



FEBRUARY 2026

SPONSOR UPDATE



MISSION

Through strategic authorizing and partnership, we develop educational communities of achievement through innovation, hope, and support.

VISION

We envision a rich ecosystem of community schools ensuring ALL students and families have access to a high-quality public education.

Do Hard Things

By Dane Puterbaugh, School Improvement Representative

If you have ever attended a professional development session with me in the last three years, there is a good chance you have heard me talk about the "stress-as-enhancing" mindset study published in *Nature* in 2022. I love this study. If my wife found out how often I think about this study, she would probably be jealous.

The study showed that explicitly teaching students a growth mindset, paired with a "stress-as-enhancing" mindset, helped build students who are more resilient in the face of stress. The researchers recognized the mental health crisis building in our adolescents and tried to find an intervention to mitigate it. As it turns out, if you teach students that doing hard things can make them better, their biological reactions to stress improves. You can measure the effects in their hearts, daily cortisol levels, psychological well-being, levels of anxiety, and you can see it in their academic success. The old adage "the best way out is always through" holds true for situations that cause stress and anxiety. Our interventions can help build students that are more willing to take on risks and stop running away from stress. The stress-as-enhancing mindset is the peanut butter to growth mindset's jelly. Both work on their own, but together form something greater than the sum of their parts.

What I didn't know before preparing this article is that there was a follow-up study. A year after publication, some of the same researchers wanted to find out if a one-time intervention was enough to address young peoples' mental health needs at scale, or if supportive environments are needed to prevent the fading effects of the intervention. As you might suspect, creating an environment that supports doing hard things, seeing "stress as enhancing", better supports students' risk taking and reaction to stress. An environment that supports and celebrates doing hard things produces students more willing to do hard things.

In the follow-up study, the professors who were tasked with creating a supportive environment only had to message their students four times throughout the semester. This is great news for everyone in the classroom! Think of how many opportunities you have to build a culture of "stress-as-enhancing", the positive effects it can have on your students, and how easy it is to make sure every student gets this message individually.

Maintaining high expectations for our students is important as we prepare them for an uncertain future. Life after school is stressful, but a student who has been taught in the safety of their classrooms, from a teacher that loves and supports them, that stress is not something to fear, but something that will make them better, will be ready for life after school. That student will be ready for anything.

Now it is up to all of us to create a culture where doing hard things is celebrated. We should all work to create school cultures where students feel supported to take on big, stressful tasks. Stress is something that enhances, not something to avoid. I challenge everyone reading this article to think of something that they have been avoiding because the idea stresses them out and go do it. No one has ever said being an educator is easy, and doing hard things makes us all better.

Works Cited:

Hecht, C. A., Gosling, S. D., Bryan, C. J., Jamieson, J. P., Murray, J. S., & Yeager, D. S. (2023). When do the effects of single-session interventions persist? Testing the mindset + supportive context hypothesis in a longitudinal randomized trial. *JCPP advances*, 3(4), e12191. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcv2.12191>

Yeager, D.S., Bryan, C.J., Gross, J.J. et al. A synergistic mindsets intervention protects adolescents from stress. *Nature* **607**, 512–520 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-022-04907-7>

Academy for Urban Scholars Celebrates Dr. King's Legacy

As part of the school's Kindness Campaign with ServeOhio, scholars from The Academy for Urban Scholars (AUS) honored the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the MLK Jr. Birthday Breakfast held at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. Grounded in Dr. King's reminder that "You can't reach good ends through evil means, because the means represent the seed and the end represents the tree," the experience emphasized the importance of leading with compassion, service, and integrity.

During the event, scholars shared kindness rocks with community members as simple but meaningful symbols of encouragement and connection. They also listened to powerful speakers who reflected on Dr. King's vision and reinforced the lasting impact of service, unity, and purposeful action.

The morning served as both a tribute to Dr. King's dream and a call to action for the next generation. Through acts of kindness and engagement with the broader community, AUS scholars continue to honor the dream while inspiring the future.



Mindy Farry Shares Her "Why"



As part of our ongoing strategic planning work with The National Charter Schools Institute, our Education Division has been taking time to reconnect with our “why”—the personal purpose that drives each of us in education. This reflection has reminded us that behind every role and every initiative are powerful stories rooted in service to students and schools. We’re excited to share those stories through our Sponsor Updates.

