ohio high school runner in any division. He ended up placing 3rd behind two athletes that rank 5th and 6th on the All-Time list. Congratulations to Austin, Head Coach Adam Beggrow and the rest of the coaching staff, and good luck heading into this spring's outdoor season, which began official practice on March 10th.

[Click here to watch Austin's Performance](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

[See what's happening in our district this week!](#)

[Like us on Facebook](#) & [Follow us on Twitter!](#)