

News From Reaching Heights

Boulevard



Marian Morton tutors Boulevard kindergarten student Cam'Ron Holloway.

Community Member Connects as Reading Tutor

By Florence D'Emilia

Sitting at a small round table, Marian Morton uses flashcards to drill a kindergarten student on vowel sounds. Trained in the letter sound recognition protocol, she says a-a-a for the "a" sound as she mimes eating an apple, and uh-uh-uh for the "u" sound while she gestures opening an umbrella.

Helping a five-year-old with pre-reading skills is a radical change for the retired John Carroll University history professor, and a valuable one. Data collected shows significant growth in the reading skills of students participating in the Many Villages tutoring program.

In addition to parents, the volunteers are recruited from religious congregations, colleges and universities, businesses and civic groups. Volunteers work individually with kindergartners to review letter shapes and sounds for 10 minutes, 4 times a week for 6-8 weeks. This letter sound recognition protocol was designed by Beth Rae, CH-UH Title I Teacher, and draws from the work of Jonathan Graham.

"Tutors don't always recognize the impact they have on students' lives," according to Belinda Farrow, kindergarten teacher at Boulevard Elementary. She notices tremendous academic growth and improved behavior. "Once students gain confidence in reading, that confidence seems to spill over into other subjects." ▲

Fairfax



School volunteer Sam Wolfe conducts a science experiment with Sophia Arts, Ashonti Austin, Nyah Hughes, Jalen Starr, and Sydney Watson (on the floor), third graders at Fairfax.

Volunteer Enriches Learning at Fairfax

By Florence D'Emilia

The gym at Fairfax Elementary School buzzed with excitement on picture day. Mrs. Schmidt's third graders lined up and took their places on the risers. Last to step into the picture was octogenarian Sam Wolfe, the oldest member of the class, a volunteer for six years.

After retiring from 30 years of teaching sciences at West Technical High School in Cleveland, he had time to use his ham radio, manage an electronics stockroom at Case Western Reserve University, and complete an eight-month walk across the United States to promote global disarmament. Fairfax physical education teacher Alice Stratton met Sam at the Ohio City Bicycle Coop and recruited him as a volunteer.

Three years ago he began sharing his Community Garden plot with the class. It is one of many spectacular gardens located on school property and is visible from Lee Road. On a recent fall morning, Mr. Wolfe took a few minutes to show the class a plant from his garden. As students watched intently, he crushed some berries and made a purple ink from the juice.

Mrs. Stratton and Mrs. Schmidt developed hands-on science lessons around the garden. In the classroom, students tested seeds for germination and planted the ones with the highest germination rate in the garden. When they harvested the early maturing radishes and lettuces, Mr. Wolfe and the students celebrated with a harvest party. ▲

Roxboro

Arts at Roxboro Enhance Curriculum

By Florence D'Emilia

For nearly 30 years, RoxArts, formerly Roxboro Enrichment Arts Program, has been bringing more of the arts to Roxboro Elementary and Middle schools. The parent-run, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization raises money to promote artistic experiences such as artist-in-residence programs, field trips, assemblies and arts projects.

This year every grade level will enjoy two artist-in-residence programs funded by RoxArts. The programs range from a musical theater project for kindergartners to workshops that combine hip-hop with creative writing for fourth and fifth graders. These programs often conclude with a performance showcase so that students may share their experience with other grade levels or with parents.

Additional projects are being underwritten by a grant from United States Department of Education's



A visiting artist will work with Roxboro Elementary students to create a mosaic pathway for the classical Chinese Garden.

Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP). These programs will support the school's Mandarin Chinese program. Some students will make Chinese calligraphy by fusing glass particles in small table-top kilns, while others will create a Chinese lion. A touring theater group will work with the entire student body to produce "The Nightingale," a classic Chinese fairy tale that includes song and dance. This Spring, an artist will work with students to create a mosaic path through the school's Chinese Garden. ▲

REACHING HEIGHTS

Our Passion: Excellent Public Education

Reaching Heights Neighborhood Newsletters take you into classrooms to give you a glimpse of the important work of teaching and learning happening every day in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Schools. In words and pictures, Florence D'Emilia and Krista Hawthorne describe the rich learning environments, progressive teaching techniques, and community connections that work together to educate all of our children.

