

Superintendent's Weekly Wrap-up: Nov. 11-18, 2011

New Teacher Evaluations Coming in 2014 - The State Board of Education has taken the first step toward creating a statewide teacher evaluation model that would account for student growth.

Board members voted Tuesday to approve the framework for the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, which would evaluate teachers in four areas: goal-setting, teacher performance and communication and professionalism accounting for half; and student growth measures for the other half.

"It's all supposed to be a uniform system for all of the districts in the state," said Patrick Gallaway, Ohio Department of Education spokesman. "I think, ultimately, it's accountability. We want to be providing the best opportunity for students for their education."

The framework for the plan had to be approved by the end of the year. It includes broad guidelines for identifying teachers as effective or ineffective, with the possibility of affecting employment.

"We need to make sure (students are) college- and career-ready for after high school," Gallaway said. "A lot of students who get to college from Ohio high schools need remedial coursework."

Gallaway said the system doesn't include a merit pay requirement, but some districts could elect to include it.

*Story originally published in The Newark Advocate on November 16, 2011
Written by Seth Roy.*

Heffner Announces Next Generation of State Assessments - State Superintendent Stan Heffner made partial delivery Tuesday on the new student assessment system promised in his first day on the job and highlighted in his recent five-region tour of Ohio. He won unanimous approval from the State Board of Education to join the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), one of two consortia states have considered in aligning assessments to the Common Core curriculum.

Heffner told board members gathered at the annual conference of the Ohio School Boards Association that staff at the Ohio Department of Education had reviewed PARCC, which is being managed by Achieve, and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.

He said although department staff was "excited" about the Smarter Balanced proposal, "Achieve and the PARCC consortium seemed like they had the best plan to meet the needs of Ohio."

In response to board member Michael Collins, Heffner said of the 12 Race to the Top recipients, 10 have chosen to align Common Core adoption of math and English language arts standards with PARCC. Six other states and the District of Columbia have also joined the consortium's governing board, bringing total members to 17. ODE's former associate superintendent of policy and accountability, Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester of the state of Massachusetts, chairs the governing board.

"You are going to have one set of Common Core standards, so you will have an apples-to-apples comparison," Heffner said, responding to board member Jeffrey Mims' concerns about the multifarious approaches to measuring adequate yearly progress (AYP) nationwide.

As an overview, Heffner said the new tests will show whether students are on track for college and careers; compare performance with other states and countries; and provide data to educators and parents to support instruction and allow early intervention for students who need extra help. He signaled as much in the days since becoming the permanent state superintendent. (See *The Hannah Report*, 7/12/11, 8/19/11.)

In addition, he said PARCC-based assessments would accomplish the following:

- Use online testing to replace the current paper and pencil assessments.
- Incorporate multiple assessment measures, including multiple choice, written response and technology-enhanced items, along with performance tasks.
- Measure student progress at intervals during the school year.
- Use automated scoring processes that provide real-time results for students and educators.

Heffner was pressed on several points before the 18-0 vote. Board member Rob Hovis asked about the cost of joining the consortium.

"The state has spent a lot of time and money developing the proficiency tests we have," Hovis said. "What is it that makes us believe we will improve the effectiveness of the tests we are purchasing from this organization rather than the ones we have developed over time?"

Board member Bryan Williams noted that the General Assembly had approved \$20 million for state assessments in 2002 when he was a state legislator.

Heffner responded by saying PARCC is funded primarily through Ohio's RttT grant and has no "development" costs, though he said there could be

some administrative costs for the transition to new assessments.

“The old tests did what we wanted them to do. It was the system that was lacking,” Heffner said, reiterating a point from Monday’s OSBA presentation. (See *The Hannah Report*, 11/14/11.)

Board members Mary Rose Oakar and Jeff Hardin expressed some concern for children from communities as diverse as the urban poor and rural Amish who may lack the means or the inclination for computer-based assessments. Heffner said districts are free to incorporate the technology as appropriate, and that accommodations can be made for students lacking computer skills.

Hovis questioned not the capacity of students but rather the capacity of PARCC to properly evaluate the writing section of English language assessments.

