



SPONSOR UPDATE FEBRUARY 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.



Screens Down, Minds Up: The Case for Phone-Free Classrooms

By Dane Puterbaugh, Accountability and School Improvement Representative

Right now, every school has the capacity to improve student learning, attention span, and sense of belonging. We need to eliminate cell phones from the classroom. Since magic bullets don't exist, this is the closest we can get to the same results. The data paints a clear picture - cell phones have no place in any serious academic settings. Cell phones are actively harming the learning capacity of our students and they need strong school policies to help deal with the digital distraction.

With the passage of Ohio House Bill 250 every school must have an approved cell phone policy in place by July 2025. This is the perfect time to examine what will help our students the most. The bill leaves room for district flexibility, but the most effective policy will be one that totally eliminates cell phones from the classroom with a school-level policy.

What's the Buzz?

- According to a UNESCO study, a single cell phone notification causes students to lose focus for an average of 20 minutes. One vibration can derail a student for half a class and there are almost no tasks that a cell phone accomplishes better than even the cheapest computers.
- The same UNESCO study also showed that cell phones had a stronger negative impact on the learning of students who are performing below their peers. That describes the majority of the students we serve.
- A study out of Rutgers University showed that having cell phones in classrooms lowers student

end-of-course grades by half a letter. And even more interesting, that study showed that even if a student did not have a device in class but their peers did, their grades were negatively affected.

A Shining Light (That Isn't a Screen)

- At the Buxton Boarding School in western Massachusetts, students replaced their smartphones with “dumb” phones. Teachers say students started socializing more, staying after class longer to talk with their teachers, and became more engaged in extracurricular activities.
- Schools in Florida that have eliminated cell phones from the classroom have reported fewer fights, incidents in the bathrooms, and improved grades.
- A study out of Hartford, Connecticut showed that “the implementation of Yondr pouches in December 2022 corresponded with a 50% drop in office referrals and a 30% to 40% decline in suspensions at the school.”

Cell phones are designed to capture our attention. Social media companies have a financial incentive to keep our students glued to their phones and they employ 1000s of engineers to keep them hooked. Putting the onus entirely on our students is an unfair burden. Students need our help disconnecting from unnecessary distractions when they are in the classroom. Their learning, social interactions, and emotional well-being depend on it.

Works Cited

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Project Nurture

Focus Schools recently hosted its annual Holiday Party for students who are also parents. The event, designed to bring joy and support during the holiday season, featured a delicious meal, thoughtful presents, fun crafts, and a special visit from Santa Claus. Students had the opportunity to bring their children along, making the celebration a meaningful family experience.

“We started the event several years ago because we saw the need for our students to provide for their children during the holidays,” said Tiffany DeLong, Support Services Director at Focus Schools. “This event is important for our students to feel supported by their school. Celebrating with them and their children lets them know that we care about them and their life outside of Focus.”

The Holiday Party reflects Focus Schools' commitment to creating a supportive environment that goes beyond academics. The event not only brought smiles to the faces of students and their children but

also underscored the importance of community and connection during the holiday season.



Horizon Science Academy Middle School Students
Take on Rain Barrel Art Project

Seventh-grade science students at Horizon Science Academy Middle School (HSAMS) are helping conservation through art! They recently participated in the Rain Barrel Art Project, an initiative sponsored by Save Local Waters and the Cincinnati Zoo to promote water conservation. Now in its 12th year, the project transforms ordinary rain barrels into functional art, raising awareness about their environmental benefits.

Working in small groups, students designed artwork for the barrels, with three designs selected for competition. Excitingly, one HSAMS student was chosen as a finalist, earning the school rain barrels for students to paint. These beautifully decorated barrels will be displayed at the Cincinnati Zoo in April before being auctioned off to support conservation education efforts.

This project ties into students' earlier studies on the water cycle and conservation strategies. Earlier this year, they designed 3D water conservation systems. Now, they are using art to inspire action. Rain barrels help reduce stormwater runoff, prevent flooding, and conserve water, making them a simple yet powerful tool for sustainability.



M3 Challenge: Using Math and Data to Solve Real-world Problems

Do you have students who would be interested in participating in a transformative math competition that could earn them money for college? If so, then the MathWorks Math Modeling Challenge (M3 Challenge) may be for them! M3 Challenge is a free online contest in which high school juniors and seniors use math and data to solve real-world problems.