If you have questions, suggestions, or corrections, please contact Reaching Heights at rh@reachingheights.org or 216-932-5110



Miles Walker
Boulevard '02
Roxboro Middle '05
Heights High '09

Currently a sophomore at The Ohio State University in Columbus.

What's your major or degree? My major is electrical engineering.

What would be your dream job after graduation?

My dream job would be working for Google or Nintendo.

Do you have a favorite memory from Boulevard Elementary School?

My favorite memory is of the Boulevard Blast - more specifically the "Magnet Mile." Now that I think back I'm pretty sure a lap around the school is not a mile but it seemed like that and I would go out on a full sprint only to get burned out near the finish line and come in third or fourth place.

What did you learn at Heights High that prepared you for college?

I learned quite a few things from Heights High. I learned how to handle large workloads and how to effectively complete my work on time. Also I learned that Heights is a fairly diverse school and it prepared me to interact with different types of people.

What did you enjoy most at Heights?

The teacher I enjoyed the most would have to be Ms Bradshaw. After completing her chemistry class in the tenth grade I thought I would never need to use that information again but upon entering my freshman year her voice was in the back of my head telling me how to use "sig figs" and unit conversions.

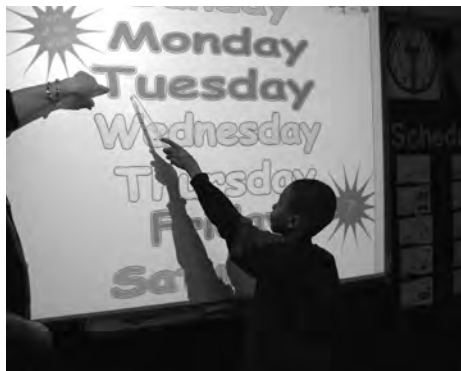
What advice would you give current Heights High students?

Don't be afraid to challenge yourself or try something new in the classroom. A strong work ethic will stick with you. 📖

Smartboard Technology Engages Students in Learning

By Florence D'Emilia

Technology is everywhere. There are still blackboards in the classroom, but now an Interactive White Board (IWB) has been placed on top of them. The IWB can be used to display a computer screen and is touch sensitive. "SmartBoards" (a brand name) are in every Boulevard classroom this year and



they are being used in a variety of ways.

A group of six students in Judy Diehl's multi-handicapped classroom used the white board during circle time to reinforce reading skills, and to learn to tell time. As one classmate stood at the white board, dragged a letter from a mystery box, and matched it with its uppercase counterpart, the other students cheered, pointed, and called out the answers. "It's easy to set up and use and it keeps things colorful, interactive, and fast paced," added Ms. Diehl.

Art teacher Kelly Wachhaus taught students how to make contour drawings, an exercise that requires students to draw the outline of an object. Students took turns using a stylus to trace an object displayed on the SmartBoard. Then she used the board to display a video of an

artist making a contour drawing. Finally, students took paper and pencil in hand and made contour drawings of pumpkins and gourds. "The Smartboard gives us quick access to a work of art, a short video demonstrating a technique, or an artist's biography," Wachhaus explained. 📖

Parents and District Make STEM the Focus for Boulevard

By Florence D'Emilia

A group of committed and passionate Boulevard parents, teachers, administrators and a professional facilitator met monthly over the course of a year to develop a vision for Boulevard. A consensus emerged to become a STEM school — emphasizing instruction in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

The STEM emphasis is a natural fit for this school since it has a volunteer-run afterschool Math Club, a weather station on its roof, and a popular hands-on science program run by COSI, the Center for Science and Industry.

The transition will be a multi-year process, but teachers are looking at ways to integrate the five areas of core science knowledge across the curriculum: 1) Where we are in the universe, 2) how we came to be, 3) the organizing principles of contemporary science, 4) human health and well-being, and 5) what science and

technology can do today.

When students of Margie Dunlevy, a Boulevard teacher and STEM team member, made mobiles after reading a story about the artist Alexander Calder, they approached the assignment as young engineers. They followed a multi-step process and their work was evaluated on whether their mobiles were balanced while in motion.

