

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

Calamity days legislation - While the House was to vote on House Bill (HB) 416, legislation adding four calamity days and allowing up to 30 minutes to be added to the school day to make up lost time at local boards' discretion, the Senate introduced SB 273 this week.

During their Wednesday session, the House passed over legislation that would give school districts hit hard by a cold and snowy winter four more calamity days, with some members expressing concern that nine days is too much for schools to go without making it up.

House Education Committee Chairman told Hannah News that he expects HB416 will come back to the House floor next week "with some amendments." Stebelton said there is a concern in the Republican caucus that the state will be paying \$750 million for those extra calamity days in staff pay and other costs. He said he expects amendments will produce ways schools can make up those lost days.

After session, House Speaker William Batchelder also said there was a feeling among his caucus that they should not take away the decision making from school districts. He said some districts may want to try to make up calamity days by either adding time on to the school day or cutting back scheduled vacation days.

Both Batchelder and Stebelton expressed confidence that the issues would be resolved by next week.

Click [here](#) for a copy of SB 273 as introduced.

Click [here](#) for a copy of HB 416 as passed by the House Education Committee.

Contributions by Focus Education, of the Hannah News service.

Third Grade Reading and Cursive Writing on State Board of Education

Agenda - State Board of Education members have been getting regular updates on the Third Grade Reading Guarantee from Superintendent Richard Ross and other staff, but early this week they heard how educators are addressing it on the ground in local schools.

The board's monthly meeting, scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, Feb. 10 and 11, included presentations on reading guarantee implementation strategies from three districts: Cleveland Heights-University Heights Schools in Cuyahoga County, Lancaster City Schools in Fairfield County and Mechanicsburg Exempted Village Schools in Champaign County.

The guarantee, enacted in 2012 as part of Gov. John Kasich's mid-biennium review proposals and updated last year in SB21 (Lehner), will go into full effect this year, meaning third graders' reading scores on achievement assessments could determine whether they move to the 4th grade. Complicating matters is all the missed class time from the unusually high number of snow days schools have taken this year. The Ohio Department of Education is considering pushing back testing dates in reaction, but would still be under pressure to get third grade reading scores back in short order so decisions can be made about students below proficiency.

Discussion of cursive writing was also on the agenda for the Achievement Committee's meeting as well as the full board's agenda. The agenda items were a follow-up to board discussions in the summer about the importance of cursive in developing writing skills. Sasheen Phillips, senior executive director for ODE's Center for Curriculum and Assessments, talked about supports ODE has developed for writing instruction.

State Superintendent Ross extends testing window for the Ohio

Achievement Assessments - State Superintendent Richard Ross told the Board of Education Tuesday that, because of the weather, he will be extending the testing window for the Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAA) one week, taking the time for giving the tests to a total of four weeks. However, he said there is no change to the testing timetable for the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT). The Ohio Department of Education said that the modified testing window will be April 21 through May 16. The first three weeks will serve as the actual testing weeks, and the fourth week will be the make-up week for students who were absent for testing.

He also noted that the vendor will be prioritizing the scoring of the third grade tests, which include both reading and math, so that those students needing "interventions" to fulfill the Third Grade Reading Guarantee requirements can receive them over the summer. He further acknowledged deadlines the department faces in getting the summer reading assessments done before the start of school in the fall so the students "have the appropriate placement" in classes.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Administrative Meetings - Mr. Morrison met with the district's Assistant Principals, new HTHS Dean of Students Jon Sweet and Alternative Academy Director Allyson Price to review alternative academy issues, residency, attendance and disciplinary issues and withdrawal procedures on Thursday, January 16. These regular "AP" meetings also feature a book study, led by Dr. Witten. Our book study, "The Answer to How is Yes" by Peter Block, featured a presentations by Mr. Morrison. Mr. Morrison reviewed chapters relating to management from the perspective of the employee and ambition.

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

Health and Safety - Ohio Revised Code requires that schools provide vision screenings for students in Pre-K, K, 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th grades. The purpose of the screenings is to identify students who may have a vision problem that could impact their ability to learn. Students who fail vision screenings are referred to an optometrist for further evaluation. This week, Colleen Brumfield, elementary clinic aide, and Kathy Brickey, R.N., school nurse, performed vision screenings for third grade students. Notifications of failures will be sent out within the next couple of weeks. Mrs. Brickey will also be starting 7th and 9th grade screenings next week.

OFFICE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Change to Spring 2014 OAA Testing Week – The State Superintendent of Schools has extended the spring Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA) testing period. As a result, the district will move grades 3 – 8 OAA testing from the week of April 28 to the week of May 5 – 9.