Participants work in teams of 3-5 students to answer an open-ended question focused on a relevant and timely issue; teams choose their preferred 14-hour window to work over Challenge weekend, this year taking place Friday, February 28 through Monday, March 3. Teams work in person at the location(s) of their choice or virtually using online collaboration tools. Scholarship awards totaling \$100,000+ will be awarded in 2025!

Registration for M3 Challenge closes February 21, 2025.

[Learn More and Register](#)

Grow Your Own Scholarship

The Grow Your Own Teacher Scholarship Program is designed to help school districts across Ohio recruit their own students and staff to become teachers within the district. Recipients of the Grow Your Own Scholarship agree to teach for a minimum of four years at their home school district in exchange for a scholarship of up to \$7,500/year for four years.

Application periods will be set by the Ohio Department of Higher Education as funding is available. Leadership staff at qualifying schools are expected to pro-actively recruit their own students and employees to participate in this program. Each school district interested in participating in the Ohio GYO Teacher Scholarship Program must attest that it has difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified classroom teachers.

The nomination deadline is February 14th. To see the Department of Higher Education powerpoint, [click here](#).

[More Information](#)

2026 Ohio Teacher of the Year Nominations Open

The Ohio Teacher of the Year program identifies exceptional educators celebrating their effective, inspiring work inside and outside the classroom. The program's mission is to elevate their voice as leaders and advocates for the teaching profession and public education. Don't miss the opportunity to recognize outstanding teachers. Nominations for the 2026 Ohio Teacher of the Year open Feb. 1, 2025.

[Nominate a Teacher](#)

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 is highlighting one board member each month in our sponsor newsletter.

This month we are featuring Nichole Moore, who serves on the Engage High School board. Nichole is a newer addition to the board, having started in July 2024.

Outside of work, Nichole loves spending time with her family and their standard poodle, Mylo. She enjoys traveling, baking, and community service projects with her sorority.

What have you learned over the years about running/being a part of board meetings?

Some key lessons that I have learned about running and participating in effective board meetings are:

1. Preparation is crucial.
2. Encourage active participation from all members. Create an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are welcomed and all voices are heard.
3. Focus on strategic discussions rather than just updates.
4. Leverage individual expertise by delegating tasks and encouraging board members to contribute in their areas of strength.

How do you solicit and retain new board members?

The best way to attract and retain new members is to look for people in your community whose values align with mission/vision of the board and who have a passion for the work.

What part of the school's mission do you most connect with?

Engage High School's aim to cultivate leaders resonates with me, but more so, I believe the experiences at Engage deepen and develop students' social and emotional skills and will prepare them to be even better leaders in their communities!

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

February Compliance Update

-Labor Law Postings

Schools should ensure they have the latest versions of the Labor Law postings to remain compliant with state and federal regulations. The most recent update to the Ohio and federal labor law posters was made effective on January 1, 2025. Specifically, the Ohio Department of Commerce updated the minimum wage posting to reflect the new rates for 2025. There were several updated and new required postings in 2024.

If you need to update postings, you can download them from the respective agency websites or purchase an all-in-one poster that includes all required postings. Free downloads of individual postings available here: [Labor/Employment Law Posting Requirements for State Agencies | Department of Administrative Services](#)

These posters (postings) must be displayed in a prominent area within the workplace to ensure that all employees have access to this important information.

Please reach out to your BCHF Compliance Representative with any questions.

-When can a Community School Board (public body) go into Executive Session and what can be discussed?

It's important to note that Executive Session can only be used for discussions or deliberations. Board members cannot vote or make decisions, those types of actions must be done in the *Open* board meeting. It does not mean the board must come out and take action on what was discussed.

The Board must make a motion to go into executive session during the board meeting by having a unanimous roll call vote and the motion must be specific in stating the statutory reason(s) for entering into executive session. Board members cannot discuss any other topics or matters before the board other than the reason/topic stated in the motion.

There is a very defined list of topics for executive session as outlined in Ohio Revised Code 121.22(G) <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-121.22>.

Please make sure as a community school board operating as a public body that you review and adhere to these guidelines. Additional information can also be found on the Ohio Attorney General's website, [Sunshine Laws - Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost](#). If you are unsure, always consult your board legal counsel if you have any questions or legal guidance.

-Updated special education model policies and procedures available

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce updated the special education model policies and procedures to include changes to the Operating Standards for the Education of Children with Disabilities, which are now available on the Department's Operating Standards and Guidance webpage. All educational agencies must upload verification of local school board approval of policies and procedures for the 2024-2025 school year through the Monitoring System by **March 30, 2025**. Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, the annual due date is Nov. 30. For more information, click here: <https://education.ohio.gov/Media/Ed-Connection/Dec-10-2024/Updated-special-education-model-policies-and-proce>

School Highlights

Scholars and staff from [The Academy for Urban Scholars](#) took part in a meaningful and inspiring breakfast celebration honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The event was filled with reflections, powerful speeches, and heartfelt discussions on equality, justice, and community.