"STEM involves integrated learning: the activities enhance the curriculum," said Dunlevy. In the spring, she expects the entire fifth grade class to build solar cars. The project requires students to follow a five-part engineering design process.

The district's Science Content Specialist Lori Turner is involved with grant writing and visiting other STEM schools in Ohio. "The successes at Boulevard will be rolled out to everybody." 📖

Writing and the Literacy Framework

By Florence D'Emilia

Fairfax Elementary first-grade teacher Stacey Cohen sat in a rocking chair, her students in a circle on the rug, each holding a sheet with a half-page drawing and words of a story, which they shared. Topics included a Halloween experience, a visit with a grandmother, a family vacation to Arizona.

Cohen responded warmly to every story and then subtly challenged each writer. She asked questions to clarify the sequence of events, highlight good word choice, and focus ideas. Attentive student listeners asked writers for more details and shared common experiences.

This sharing took only ten minutes, but was the culmination of a lesson that Mrs. Cohen structured using the district's new Literacy Framework that asks all elementary teachers to spend 45 to 60 minutes a day focused on writing. "The framework maximizes the extended

time allotted within our school day and gives clearer definition and purpose to every minute," explained Kelly Stukus, the district's Literacy Coordinator. "Each component of the framework enables teachers to meet student needs through the use of a balanced approach and differentiated instruction."

One lesson at Fairfax began with a class review of vocabulary words. Then Mrs. Cohen modeled the assignment. Using the blackboard, she drew a picture "to help get some ideas and plan my story." As she composed the simple story, she asked students to remind her of good writing strategies: look at a word list to check spelling, reread a story from the start to make sure it makes sense, and write a strong concluding sentence.

At their seats, students propped up their "mini offices," tall folders that block distractions and are lined with a



Fairfax first grade teacher Stacy Cohen works on a writing assignment with her student Camay McCollum in her "mini-office."

checklist to remind students to use proper punctuation, capitalization and spacing, and lists of words commonly used at the beginning, middle and end of stories.

Mrs. Cohen spoke quietly with individual students, helping one plan his story, listening to another, and asking questions that elicited new details. Time passed quickly; stories emerged. **A**

fairfax elementary school

New Science Initiative Underway in Elementary Schools

By Florence D'Emilia

"Science is not memorizing facts in isolation," declares Lorri Turner, the district's new Program Specialist for Science K-12. "Science is how scientists work." This year, the science program is engaging students as young scientists.

Kindergarten through fifth grade students are observing the world around them, asking questions, and recording notes in science journals. They are collaborating in teams and engaging in discussions that push them to become more critical in their thinking.

When a fifth grade class arrived at Fairfax's Science Resource Room, they were asked to discuss a satellite photo displayed on the SmartBoard that showed Western Europe and part of the Atlantic. England and Ireland were clearly visible, but much of Europe could only be identified by bright lights shining through darkness. And so began a lesson about what causes light and darkness, day and night.

Providing no easy explanations, Science Resource Specialist Kim Bischof prodded students to articulate what they knew about the earth and the sun. Her questions evoked from the students

increasingly precise explanations and scientific terminology. She placed a bright light bulb on a table and asked students to stand in a circle around it. She told the students to rotate like the earth and stop at day. Some made the mistake of walking in a circle around the bare bulb, and provided Ms. Bischof with an opportunity to lead them in a discussion about the difference between the earth revolving around the sun, and the earth rotating on its axis.

Over a two-week cycle, a Science Resource Specialist presents a week's worth

of introductory lessons to all students. Classroom teachers follow up with five lessons that delve more deeply into the content. Bischof, along with other specialists Jackie Taylor, Sean Sullivan, and Huikai Karol, "have worked endless hours to produce wonderful lessons that engage budding scientists in explorations that help them understand the natural world," said Ms. Turner. All elementary schools follow the same high-quality lesson plans developed by this dedicated team. **A**



Xavier O'Neal, Jordan Major and Jenna Dent, fifth graders at Fairfax, demonstrate how the earth rotates on its axis as it orbits the sun.

Math Framework Allows for Differentiation

By Florence D'Emilia

Understanding fractions is useful in keeping track of Malik Daniels's first grade math class at Roxboro Elementary School, with students divided into many small groups and lessons divided into many activities.