“I don't think a computer can assess the quality of thinking and expression. I wonder how it would grade Edgar Allen Poe or Emily Dickinson?” he said, suggesting some “human scoring” may be necessary. “I can understand it evaluating syntax, but what about the flow of logic from one paragraph to the next, or whether an analogy that has been used is apropos?”

Heffner assured the board that both Smarter Balanced and PARCC have developed the necessary artificial intelligence to grade complete sentences, paragraph development, and organization of ideas.

The superintendent said the PARCC resolution had been forwarded to the governor’s office.

Thursday, Heffner followed with a separate release, noting, “By joining PARCC, Ohio is positioned to play a key role in raising the academic expectations for students so they can thrive in this global economy.”

Said Chester, "Ohio has a long commitment to high expectations for all students and improving education through meaningful reform. By becoming a governing board member, they will play a vital role in the development of high-quality assessments that provide meaningful data to teachers and parents about student achievement and readiness for college and careers." *Story originally published in The Hannah Report on November 17, 2011. Copyright 2011 Hannah News Service, Inc.*

For Ohio Students, Online Tests To Replace Pencil and Paper - Starting in 2014, all school districts in Ohio will be using new state tests for the Common Core Curriculum being rolled out in 45 states and the District of Columbia.

The catch: The new tests will be taken online, replacing the standardized No. 2 pencil-and-paper tests that Ohio schools have always used.

While local school leaders like the idea of online testing, the switch is also creating concern because it's unclear who's going to pay for the computers and software upgrades needed for the new system. District officials worry the state will pass costs onto local districts - and their taxpayers. That's something many districts fear they won't be able to afford.

"It's a bit of a dilemma," said Janet Walsh, spokeswoman for Cincinnati Public Schools, where voters recently defeated a levy that would have helped the region's largest district defray such costs.

"Our request for (the levy) was framed with this in mind because we were unclear if the state would be able to pay," Walsh said.

CPS is working to close a \$30 million deficit next year - a gap that will become bigger if it has to start budgeting for new online testing tools.

State officials say that the new reading, language arts and math tests they're developing will test new, national Common Core academic standards.

The tests and the standards are expected to be ready for rollout in the 2014-15 school year.

It represents a major change in test-taking in Ohio. Instead of filling out multiple-choice bubbles or writing extended responses on answer sheets, students will instead sit in front of computers several times a year, answering questions online and even getting some questions in video form.

Instead of tests once a year, the new tests will probably be taken at least twice a year, said Dennis Evans, an Ohio Department of Education spokesman.

What's not clear is how much the transition to these new tests will cost the state and school districts, which must acquire enough computers and technology to enable large numbers of students to take multiple tests.

Hamilton County's Northwest Local Schools, for instance, probably has enough computers at its two high schools to accommodate new online tests. But it doesn't have enough computers in its three middle schools, said Mark Farmer, assistant superintendent of the 9,600-student district.

Each of the middle schools has about 700 students but only about 50 computers in each school's computer labs.

Without additional computers or greater wireless capability, the new tests shrink the number of computers available for remedial classes and other kinds of instruction, Farmer said.

"We'd be very much in trouble if they expect us to do all that (testing) online," he said.

Northwest voters, like Cincinnati's, rejected a combination bond issue/operating levy this month that would have paid to renovate the high schools and improve technology.

Ohio does have federal Race to the Top money to develop higher standards and more rigorous testing. But it's unclear how much of that will be used to help school districts adopt technologically to the new tests, Evans said.

"How things are implemented and what resources there are, that's a conversation that is ongoing," Evans said. "We're still working on identifying all the resources and challenges and opportunities that lay ahead."

Cincinnati School Board member Melanie Bates loves the idea of online testing because it goes hand-in-hand with the purpose of the new curriculum - getting kids ready for 21st century jobs and colleges. They'll need to be able to adeptly handle online tasks and technology.

"I definitely (like it) but it will take a major investment to do it," Bates said. "Hopefully, the state will be realistic in the implementation of it."