This month, we’re proud to feature Mindy Farry, School Improvement Representative. With decades of experience as a teacher, principal, and educational leader, Mindy brings a deep commitment to student success and a passion for supporting educators and school leaders. Her journey in education reflects the lasting impact of believing in students and the difference one educator can make.

What originally drew you to a career in education?

I am a first-generation college student and don't really remember being encouraged to go to college. I was a good high school student who everyone said should become a teacher. I ignored that advice and went through four majors in my first year of college (dance; theater; pre-law; communications, then finally education). I finished that bachelor's degree at The Ohio State University with a double major in English Education and Speech/Communications. At OSU, you get a taste of your first teaching experience during your freshman year, and that's when I knew my true love was in the classroom.

I started teaching high school English at Whitehall-Yearling High School in 1978, met my future husband on the picket line while we were on strike, and taught in that same building until I became the assistant principal and then principal in 1998. I taught everything imaginable in the English department from Bible as Literature to AP English for seniors. I directed the dance team there for 15 years and won 9 National Championships and 13 State Championships. Those women, now wives, mothers, and even grandmothers are amazing legacies of what we built at Whitehall; I love watching their stories on social media and the amazing women they've become. I left Whitehall in 2003 for an opportunity to be the principal at Olentangy High School, and then retired from there in 2008. I teach English composition part time for Columbus State and am an adjunct at Ashland University in the Education Leadership division. I am also a trainer for the State of Ohio in the Principal and Teacher evaluations systems.

What motivates you to come to work every day?

I retired as a principal in a large, traditional public high school, and I resisted leaving the classroom for many years. It was only when I felt as if I could help teachers be better teachers and school leaders be better school leaders, that I felt truly fulfilled. So my motivation at BCHF is to help those people in leadership positions (in their buildings or in their classrooms) create better experiences for students.

What do you enjoy most about your role at BCHF?

I enjoy the travel and meeting all sorts of new people who have the same mission in their careers--helping students, especially in underserved populations, have a quality educational experience.

How do you define your “why”? Is there a particular moment that reinforced it?

My “why” is children/students. After I began teaching in an urban high school and heard my students' stories, I knew that I would do whatever it took to help them become successful in their adult lives. A particular moment I just recently experienced was at a high school reunion to which I was invited. This was the Class of 1995 reunion, and I was invited as an honored teacher. One woman approached me and told me she was working on her PhD in political science and was currently working in Washington as a congressional liaison. She leaned in and whispered in my ear, “I went to college because you told me I should. No one else had ever said that to me.” The ironic thing isI couldn't even remember her name or having had her in class. It really struck home that every word we say....and every word we don't say could change their lives.

How do you reconnect with your “why” during tough times?

When I was a principal and sometimes mired in the negative aspects all day long, I'd sneak into the back of the music room and listen to the rehearsals--students and teachers doing something they loved. Then, I'd visit other classrooms and listen to the amazing teachers in my building and watch students engaged in lessons. It reminded me that the positive, wonderful things happening were much more apparent than the few negative people or events occurring. So, now, I do the same thing...I take a step back and look at my blessings, remind myself why I'm doing what I'm doing, and move forward.

How do you hope to continue growing in your role?

I have so much more to learn, I don't even know where to start. There is always something new to read, a new study to study, a new podcast to listen to--it's never ending.

What is a quote or mantra you live by?

“In a completely rational society, the best of us would be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less.” – Lee Iacocca

Who inspires you in your work?

I am constantly inspired by the school leaders with whom I interact. Their passion, their knowledge, and their real desire to help every child inspires me. Our School Improvement team inspires me--I always wish we had more time together to plan, discuss, and learn from each other.

Who are you outside of work?

I love to travel and am not happy unless I have something "touristy" to look forward to. My family calls me their personal travel agent because I also love to plan vacations for other people. Until recently, I was heavily involved in the dance team world, judging contests, running competitions, and summer camps. Since I started on that career in 1974, I choreographed 3 Hula Bowl; 1 Peach Bowl; and 9 Citrus Bowl halftime shows and had groups who appeared in the Cotton Bowl; Rose Bowl; and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Mindy's story is a powerful reminder that the influence of an educator often extends far beyond the classroom or school building. Her commitment to students, teachers, and school leaders continues to shape meaningful educational experiences and lasting outcomes. We're grateful for the passion and perspective she brings to our work and are proud to share her "why."