The district's elementary math framework devotes 90 minutes to math each day, divided into segments, including whole-class and small group instruction, plus time for partner and individual activities. Thoughtful lesson planning allows teachers to differentiate activities to meet a range of student proficiency levels.

On a recent afternoon, Mr. Daniels's first graders sit on the carpet for the day's whole group lesson on numbers, which calls for lots of thinking, chanting and gestures. One student uses the Smart Board to add a sunny day to the weather graph. After counting the yellow suns, everyone spreads-out to do five jumping jacks. The students count by twos, snapping fingers and clapping when they called out 10 and 20.

Students complete a worksheet on counting pennies as Mr. Daniels moves into small-group instruction. Something similar is happening in Melissa Garcar's fifth grade classroom.

Whole-class instruction is over and

students break into small groups, based on the previous week's short cycle assessment, which allowed Mrs. Garcar to identify strengths and weaknesses that are common among the children. Every fifteen minutes students move to a different station and quickly settle into a new activity. Some students play math games with a partner. Mrs. Garcar works with groups of four students on rounding fractions to the nearest one-half. Others practice math facts using a small electronic Flashmaster that times them and gives immediate feedback on accuracy. A special education aide helps four students with exercises in their math workbooks.

Activities reinforce and extend what has been taught in previous lessons so that each student's specific needs are met. 📖



First grade teacher Malik Daniels reinforces math concepts using gestures and chanting with students Camryn Koonce, Tyonna Lindsey, Ramiah Mitchell and Jaila Woods.

Literacy Framework Engages Students at All Levels

By Florence D'Emilia

Our teachers work with children who struggle to become proficient readers and children who excel years beyond grade level. The district's new literacy framework creates a structure to meet those varied needs.

Elementary students spend two hours and 15 minutes on literacy daily, including about an hour on writing. This provides a balanced daily diet of skills — vocabulary, comprehension, reading and writing.

"Literacy components are interconnected, but they don't all develop at the same rate," explained Kelly Stukus, the district's Literacy Coordinator. "Requiring practice of each skill daily encourages growth in all areas."

In Sue Miracle's fourth grade classroom at Roxboro, the English Language Arts lesson starts with a whole group lesson, so all students have a meaningful grade level experience. Then, some children work with partners reading novels and answering analytical questions while others read or

work independently. A volunteer tutor records fluency, timing students reading aloud. Small groups are challenged with prepared activities at learning centers or the Smart Board. As groups work with Ms. Miracle, she keeps track of time and announces when to move to another learning center. Students focus on assigned activities, using every minute.

Meanwhile, amid a quiet hum of activity in Mary Windham's second grade classroom, she works with a small group of struggling readers. They read silently and jot down words they don't know. Then, to build fluency, they imitate Ms. Windham as she reads the story aloud. Finally, students work on main idea packets on their own and then review them together.

Students are curious and enthusiastic. One student flips through a book and comments, "I can't wait for this story, it looks really good." As the lesson ends, another student asks, "Can we come back after lunch?" 📖



Susan Wherley
Coventry '99
Roxboro Middle '02
Heights High '06

Recently graduated
from Harvard University
in Cambridge,
Massachusetts

What's your degree?

I graduated with a degree in African Studies and Health Policy

What would be your dream job after graduation?

I interned with the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. It would be a dream to work there with the Biorisk Reduction for Dangerous Pathogens team on diseases like hemorrhagic fevers and poxes.

What are you plans for the next couple of years?

I'm planning on getting degrees in medicine and public health after working in health policy for a year or two.

Do you have a favorite memory from elementary school?

My kindergarten class at Coventry school sat on the hill singing "I'll Be Working on the Playground" while our parents built that beautiful playground. The friends I made in elementary school are still some of my best friends today.

What did you learn at Heights High that prepared you for college?

My teachers at Heights High were wonderful mentors to me. They made classes fun, interesting and challenging. The close relationships I developed with them gave me the confidence to approach my college professors to ask for help with a difficult concept or advice for the future.

What did you enjoy most at Heights?