Future Focused Friday – On February 21 the district will focus on post-secondary planning. Staff and students are encouraged to wear clothing that represents post-secondary programs, colleges, or a branch of the military. Staff members will discuss future options and share their educational, work, and service experiences.

Parent Tips for Substance Abuse Prevention – Know! provides parents with twice monthly, FREE Know! Parent Tips via email that contain current facts about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, as well as action steps parents can take to help their children resist peer pressure to use. Know! aims to increase parental:

Awareness that every child is at-risk for using substances;
Knowledge about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs;
Conversations with children about the importance of non-use.

Children whose parents talk early and often about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use are 50 percent less likely to use in the first place (The Partnership at Drugfree.org, 2005).

"93% of parents say that as a result of receiving Know! Parent Tips, they have learned something new about alcohol, tobacco or other drugs" (2012 Know! Parent Survey). [Sign up for their newsletters.](#)

HAMILTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

NHS Heads Up Blood Drive - On Thursday, National Honor Society hosted the second American Red Cross Blood Drive of the school year in the auditorium. Students and teachers donated blood throughout the day. National Honor Society students checked in donors at the registration table. Even though there was a late arrival, the Red Cross still successfully collected 29 units of blood. Each unit of blood can save up to three lives. The blood collected is donated to 41 hospitals across 27 counties around Columbus including Nationwide Children's Hospital, Grant Medical Center, OSU Medical Center, and community hospitals like Knox Community Hospital. Only 3% of the United States population has ever donated blood, so more donors are always needed. Our final blood drive of the year is Thursday, May 1st in the auditorium. Please visit redcrossblood.org for tips for a successful donation.

Professional Development Focus On Grading and Curriculum – During the Friday professional development day (NO Student Day) HTHS used all professional development time wisely by emphasizing the focus on grading consistencies and aligning curriculum. The teaching team was engaged and encouraged by the video training, surveys, assignments and discussions that took place. A follow up to this session will take place at the April professional development date. The daily professional development included grading consistencies, alignment with the Common Core, Difficult Student Seminar,

Teacher Website Detailing, Schoology, and scheduling preparations for 2014-2015. All professional development is designed to positively and directly influence student achievement.

HAMILTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Red Out - The Middle School Student Council partnered with the American Heart Association to help fight heart disease as one of their community service projects for the year. Student council sold "Red Out" T-shirts to both staff and students in efforts to raise money to fund lifesaving research and raise awareness of heart disease. Everyone who purchased a T-shirt was encouraged to wear it on Friday, February 7, 2014, National Wear Red Day. Those students who donated were rewarded with a game of dodge ball during intervention. We were able to raise a total of \$620 during this event! Student Council and the American Heart Association would like to thank everyone who participated and donated to such a great cause!

The Diary of Anne Frank - The 8th Grade Language Arts classes have just finished their unit on Anne Frank and the Holocaust. The students have enjoyed reading the play aloud as well as acting out portions of this classic story. Within the unit, students have focused primarily on the different types of characters as well as the themes within the story. Teachers have also included various activities to help the students grasp the most important concepts. These include Computer/Library research, Theme Lines running throughout the story (and classroom), as well as Comparing & Contrasting the book and movie. Classes have also enjoyed spirited discussions focusing on different subjects within the story: Anne Frank's importance in today's society, personal vs. societal responsibility, and right vs. wrong. Students look forward to learning more about this topic on Holocaust Remembrance Day in April as well as when John Koenigsburg, Holocaust Survivor, visits the middle school in May.

HAMILTON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Saying Goodbye To Mrs. Siegel - Friday, Feb. 14 was Mrs. Amy Siegel's last day as assistant principal for Hamilton Intermediate School. We are very sorry to lose such an amazing team player, academic coach, co-worker, and true friend. Mrs. Siegel really cared about our students, and when dealing with them, she would always try to understand the whole child. One of her other strengths is analyzing details: she can recall numbers like she has a photographic memory.

Mrs. Siegel was also responsible for student attendance, and under her supervision, building attendance was record setting. She has consistently demonstrated that "high expectations bring high performance." Mrs. Siegel, you will be missed!

HAMILTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Joyful Reading Project - The Joyful Reading Project finished its last session on Wednesday, February 12, 2014. Kindergarten families were eager to enjoy a great meal catered by Flyers Pizza and work with our teachers and staff on how to guide their children to be successful readers. As a thank you for such great participation, all families in attendance were entered into a drawing of over 30 prizes, including books, games, a bicycle, and two iPads.