Story originally published on news.cincinnati.com on November 17 | Written by Jessica Brown and Denise Smith Amos.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Building Operations - Maintenance and custodial teams are busy preparing for the upcoming winter weather. Fine tuning climate controls, prepping snow removal equipment, and stocking up on salt and ice deterring chemicals are just part of the process to make our campus safe for students, staff, and community members.

Campus and Athletic Grounds - Our outdoor athletic grounds are being winterized in preparation for the upcoming winter season. Mr. Beggrow and our maintenance department will spend many weeks checking and securing our soccer, football and baseball fields.

Administrative Meetings - Mr. Morrison attended the OSBA Capital Conference this week at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. This

conference is a great resource for school administrators and board members. Sessions attended during the week were: *Student Discipline and Expulsions, Bad Behavior Beyond The Schoolyard, A Legal Update on Unfamiliar Residency Issues, Strategies For Managing Your eNightmares, School Law Workshop, Helping Students With Disabilities Achieve, Improving Attendance Rates and 2011 Case Law Update*

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

OFFICE OF THE TREASURER

ODE Sends Money To Our District Through The Ed Jobs Grant - Hamilton Local Schools will be receiving slightly more than \$23,000 in additional funds through the Education Jobs Bill. This is unexpected and the District is extremely happy to receive these additional monies.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Inaugural Autism 110 Fun Run/Walk A Success - In an effort to build on last year's autism awareness event (The NBC 4 Autism Shootout), Mr. Payne coordinated a team of district employees to plan the Autism 110 Fun Run/Walk that took place on Sunday, Nov. 13 at the HTHS track.

Nearly 70 people participated in the charity event that raised more than \$1,900 for the district's autism fund that will be split evenly between Autism Speaks and the Autism Society of Ohio.

Mr. Payne's planning team consisted of Jeannie Kline and Nate Collins at HTHS, Shelley Lemasters at our middle and intermediate schools, Lisa Payne at HES, and Jan Strahm in Hamilton Preschool. Mr. Morbitzer provided the soundtrack for all of the walkers during the 90 minute event. Mr. Collins came up with the idea to have the fun/run walk, and the team did a great job with the organization and execution of the event. This is just another great example how our employees go above and beyond to make a difference in our community.

HAMILTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Project Rwanda: Creating Hope - Part of the 9th Grade standards includes studying the 1994 genocidal conflict in Rwanda. As part of this curriculum, the students watch *Hotel Rwanda*, a movie that is based on a true story

concerning the genocide, and one man's attempt to save his family and others from the brutality. The movie has inspired the students of HTHS to take on a humanitarian effort for those who are still suffering in that area.

As a result, HTHS has sponsored a ten-year-old girl named Josianne from Rwanda. Students and staff have been challenged to each donate a quarter or dollar a month, respectively-and have overwhelmingly risen to the challenge.

To date, HTHS has raised \$466.70 for Josianne, and their goal is to raise \$1000 by the end of the year. This once again demonstrates Hamilton's compassionate nature to help others in need. The students and staff at HTHS thank Mrs. Ford for her efforts coordinating Project Rwanda. Pictured below is Josianne.

HTHS Digital Dollars - Digital Dollars is an incentive program that started during the 2009-10 school year to provide a positive reinforcement for our high school students who display good behavior and accomplishments in the classroom during their time in Hamilton Township High School. Schools tend to focus on inappropriate student behavior. HTHS staff and administration want to focus on the good/positive achievements of our students by utilizing this reward program.

Frequently asked questions regarding Digital Dollars are:

- How can students earn Digital Dollars?
- How can I use my Digital Dollars?
- Why does it show up as a class in Progress Book?
- Does Digital Dollars count as a class?
- Can I carry over my Digital Dollars to the next school year?

[Click here](#) to view the answers to the questions above and to scroll the newly created website regarding digital dollars. Any questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding Digital Dollars can be directed to Mr. Matt Thompson, HTHS Dean of Students.

Ohio University College Visit - As part of our HS Postsecondary Action Planning to: *Help more students pursue postsecondary education through local college access programs, financial aid advising, scholarship and grant availability advising, career guidance, and other services*, Mr. Mike Elfers and the HS guidance department constantly and consistently bring colleges into the HS for informational sessions and presentations for our students.

