

Twelve Heights High seniors were recognized as Merit and Achievement Scholars based on their PSAT scores.

Heights Scholars Excel

The National Merit Semifinalists are Andrew Brandt, Sarah Dion, Andrew Donley, Alexander Kraus, and Jane Lindsay. The National Merit Commended students are Maria Evangelista, Owen Lowrie, Chelsea Steffen, Hannah Tatar, Victoria Williams. The National Achievement Semifinalist is Victoria Williams, and Daley Baker and Adam Katt are Outstanding Achievement Participants.

Making the Leap to High School: Teachers Help Freshmen Succeed

The transition from middle school to high school can be challenging. Teachers in the PRIDE and Legacy schools are making that transition more comfortable and successful.

PRIDE School:

One element of the plan, Freshmen with PRIDE, has the 85 PRIDE freshmen spending half of their lunchtime in a classroom with a PRIDE teacher and other PRIDE students working on habits of success. Students identify their academic goals and the actions they will take to achieve them.

Freshmen with PRIDE teachers — Jenel Chang (social studies), Melissa Egbert (math), Judy Goral (English), and Lorna Coffey (science) — work with teachers in the targeted classes to help the students craft an action plan to meet their goals.

Other elements of Freshmen with PRIDE include:

- Online grade books students and families use to check student progress;

- A common organization system for all students;
- Daily informal meetings and more formal meeting two or three times a week to plan for student success;
- Proximity; teachers' classrooms are adjacent to each other; and
- A Family Room stocked with school supplies for after school homework help

Legacy School:

Legacy Teacher Leader Karen Kastor and science teacher Stephanie Loncar coordinate the Legacy Freshman Seminar that is held in the 25 minutes before students' lunch period. "Often the fear of the unknown and lack of knowledge about high school creates frustration, resentment, and apathy in students," Mrs. Kastor said. The seminar content is designed to help students gain skills that will defuse hostility, frustration, and negativity.

One of the first activities was designed to familiarize students with the school's basic layout and services. They

went on a scavenger hunt to find the main office, where they bought workbooks, to the nurse's office, and to meet the small school secretaries and guidance counselors.

On Wednesdays, students form study groups for specific subject areas. Some days are spent in team activities.

Other elements of the Legacy Freshman Seminar include:

- Development of organizational and study skills using the Cornell Notes system;
- Lessons on conflict resolution – dealing with disrespect;
- Instruction on how to be an effective member of a team; and
- Help in making a four-year high school plan. 🌟



Roxboro REGISTER

A Publication of Reaching Heights

Learning to Read

By Karen Reinhardt, Roxboro parent

Roxboro's second grade teachers assessed the reading skills of their students in the fall and discovered that a small group of students needed additional phonics instruction. Per the CH-UH protocol, teachers asked themselves "what are we going to do about it?" The answer came in the form of a unique reading/phonics intervention that involves teachers, Village Volunteers (see related article) and Literacy Coach Beth Rae.

A 12-week program uses the "pound and sweep" method of phonics training and is a concrete way for children to hear that sounds combine to make words. With this type of instruction, children discover that instead of guessing when they see a word, there is a strategy for determining letter sounds and blends.

This program is unique in many ways. First, all the volunteers and staff were trained the same way....everyone is on the same page. Also, the children involved in the intervention are working one-on-one or one-on-two with tutors.

The 15-minute tutoring sessions include three 5-minute segments. In the first five minutes, the students are shown flash cards depicting consonants, vowels and blends. The child sees the flash card and says the sound. If the child does not recognize the vowel sound, the tutor makes the hand motion depicting the sound - this helps the child remember the sound.

In the second five minutes, the tutor says the sound and the student draws the letter or blend on a white board. In the final five minutes, the students learn how to combine letter sounds to create words. The tutor "pounds" out the sound associated with each letter and then sweeps up the letters to create/say a word. The student and tutor do this together and then the student practices on their own.

The sessions continue until all the sounds and blends are introduced. The training takes 12 weeks. Halfway into the project, results were encouraging. Sound recognition scores have jumped from an average of 71% to 93% and word decoding has risen from 62% to 78%.