Students from **Horizon Science Academy of Lorain** spoke at the City of Lorain's annual Speak Up, Speak Out Forum. High-schoolers Re'Al K., Rueben M., and Kayla K. played an active role in this community event, collecting audience questions and even submitting some of their own! Rueben had two of his questions answered by the panel. This event served as a great opportunity for students to engage in real-life civic dialogue and learn more about their community.



Students at **Horizon Science Academy Primary** earned certificates at the school's semester awards assembly! Students who showed great behavior during the assembly received raffle tickets to win new books for their home libraries.



Students at **Imagine Schools of Akron** got to visit the Book Mobile and check out some amazing books! A fun way to keep the love of reading alive for everyone!



James Starks from 13 Action News visited the **L. Hollingworth School**. His visit made a lasting impact on students, discussing the ins and outs of news broadcasting. Students were inspired by his insights and left with a deeper appreciation for the world of journalism.



Noble Academy Cleveland on the news! Students Gewaunn, Katelyn, Richard, Addison, and Mikayla will be featured on Fox 8's Black History Month "History Heroes" segment. Congratulations on being featured and representing your school in an inspiring way.



Upcoming Events

What is a LOVEly professional accomplishment? Getting your required professional development for licensure renewal completed early in the calendar year will give you a great feeling. For the “Month of Hearts,” we have many opportunities available to you. It is a truly sweet experience for educators to get together and collaborate. Here are the upcoming professional development opportunities offered by Buckeye Community Hope Foundation. Register for sessions via the link in the title, or go to BCHF’s Professional Learning Opportunities Catalog, [available here](#).

In addition, this month, we will be asking you to complete our very vital *School Needs Assessment*. This opportunity for input truly guides our work in setting the theme for our June leadership summit, planning professional development for the coming school year, and assisting schools in a more targeted meaningful way. Watch for the survey to be released on February 14, and please complete it to share YOUR input!

[HOW TO TEACH KIDS TO THINK: PARTS 1 and 2](#) – February 5 and March 6, 2025 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Can the thinking skills of our students keep pace with artificial intelligence? Critical thinking skills are more important than ever as we look at mastering Ohio learning standards and preparing our students for the future! A technology-based, technology-dependent world requires its people to be able to analyze, evaluate and create information. How might 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.

[ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: 3 PART SERIES](#) – February 6, 2025 – 3:30 to 5:00 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Is Artificial Intelligence an asset or a threat? Join middle school teacher Dan Jones as he discusses how to make Artificial Intelligence a teaching and learning tool. The second seminar in the series is synchronous for February 6 but you can “join in” regardless of participating in the first. Share with us in a practical discussion of some specific strategies and examples to help you navigate AI!

[COHORT: SUPPORTING MULTI-LINGUAL LEARNERS](#) - February 6, 2025 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Join us to stay updated with the latest research and news in multilingual education, learn innovative strategies tailored to your classroom, and engage in meaningful networking with peers. In this supportive community committed to enhancing language development and academic achievement for all students, we meet to share ideas, strategies, and ready-to-use instructional resources. Each session is a blend of learning, sharing experiences, and building a collective knowledge base to effectively support emergent multilinguals in their educational journey. Session focus areas include Feb 6: Identifying & serving MLs with disabilities; tech tools that support academic language learning; April 10: Experienced MLs (aka Long-Term English Learners); monitoring exited students.

[COHORT: MATHEMATICS LEADERSHIP](#) – February 11, 2025 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. – Online via Zoom

EVERY SCHOOL in the BCHF portfolio is experiencing challenges with achievement in mathematics!

This series is designed for mathematics leaders at every level (e.g., principals, academic coaches, grade team leaders, and master teachers). The program aims to assess the impact of leaders on improving student learning by examining their current mathematics situation in terms of instruction, structure, and culture. Participants will become familiar with the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics (NCSM) framework for leadership in Mathematics Education. You will be guided through developing a mathematics program improvement plan (MPIP) through assigned learning activities and deliverables designed to support progress through various stages of the MPIP. Participants are expected to attend meetings fully prepared to contribute to group learning. The primary resource for this year will be NCSM Essential Actions: Instructional Leadership in Mathematics Education. Session topics are: 1. Preparing Your Program (instructional focus); 2. Planting Seeds of Security (structural focus); 3. Cultivating a Healthy Mathematics Garden (cultural focus); and 4. Celebrating Improvement (sustainability focus).