After a recent visit from Ohio University, Assistant Director for Communication, Breanne Sisler commented, *"I just wanted to thank you again for allowing me the pleasure of meeting with your students yesterday. After a long travel season and having visited nearly 70 central Ohio high*

schools in the past two months, I have to say that my visit to Hamilton Township High School was easily one of my best.

I was blown away not so much by the large turnout (though it was certainly appreciated), but by the students' earnest and thoughtful questions. They weren't afraid to ask what they really wanted to know, and I value that as a sign of maturity and seriousness about the college process.

I look forward to continuing to help your students as they prepare for college. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance!"

Sincerely,

Undergraduate Admissions
Breanne Sisler
Assistant Director for Communication

TEAMwork - HTHS juniors and seniors enrolled in a Family and Consumer Science Class, who also have curriculum requirements that involve learning about child development, volunteered at the elementary school for National Recycle Day. The high school students walked around the lunch tables with boxes and the elementary students recycled paper and plastic products from their lunches. The visit was a success and was also a great experience for our HS students.

HAMILTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Explore Test Results Are In! - The eighth grade students took the Explore Test in October. The results from this test give an indication of how the students will do when they take the PLAN in 10th grade. Mrs. Carfagna is meeting with the 8th grade students in their Language Arts classes to go over and explain their results. The reports are being sent home with the students. Parents, please ask to see these reports, as they are full of useful information in planning for your child's future!

Kearns Returns from Injured Reserve - Head Custodian Jewell Kearns has returned to our middle school after an extended absence due to an injury. The building's teachers and students are thrilled to have her back and she is happy to be back as well. Thank yous go out to Shari Stewart and Kim Boggs, the other custodians in the building, for all that they did to keep our middle school in excellent shape. All three ladies play a vital role in the operation of the building. Welcome Back, Jewell.

HAMILTON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

We Welcome Mr. Brian Ray To The H.I.S. Family - On October 10, 2011, Mr. Brian Ray joined our staff as one of the evening custodians. Mr. Ray is a member of the Hamilton Township Community and has three children who attend school in the district. His two sons are students at the high school and his daughter is a student in the intermediate building. Mr. Ray is also part of the coaching team for the Hamilton Township Youth Wrestling Program for children from age 5 to 6th grade. Welcome to the Hamilton Local Schools family.

Corey Thanthanavong Receives Ohio Lottery Student All Star Prizes - Congratulations to Corey for being the awesome student he is! He received a gift pack from the Ohio Lottery consisting of an Ohio Lottery book bag, sweatshirt, water bottle and a \$50 gift card.

The Students at H.I.S. Observed Veteran's Day - The 4th grade students were visited by Mrs. Smith's two friends, Sgt. Strahle and Sgt. Smith of Lima Company 3/25, to celebrate Veteran's Day. The veteran Marines shared pictures of their time training in California and serving in Iraq in 2005. Stephanie Derga and Kristin Harmon also attended the presentation. Their son and brother, Cpl. Dustin Derga, was killed in Iraq in May of 2005.

The 5th grade discussed the role of veterans in the United States and how they defend the rights of the United States citizens. They watched a movie that showed the experiences of a veteran and what it means to him. Finally, they read about Veteran's Day to learn how it began!

In the 6th grade, students read some material about how Veteran's Day became a national holiday. Our students also compared the differences between Veteran's Day and Memorial Day. We also discussed ways that we could be volunteers in a VA Medical Center or in our local community.

This discussion led to how volunteer work can lead to job opportunities or scholarships for college. Finally, students wrote a persuasive essay on the following topic: *Should the youth in the United States of America between the ages of 18-24 be required to perform either community service or military service for at least 2 years? Why or Why not?* Students read some of their responses and then read the essay that was selected as the national winner.

Video Taping Lessons For Professional Development - At the end of the 2010-2011 school year, the math department met to discuss a possible professional development reflection process for the upcoming school year. All six teachers have signed up for two video taping sessions, in which they are taping lessons during a given class period.

Each teacher then individually reflects on his or her own lesson prior to the group meeting. In doing so, the teacher comes prepared with his or her own questions and/or concerns that may assist in dialog at the meetings.