So much! I loved my AP classes, the instrumental music program, field hockey, Model UN, AFS Club and two trips to France with the French Club.

What advice would you give current Heights High students?

It's easy to just coexist at high school. Make an effort to get to know the people around you and you'll learn something new every day. Most importantly, take advantage of all the opportunities that being a student at Heights offers you. 📖

More Time Together = More Learning

By Krista Hawthorne

“Last year I was teaching a 60-minute curriculum in 42 minutes,” says John Powaski, seventh grade math teacher at Roxboro Middle School. “There was no time for review or practice.” Not any more. Every middle school student in our district now receives 84-minute blocks of language arts and math each day. “More time together means more learning,” Mr. Powaski says.

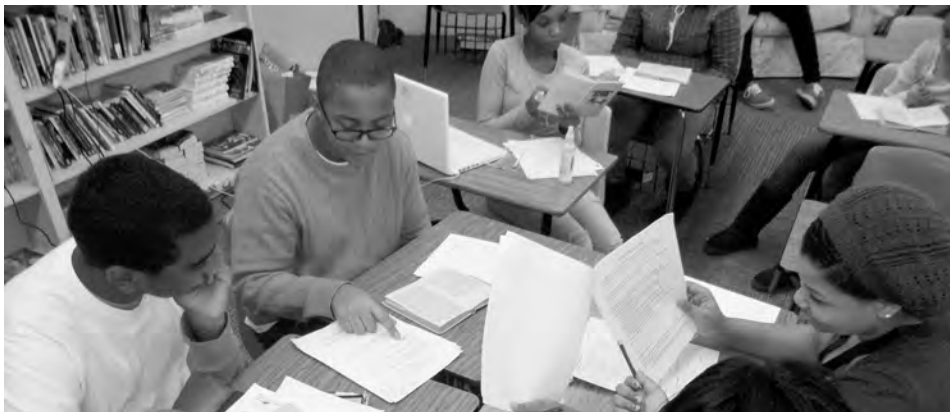
Each class includes a mini-review to assess students’ readiness to learn the next math concept. Then he adjusts his lesson plan to make sure he is teaching what they are ready to learn. After he has fully explained the day’s new concepts, he has students complete a few practice problems together.

Powaski strongly supports block scheduling. “It gives time for students to move through the inevitable ‘uncomfortable zone’ of learning a new

math idea to get to a couple of ‘a-ha’ moments each day.”

In Lia Radke’s eighth grade English/ Language Arts class, block scheduling allows time for meaningful group work. Class begins with a mini-lesson about a specific literary concept. Then the class reads a piece of writing aloud that gives a good example of that concept.

As in a writer’s workshop, students break into groups to review their own writing with the new concept in mind and to edit classmates’ writing. Students work on specific skills in collaboration stations. Ms. Radke, who floats from group to group or meets with individual students, appreciates the 84-minute block. “Students learn so much more by hearing from me and then working together and teaching each other. And I feel like I have time to meet with students one-on-one when they need that kind of support.”



Eighth graders Romeo Moore, Matthew Wilcoxin, Ebony Battle and Aaliyah Davis form a Writers Workshop in their English Language Arts class to improve their writing skills.

More Options in Foreign Language Classes

By Krista Hawthorne

Hola! Bonjour! The Cleveland Heights-University Heights school district has changed the structure of foreign language instruction at all three middle schools with the addition of four new courses: Introduction to Spanish I & II, and Introduction to French I & II.

All sixth graders take Foreign Cultures, which introduces both French and Spanish language and culture. In seventh grade, students can choose either Intro to Spanish or Intro to French. In eighth grade, students can

choose to take the complete French I or Spanish I for high school credit, or take the second level of Intro to French or Intro to Spanish.

Learning a new language is interesting and fun for some students but it can be very difficult for others. “The new introductory classes warm students up to the challenge of speaking a new language; they include more about life and culture and are not grammar-based like the high school classes,” explained Spanish teacher Abiola Adeyemon.

Teachers Learn from Each Other

By Krista Hawthorne

Professional development for teachers happens every day at Roxboro Middle School, where teachers work in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and meet at least 5 times each week.