February Compliance Update

AI Model Policy for Ohio Districts and Schools

By July 1, 2026, all Ohio traditional public school districts, community schools, and STEM schools are required to adopt a formal policy on the use of artificial intelligence (AI). To support this statewide initiative, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, informed by the work of the Ohio AI in Education Coalition, has developed a [model policy](#) that schools may choose to adopt.

The Department, in collaboration with its partners, is also providing resources to assist schools with implementing these AI policies effectively. This collective effort underscores Ohio's commitment to equipping students with the skills and understanding necessary to thrive in a future shaped by AI.

Kindergarten/First Grade Admission

Effective March 20, 2026: Kindergarten/First Grade age requirements

House Bill 114 was passed to clarify that kindergarten admission is open to any student who is 5 years old (or 6 if they have not completed first grade) by the *first day of instruction* at the school. Age requirements for first grade were unchanged. The school's early admission is still an option for students who turn 5-years-old prior to January 1st pursuant to the early entry or acceleration policy.

Regulation against Imitation Meat and Egg Products

Effective March 20, 2026: Regulation against Imitation Meat and Egg Products

House Bill 10 was passed in an attempt by the state to protect students from the unknown long-term effects of "experimental foods." Other states have passed similar legislation regarding imitation meat and egg products sold at schools. By March 20, 2026, each board must adopt a policy that prevents the purchase of a food that is either misbranded as either a meat product or egg product or is a cultivated-protein food product.

CSP and CFIG Webinar Opportunities

Ohio received \$55.5 million through the 2025 Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant. This funding will support the growth of high-performing community schools across the state over the next five years. It will be used to replicate successful school models and expand existing schools that have demonstrated strong academic outcomes.

Additionally, Ohio was awarded the State Facilities Incentive Grant (CFIG), which provides \$49.2 million in matching funds to help high-quality community schools address facility costs.

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce will be hosting an informational webinar about the CSP grant on Feb. 5 at 1 p.m. and about the CFIG on Feb. 5 at 2 p.m. The webinars are for anyone interested in learning more about the funding opportunities and the application process. Interested attendees are encouraged to [register for the CSP webinar](#) and [the CFIG webinar](#). Webinar recordings will be posted to the Department's webpage.

Please contact community.schools@education.ohio.gov with any questions

Upcoming Dates, Trainings, and Deadlines

Please see below for important upcoming deadlines and training opportunities from DEW.

- **DOPR Report Card training sessions**
 - Thursday, March 5, 12:30pm-2:30pm
 - Wednesday, March 11, 9:30am-11:30am
- **2/28 – Financial Forecast-2 due**
- **7/1 – AI policy adoption** – Department's model policy can be found [here](#)

Renaissance Open Office Hours

- **February 18** – Reading/using STAR reports - [Register Here](#)
- **April 15** – Topic TBD - [Register Here](#)
- **May 13** – EOY wrap-up - [Register Here](#)

Math Newsletter

Math Minds Monthly

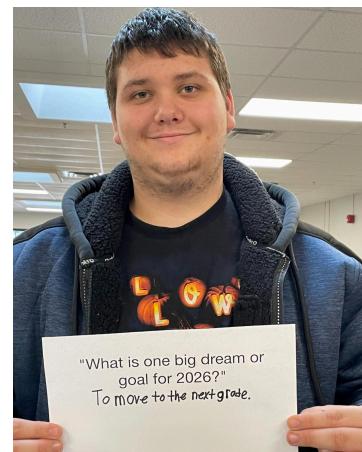
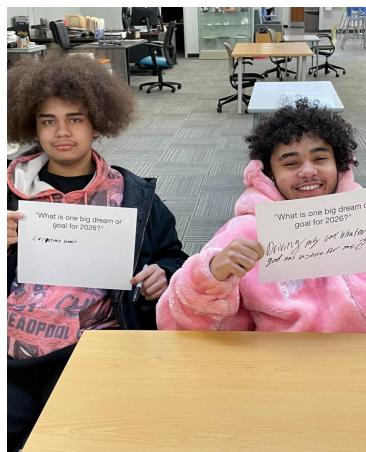
Check out the latest edition of the Math Minds Monthly newsletter, curated by Brit Seward, School Improvement Representative: Mathematics Support. This thoughtfully crafted newsletter offers insights, strategies, and perspectives for improving mathematics teaching and learning.

School Highlights

This January, students at **Buckeye Community School** have been focusing on goals for the New Year! Students were asked to think about the future and imagine what they want for themselves in the year ahead. Big dreams, long-term hopes, and things they're excited to work toward — no limits, just possibilities. Students shared: One big dream I have for my future is...