During group discussions, the department teachers then collaboratively view the lesson and focus on reflecting and giving constructive feedback to one another based on what is seen in the video.

They hope to make appropriate gains based on the goals that they individually set before the process began in order to increase student achievement scores and progress throughout the year.

Parents Conference With Teachers About Student's Progress - On November 3rd and 17th, teachers met with parents of many students to discuss their child's progress so far this school year. Teachers were able to discuss academic progress and to get a chance to collaborate with the parents to help meet the needs of their child. This was one of the highest attended parent/teacher conferences. Thank you to all those who participated.

HAMILTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Sounds A Little Fishy To Me - Mrs. Boring's second grade students performed the first of two musicals that will take place this year. The ocean-themed musical featured circling sharks, dancing jellyfish, one very large whale, and the beautiful voices of our students. The event was enjoyed by everyone in attendance. In addition to the students and Mrs. Boring, the entire specials team worked very hard on the production as well.

Elementary Students Recognized at Success Assemblies - Every nine weeks, Hamilton Elementary students are recognized by their teachers at their team's success assembly. To wrap up the first nine weeks of this school year, each grade level team held an assembly where students received certificates of recognition for Principal's Honor Roll, Honor Roll, Perfect Attendance, Most Improved Student, and Most Respectful Ranger. The assemblies were packed with proud parents and the students were very excited to receive the recognition.

Parents & Teachers Complete 553 Conferences - The majority of parents were able to attend the two nights of parent/teacher conferences that the elementary school recently conducted. In total, there were 553 individual conferences, which is substantially more than usual.

Teachers are thrilled by the turnout, as they were able to communicate face-to-face with the parents of most of their students. Building a solid

relationship between parents and teachers and keeping parents informed about their child's progress are major factors in student achievement.

HAMILTON PRESCHOOL

Tie Dying - Students had the opportunity to tie dye a spirit t-shirt for upcoming field trips and special days. The first day our students will wear these shirts will be Friday, December 16, 2011. Parent volunteers and teaching assistants helped with this process. The shirts are also a keepsake for the students as they graduate from Preschool later this school year.

Parent Survey - During Wednesday's parent teacher conferences, we invited each attending parent to take part in a very brief survey to let us know how we are doing. The results were reviewed and parents are most pleased with the events planned at the preschool, communication coming home and on the website, and enthusiasm of our staff. Parents stated they would like more opportunity to volunteer during the school day. We will conduct a follow-up survey in April 2012.

LARRC Update- During the first nine weeks of this school year, students in Mrs. King's afternoon class have participated in phase three of the research program. Her students have been piloting the Science Curriculum for this study. The Preschool unit focuses on Rocks and Minerals. Her students have learned how to use a KWL chart, classification, sorting, and journal writing. This has been a very rewarding experience for all involved. We look forward to Phase 4.

OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Dropout Recovery Schools Provide Important Environment for At-Risk High School Students - The Alternative Academy is classified as a Dropout Recovery Conversion Community School. That means that the Alternative Academy serves a majority of students between ages 16 and 22 that are at least one grade level behind their age group and/or have experienced crises that significantly interfere with their academic progress. Through our program we are providing intervention and support to these students to keep them in school and help them earn the credits they need to earn a high school diploma.

Stakeholder Meeting Provided Insight to Performance Standards To Be Set by the Ohio Department of Education - Ms. Price attended a meeting on Monday hosted by the leaders of the Office of Community Schools of ODE. Recent legislation in Ohio requires new performance standards be developed for dropout recovery community schools. This meeting, as well as

others, allowed schools from around the state to provide input as to appropriate performance standards for our types of schools. Due to the specific needs of our types of students, deficient in credits and above age compared to their grade level, most community school administrators feel that these schools should have performance standards reflective of the growth of these students without being compared to the population of all schools. The results of our input will be shared with ODE and the legislators of the State of Ohio as they make important decisions regarding performance standards over the next few months.