[COHORT: SOCIAL STUDIES](#) – February 13, 2025 – 3:00 to 4:00 P.M. – Online via Zoom – *Please share with your social studies teachers!*

Join our BRAND-NEW cohort for social studies educators, an opportunity to discuss and improve instructional practices, increase test scores, and empower students to be effective citizens! Through

this collaborative group, we will be discussing the future of social studies with the advent of AI; test preparation; and overall goal of students' transformation into contributing citizens!

BRIDGING THE LITERACY GAP--How Writing Connects to the Science of Reading - February 13, 2025 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. – Online via Zoom

But what about writing? Speaking and listening? In this session, we will explore how writing and all other literacy skills play a crucial role within the framework of the Science of Reading, enhancing literacy development for all learners. Participants will learn how writing not only reinforces phonemic awareness and decoding skills but also fosters vocabulary growth, comprehension, and critical thinking. Through practical strategies, we will discuss how writing activities-such as dictation, sentence construction, and written expression-support the brain's natural process of reading acquisition. Attendees will gain insights into how structured writing practices align with evidence-based reading instruction and promote deeper engagement with texts. This session is perfect for educators seeking to integrate writing seamlessly into their literacy instruction for a comprehensive, research-backed approach to developing proficient readers and writers.

QUICK WINS, BIG GAINS: TARGETED READING AND WRITING INTERVENTIONS THAT WORK - February 18, 2025 – 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Get ready to see big results with simple, high-impact interventions you can use immediately! In this session, you will learn targeted strategies that improve comprehension and writing skills that are essential across content areas. Discover actionable tools to address common literacy skill gaps, engage diverse learners, and make measurable gains--without overhauling your existing routines. Not just for ELA teachers, these strategies offer versatile ways for even the most resistant students to make meaningful connections through the written word.

BUILDING LESS ANXIOUS, MORE RESILIENT STUDENTS - February 20, 2025 – 3:00 to 4:00 P.M. – Online via Zoom

In an age where anxiety levels are rising, how can schools become places of calm and resilience? This session is for educators and school leaders committed to fostering mental wellness in students. Participants will explore how a supportive school culture, growth mindset, and "stress as enhancing" perspective can reduce anxiety. Learn evidence-based strategies for promoting resilience and decreasing student anxiety in the classroom. By the end of the session, you'll be equipped with tools to help students navigate stress more effectively and develop the confidence to thrive in and beyond school.

COHORT: SPECIAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP : EQUITY AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION – February 21, 2025 – 3:00 to 4:30 P.M. online via Zoom

Join the discussion of issues pertaining to special education coordinators and leaders! This session of the cohort provides a comprehensive exploration of key legal and policy issues, equipping leaders to navigate regulations, address ethical dilemmas, ensure compliance, and uphold professional standards. This cohort prepares special education leaders to create fair, inclusive, and legally sound educational environments by integrating equity and legal perspectives.

COHORT: LITERACY AND DYSLEXIA – February 25, 2025 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. – Online via Zoom

The Dyslexia and Literacy Cohort is designed for classroom teachers and anyone who provides instruction on Dyslexia or Literacy. This cohort is designed with those instructors in mind. The cohort will meet in February and May with a focus on Best Practices for Dyslexia and Literacy. February's session will focus on how to use systematic reading instruction that targets students with dyslexia and benefits the whole class.

COACHING TEACHERS THROUGH ASSESSMENT SEASON – February 27, 2025 – 9:30 to 11:00 A.M. – Online via Zoom

How much do your teachers understand the assessments their students take? This session will cover strategies and tips to share while coaching your new and inexperienced teachers in effectively using assessment data to improve instruction. We will share best practices that school leaders can use to coach your teachers while they prepare their students for assessments.

HITS! How to Coach Your Staff to Use HIGH IMPACT TEACHING STRATEGIES – March 4, 2025 – 9:30 to 11:00 A.M. – Online via Zoom

The BIG TEN! Join us to learn ten strategies that will help you coach your teachers to a better understanding of high-stake assessments and how to best prepare students for the assessments. Come away from this session with ideas you can use the next day!

Have a story or event at your school you would like to share? Send it to Hana Chandoul, Strategic Communications Specialist: hchandoul@buckeyehope.org.

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