"I would like to get my driver's license." Jonny W.
"I can't wait to get my driver's license!" Miranda C.
"My goal for this year is to get a job!" Laura K.
"I want to get a car & my driver's license!" Shawn B.
"Driving my car or whatever God has in store for me." Jalen C.
"To advance onto the next grade!" Wyatt O.
"I would like to do better at Math this year!" Heather H.
"To catch a HUGE catfish!" Taylor B.
"Start prepping to get my own place when I turn 18 later this year!" Saphaie F.
"I am going to work on boosting my mental health this year." Jack G.
"I'd like to get through this school year successfully!" Novy M.

We're proud of the students for thinking ahead, believing in themselves, and taking steps toward the futures they imagine.



College Credit Plus (CCP) opportunities were in the spotlight at **Horizon Science Academy of Lorain** during a recent alumni presentation featuring Lorain County Community College's CCP program. Students demonstrated strong engagement by asking thoughtful questions and actively participating throughout the session. Middle school students, in particular, showed excitement about how CCP through LCCC can support their future goals!



As part of their focus on Respect and Responsibility, 50 students who consistently demonstrated strong character at [Imagine Schools of Akron](#) were rewarded with their very first character-based field trip to Castle Noel in Medina, Ohio. This experience reminded students that positive choices, leadership, and character truly open doors.



BCHF Annual Needs Assessment - Coming this Month!

Buckeye Community Hope Foundation will share out its annual needs assessment on **February 13, 2026!** The Needs Assessment is an important way for you, our key stakeholders, to help us provide "best fit" services to you and your school. Please complete the survey when you receive the link.

THANK YOU in advance for your time and your input!

Upcoming Events

It's the month of hearts and sweet treats. "Sweeten" your professional life by devoting some time to your own professional learning. February is a cold month in Ohio, but our topics are warm and inviting. Register for sessions via the link in the title, or go to BCHF's Professional Learning Opportunities Catalog, [available here](#).

FALLING FORWARD: TURNING FAILURE INTO MOMENTUM – February 5, 2026 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Mistakes aren't obstacles-when leveraged well, they are catalysts for deep learning. This session explores how educators can create conditions where students view errors as valuable data rather than failures. We'll discuss the psychology behind mistake-making, including growth mindset principles, brain science, and the role of productive struggle. Through interactive examples and discussion, participants will learn how to model reflective thinking, design tasks that encourage risk-taking, and implement feedback systems that guide students toward improvement. By the end of this session, you'll have a set of strategies to help students analyze their missteps, revise their thinking, and build resilience and confidence in their learning journey.

Cohort: Leadership #5 - Dealing with Difficult Parents – February 9, 2026 – 3:30 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. – Online via Zoom

How does a school leader deal with parents who cannot be reached or who are not responsive to the needs of their child's schooling? Come prepared to discuss your most difficult interactions with parents, what has worked for you, and what research and best practices might guide us. BCHF's Leadership Cohort is an accepting, conversational space where leaders discuss information, share ideas and best practices, and overall support each other in the pursuit of great leadership and great schools!

PURPOSEFUL QUESTIONING IN MATHEMATICS: Promoting Reasoning, Not Recall – February 10, 2026 – 3:30 to 5:00 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Every question in math class signals what we value-speed or thinking, recall or reasoning. This session helps educators craft and adjust questions that uncover student thinking and deepen mathematical understanding. Participants will use student work and video cases to examine patterns in their questioning, plan for purposeful prompts, and reflect on how questions can support access and rigor. Leaders will consider how to support this shift during observations and feedback.

TEACH LIKE A CHAMPION 1: A Guide to the Science of Reading – February 12, 2026 – 3:30 to 4:30 P.M. – Online via Zoom

This is the first collaborative session for the book study on Teach Like a Champion's Guide to the Science of Reading. Anyone can attend any session! Attendees who register and attend at least three sessions will receive a copy of the book. In this initial meeting, we will introduce the book's core arguments and dive straight into Principle 1: Attending to Attention. Research shows that sustained attention is a prerequisite for all learning. We will examine the cognitive science behind attention and memory, sharing practical, immediate strategies for improving student focus, managing digital distractions, and designing classroom environments that naturally enhance the mental stamina required for complex academic work.