OFFICE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Math Teacher Leaders - Hamilton Local partners with the Teaching and Learning Collaborative (TLC) to support math and science teaching. This year, third grade teacher, Ami Gaus and 6th grade teacher, Julie Murray are participating in TLC's math teacher-leader professional development program. The workshops focus on instructional strategies that are engaging to students and help them apply math concepts. Ami and Julie will be sharing ideas from the workshops with their building-level math teams.

Ohio Resource Center for Mathematics, Science, and Reading - The Ohio Resource Center for Mathematics, Science, and Reading (ORC) is a great resource for teachers and is funded by the Ohio General Assembly and established by the Ohio Board of Regents. ORC provides links to peer-reviewed instructional resources that have been identified by a panel of Ohio educators as exemplifying best or promising practice. Available resources also include content and professional resources as well as assessment and general education resources that will support the work of PK–12 classroom teachers and higher education faculty members. The resources are correlated with Ohio's academic content standards and with applicable national content standards. ORC resources are located at: <http://www.ohiorc.org>.

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Another Hamilton Student to Attend College - Jessie Brammer has been accepted to Hocking College. He will graduate from the Eastland Career Center and Hamilton Township High School in May 2012 and start at Hocking College in the fall. Jessie has shown great leadership qualities at the career center in various organizations and clubs.

Y's Guys - Ruby Payne, author of "Frameworks of Poverty," says that many children who live in poverty cannot attend to our academic instruction because their families are in survival mode. These children don't have the capacity to think about the science lesson, because their home life is a mess,

and their basic needs are not being met.

The team of Mike Yonnotti and Jason Hackett, in our middle school, use their positions to look at the whole child in attempt to turn their lives around. Mr. Yonnotti and Mr. Hackett noticed one of their “guys” was wearing shoes about three sizes too big. Mr. Hackett wanted this student to be able to wrestle, but he knew the student could not afford wrestling shoes. Mr. Yonnotti went out and bought the student shoes that fit. He bought shoes for every day use and shoes for the student to wrestle in.

This is just one example of how the Hamilton Local School District and its unique team of educators really take a personal interest in each and every child. I wish every educator could have seen the look on this student’s face on Friday morning with his new shoes on his feet. This simple act, and getting this student involved in sports, could possibly change his life and reverse the cycle of poverty.

Surrogate Parent Training - Surrogate Parent training is now available online through www.EdResourcesOhio.org. Any person interested in being a surrogate for our students who are foster placed in our district can now do the training from the comfort of their home by simply logging in to [their website](#) and clicking “Surrogate Parent Training” at the top of the screen. A Surrogate Parent serves as a child’s parent in I.E.P. meetings and in evaluation team meetings.

DEPARTMENT OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology-Based Online Professional Development - District administrators were introduced to the new Atomic Learning professional development resource this week, which includes tutorials, workshops, projects, and more. Atomic Learning also offers teachers technology integration courses for graduate credit. Benefits of using the new opportunity were discussed and plans are being made as to how to best utilize the wealth of information with the staff. Upcoming teacher in-service time is set to introduce and train staff on how to use the online resource, which is accessible for use from both school and home.

DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS

Kristin Tomlinson Plays in All-District Volleyball Game - On Sunday, November 13, two varsity volleyball players received Central District honors. Senior setter Kristin Tomlinson was named 2nd Team All-Central District and junior middle hitter Caitlin Gault was named Honorable Mention All-Central District.

Kristin was one of the top twelve seniors in Division II's Central District and was able to play in the Central District Division I vs. Division II All-Star match. Kristin set for the Division II All-Stars and led them to a victory over Division I.

Ranger Track Uniforms - Hamilton Boosters and The Hamilton Local School District continue to provide our student athletes with the latest equipment in hopes to utilize the newest technology that will maximize safety and performance for all student-athletes.

Football Scoreboard Updated - Our athletic department completed another renovation to the Hamilton Township Alumni Stadium scoreboard by adding a base to the recently placed Rangers logo.

Scoring Tables Arrive - A partnership has been developed with Slam Dunk Inc., they have donated two new eight foot scoring tables for use during HTHS athletic events. The tables will add to the overall atmosphere of our excellent gymnasium facility.

UPCOMING EVENTS

[Get all of this week's events listed here.](#)