The Joyful Reading Project was made possible by a grant through the Franklin County Educational Services Center. The goal of the grant was to work with parents and students to better understand how to work on reading skills at home, while providing families with the materials in which to do so. Over the series of parent nights at Hamilton Elementary, families left with more than 1,700 children's books, 3,400 paper Keep Books, magnetic letters and trays, whiteboards and markers, sight word flash cards, and the strategies to use them in their homes. We hope that these materials will help provide our students with a jump start to a life-long love of reading.

HES Attendance Stays Strong Through Bad Weather - Despite the record low temperatures and recent snow accumulation, students of HES are attending school at an all time high. Our most recent student attendance calculations show our student attendance percentage at 95.70%. Given the ailments of this winter, we are extremely proud of our students for this achievement, as well as our students' families for building good attendance habits early. We also want to acknowledge our entire staff for establishing high expectations when it comes to student attendance.

HAMILTON PRESCHOOL

Step Up To Quality Training - All Preschool Staff members attended a special Level 1 training session at Groveport Madison Administrative Office on Friday, February 14, 2014. Level 1 training provides an introductory overview of Ohio's Early and Development Standards and addresses the purpose and content of the standards. This training is a prerequisite for further training in regards to standards. With the new SUTQ rating system all staff members must have twenty hours of state approved professional development over a two-year period.

Valentine's Day - Students enjoyed trading Valentines with their classmates, received a special treat from the Preschool Boosters, and made a creative art project to help them celebrate this exciting day. Many students were able to write their classmates names on the card and then read them to give to them.

Valentine's Math - Mrs. Moore's students participated in a variety of fun activities all about Valentine's Day! One activity that incorporated the PK Standards in Math was Candy Heart Graphing. During this activity the students were actively engaged in sorting their candy hearts by color, then placing their hearts on the graph above the appropriate color word. Each of the students then colored their graph to match the candy they had. When the students finished their graph, they discussed which colors had more and which colors had less. The students were then able to take their graph home to share with their family they also got to enjoy the candy!

OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Combating the Winter Blues - The cold weather takes a toll on everyone this time of year. Here are some ideas for ways to keep your student motivated and focused on being successful in school. This information is from a brochure published by the National Education Association entitled: A Parent Guide to Helping Your Teen Get the Most Out of High School.

1) Help your child show up at school with a good attitude and ready to learn-keep tabs on attendance, make sure students get plenty of sleep, do not accept excuses for not working hard in class; 2) Help organize time and materials-provide suggestions for organization, break up larger assignments into smaller chunks, provide a quiet place for homework and study; 3) Take an interest - "given the complexities of today's high schools, this is a time when many students are most in need of parental support and involvement," listen to what your children talk to you about without immediately judging or offering advice, encourage involvement in clubs or sports, help your teen figure out possible solutions or coping strategies to problems or concerns, communicate regularly with at least one teacher for updates and advice about your child's success and well-being. "The ultimate goal is to help students become self-sufficient managers of their time and resources in order to get the most out of high school. They may need your help even if they don't realize it. Help them to develop habits and strategies for greater achievement while encouraging them to take increasing responsibility for their work."

DEPARTMENT OF TECHNOLOGY

In the Cloud – Students at Hamilton Local Schools are increasingly using the "cloud" as a place to work and save files. The web-based tools available not only let students work and learn from virtually anywhere, but they also foster greater collaboration, with the many unique sharing features that are available. Files can also be accessed from almost any mobile device or tablet. This allows for anytime, anywhere learning on the go.

The district's move to a more cloud-based approach helps create a more flexible environment, which gives students practice using free tools readily available in the technological world of today.

DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS

Varsity Girls' Basketball wins Regular Season Finale as Lauren Longbrake Sets Season Rebounding Record - The Varsity Girls' basketball team won their regular season finale versus Amanda-Clearcreek on Tuesday evening 66-41. During the game, Sophomore Lauren Longbrake recorded 19 rebounds to set the single season record with 235 total rebounds. This broke the previous decade-old record of 230 rebounds held by HTHS graduate and Athletic Hall of Famer Ashley Trimble. Congratulations to Lauren for this impressive record and to the Rangers.

The Rangers will begin Division I Central District Tournament play on Saturday at 1:00 p.m. at Whetstone High School.

Middle School Wrestling Places 13 Wrestlers at MSL Tournament - Our Hamilton Middle School team placed 13 wrestlers at the Mid-State League tournament. First place finishers included Jordan Bellomy and A.J. Evans. Runner-up finishers included Connor Garry, Rhiley Abbott, Romeo Gabriel and Austin Smith. Nick Stickney placed third. Congratulations to our middle school wrestlers on a strong end to the season.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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