DISCUSSION ROUTINES THAT SPARK DEEP THINKING – February 17, 2026 – 3:30 to 5:00 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Good discussions offer teachers a window into students' thinking, but great discussions empower students to drive their learning. Move beyond "turn and talk" to craft discourse routines that are purposeful, structured, and anchored in high expectations. Participants will experience student-generated questioning techniques that deepen comprehension and ignite curiosity, then learn discussion structures that help every student--even the shy ones! -- contribute meaningful ideas. These ready-to-use facilitation moves add cognitive depth to classroom talk in any content area.

AUTHENTIC CLASSROOMS: Engaging Students through Real Life Work – February 17, 2026 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. - Online Via Zoom

Why are so many students disengaged? Might we be able to teach them to INVEST in their own learning? If so, how? Students engage and even rise to the level of "investment" when they see life relevance in their learning. Learn from some examples of authentic, life-embedded classroom activities and share out some of your own! This session is all about "making it real" as we learn!

ALWAYS EXCEED! A Conversation for Drop Out Recovery Schools – February 18, 2026 – 2:30 to 4:00 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Will your drop out recovery program receive an "Exceeds" rating for 2025-26? We know schools are working hard to achieve those ends, but are we working smart? This session will explain the measures that constitute drop out recovery accountability in Ohio. We will highlight and explore possible pitfalls in tracking and reporting data. Moreover, we will explore school improvement and instructional strategies to ensure that your students and your school reach success!

HOPE HUB: Formative Checks That Make Thinking Visible – asynchronous “work on your own” course beginning February 23, 2026

High-quality formative data can do more than tell us who "got it" and who didn't! In this asynchronous session, educators will learn practical approaches to collecting and analyzing evidence of student reasoning to inform responsive instruction. Participants will explore approaches to classifying and grading student responses, practice interpreting misconceptions and partial understandings; and design quick but powerful checks that illuminate thinking, not just recall. By the end of the 6-week course window, participants will demonstrate their learning by submitting a short mini-project that they can put into practice immediately. Participants will receive access to materials on February 23 and submit their mini projects on or before April 6.

FLUENCY AND VOCABULARY: How These Literacy Components Build Better Readers and Writers – February 25, 2026 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Strong readers and writers don't just happen—they're built through purposeful practice. In this session, we'll explore how intentional instruction in fluency and vocabulary can transform your students into confident, capable readers who comprehend deeply and write with clarity.

COHORT: SOCIAL STUDIES: Deepening Learning with Authentic Assessments – February 26, 2026 – 3:30 to 4:30 P.M. – Online via Zoom

How can we design assessments that truly reflect the critical thinking and historical analysis we want students to master? This session shifts the focus from traditional testing to authentic and performance-based assessment methods. We will dive into tools and frameworks for designing powerful Project-Based Learning (PBL) experiences and empowering students to demonstrate their learning in creative, rigorous ways. We'll discuss how to leverage student work to provide meaningful feedback and drive deeper conceptual understanding. Bring your ideas, and let's make your next unit's assessment the most engaging one yet! Our networked improvement community will be ready to tackle any implementation questions.

WRITE WITH CONFIDENCE: MASTERING OST WRITING IN GRADES 3-5 – March 2, 2026 – 4:00 to 5:00 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Preparing young writers for the Ohio State Tests requires clarity, structure, and a solid understanding of what high-quality responses look like. This session provides a deep dive into the OST expectations for grades 3-5, including how the rubrics break down organization, development, conventions, and the use of textual evidence. Participants will examine sample student responses, identify common strengths and misconceptions, and explore kid-friendly language that helps younger learners internalize key writing skills. We'll look at effective mini-lessons, graphic organizers, modeling techniques, and strategies for helping students elaborate with clarity and purpose. Teachers will leave with ready-to-use resources, scaffolded writing supports, and confidence in how to guide students through both opinion and informational writing tasks.

DEBUNKING THE TEST: How to Have a Peaceful, Pleasant Testing Season! – March 3, 2026 – 4:00 to 5:30 P.M. – Online via Zoom

Spring testing season is upon us. Are we prepared? This workshop will examine the process of state and other high stakes testing in the context of teaching and learning. Revisit ideas about how to set up best attitudes and best conditions for testing situations. Discuss organizational strategies. And, most importantly, prepare to discuss testing with your students to encourage a calm, positive, "best effort" mindset.

Have a story or event at your school you would like to share? Send it to: hchandoul@buckeyehope.org.

BUCKEYE COMMUNITY HOPE FOUNDATION

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