“We have always worked together before and after school or during lunch or a free period” explained Zakiyyah Bergen, 8th Grade Science and Social Studies teacher. “Now it’s more structured.” Teachers have a PLC period each day to meet with teachers who teach the same content area. Twice a week after school, Unified Arts teachers meet and Core Courses teachers meet in separate PLCs in grade level groups.

They discuss teaching strategies, grading policies, or incorporating the latest school reform ideas into their classrooms. This year, the Roxboro teaching staff is applying the work of Anne Davies, Ph.D, from her book *Assessment for Learning*.

At recent eighth grade PLC meetings, several teachers presented assessment tools they have used effectively. “I’m a science teacher, and she’s a social studies teacher but we give each other ideas that we can tweak to fit our classes,” explained Martin Javorek. “We are always trying to improve our teaching and make our classes more interesting for our students - and for us!”



Eighth grades teachers at Roxboro Middle School Lia Radke-Litten, Rob Maier, Zakiyyah Bergen, Marcie Beggs, Martin Javorek, Denise Lewis and Mitch Smith (not pictured) meet twice a week as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) and 5 times a week with eighth grade teachers in the same content areas.

AVID Students Determined to Succeed

By Krista Hawthorne

"AVID is a college prep class," explains Heights High freshman Shailynn Strowder. "It helps me stay on track." Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), an elective class for credit, gives support to students with mid-range GPAs (2.0 – 3.5) to improve their academic record and prepare for college. Students sign a contract accepting responsibility for their learning by taking rigorous college prep courses, using a daily planner and maintaining a well-organized AVID binder.

AVID teachers Shawn Washington and Mark Sack work together to support their students. "Some students face daily challenges that distract them from their school work," explained Ms. Washington. "One student is frequently absent due to a chronic illness. Others just need extra support to work to their potential."

Classrooms are stocked with textbooks from most classes. On the blackboard are reminders of upcoming tests or project deadlines. Walls feature samples of student work and diagrams of interests, life goals, and plans for achieving them. "They have a lot to read each night, papers to write, and projects to do. If they get behind it's easy to get discouraged. We help them figure out how to make it all work," added Mr. Sack.

On Mondays and Wednesdays, AVID classes follow a curriculum of



Tuesdays and Thursdays AVID students work with college tutors.

learning and study strategies, advanced reading and writing skills, higher level inquiry and thinking processes, collaboration, and time management skills.

Tuesdays and Thursdays, AVID students work in small groups with tutors who are college graduates. On Fridays, students do service projects, listen to speakers, or tour college campuses.

College is continuously discussed. A student recently explained that her parents thought a college degree in fashion would not lead to a good job. Her tutor, who minored in fashion merchandising, discussed the realities of building a career in the fashion industry. "Don't think you'll graduate, jump into a job with a major designer and go to New York and

Paris," she cautioned. "It takes a lot of time drawing, sewing, and doing basic work before you get a good job."

One hundred students are enrolled in AVID at the high school and grades 7 and 8 at Roxboro Middle. In its fourth year at Heights High, AVID will have its first eleven graduates in June 2011, and all are headed to college. AVID will expand next year to include more students from the high school and students at all three middle schools.

Mary Catherine Swanson, a high school English Teacher in California began developing the strategies of AVID in 1980. AVID is currently in more than 3600 schools in the US and 15 other countries.

Get Involved – It's Not Too Late

By Krista Hawthorne

Sure, school spirit seems corny, but it's more important than you might guess. Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health of more than 55,000 students in grades 8-12 suggests that students with a high level of connection to school have less depression, fewer school problems, and higher grades.

It's never too late to join a sport, music program or club at Heights High. Senior Ben Bailey joined the wrestling

team as a junior. "A couple of my friends were wrestling and they introduced me to the coach," he said. Ben, who was in AVID from ninth to eleventh grade is also in Boy Scouts and will play lacrosse in the spring. Trent Bailey also plays lacrosse and was accepted into A Cappella Choir this year. Trent, a junior, had never been in any of the Heights High music groups before this experience. "I auditioned and made it. VMD [Vocal Music Department] is fun but it's a commitment."



Trent Bailey, Heights High junior joined A Cappella Choir this year. Ben Bailey, Heights High senior, joined the wrestling team as a junior.