According to Beth Rae, "The best thing you can do for children is give them strategies for solving problems." 🌟



Roxboro Principal Kelli Cogan

Focused On Instruction

by Joy Henderson, Reaching Heights

Being an instructional leader is the most important aspect of the principal's job, according to Roxboro Elementary Principal Kelli Cogan. "My main focus is supporting teachers in their professional conversations about teaching and learning," she said. "A big part my responsibility is creating a structure for teachers to have these conversations."

In teacher lingo, these conversations take place in Professional Learning Communities - groups of teachers addressing four basic questions – the pillars of PLCs:

- What should we teach?
- Did the students learn what we taught?
- What do we do if the students did not learn it?
- What do we do if they did learn it?

To help PLCs thrive, Cogan arranged the school day so that teachers in each grade level have at least one 45-minute period together during the week. On Tuesdays, students are released early to give teachers time devoted to cross grade collaboration.



Mural designed and made by Roxboro students.

{Instruction continued on page 2}

Roxboro Register is published by Reaching Heights, a citizen organization that mobilizes community resources to support the Cleveland Heights-University Heights public schools.

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We welcome your ideas and help. Contact us at 216-932-5110 or joy@reachingheights.org. Learn all about Reaching Heights and see how you'd like to become involved, by visiting us online at www.reachingheights.org.

Roxboro School is located at 2405 Roxboro Road. To contact the school, call 371-7115.

[Instruction continued from page 1]
When second-grade teachers identified specific needs, Mrs. Cogan worked with the second grade team, literacy coach and others to design a focused reading intervention. So far, results have been excellent.

In response to teacher request for more information on identifying gifted students, Cogan invited district Gifted Coordinator Rebecca Quinn to give a presentation about the attributes of a gifted student. "This was a huge help for us," she said. "Some gifted students do not get A's on tests and do not score high on traditional testing."

Cogan is proud of her staff's ability to identify or diagnose learning challenges and then cooperate to address the problems. "Working in PLCs is a learning process for all of us, but we are making real progress – this staff is amazing." 🌟

Transition at Roxboro Elementary

By Jennifer Sachwitz, Roxboro parent

Imagine an elementary school where half the children are new and all children are adjusting to new students and new staff. That is exactly what happened at Roxboro this year when Coventry Elementary closed and about half the students transferred to Roxboro.

Kelli Cogan, Principal of Roxboro Elementary, had a vision of how to make the transition for all of her students and families as smooth and positive as possible. She wanted to create a place where all students feel comfortable and understand the expectations.

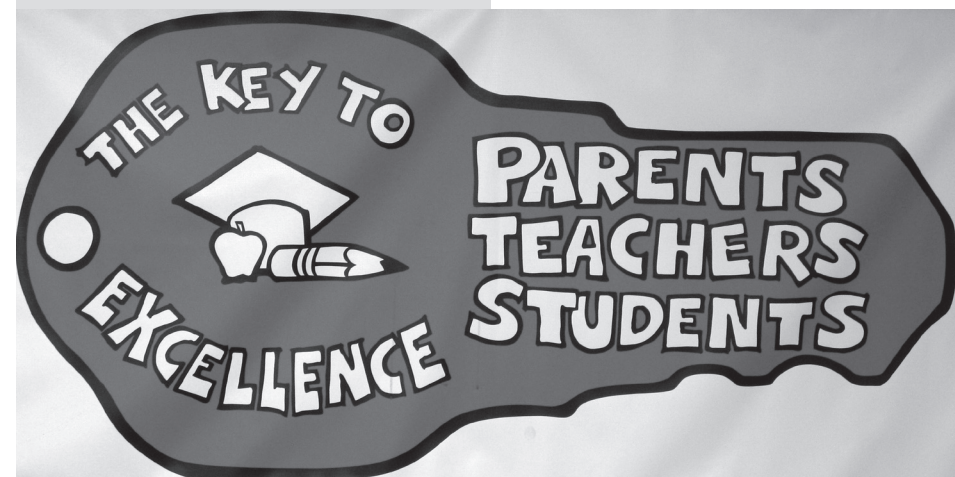
Each day now begins with "Prime Time" from 9:00-9:30 a.m. where students work uninterrupted in their classrooms. Voice Meter signs hanging throughout the building indicate at what level students should be speaking. For example, children in the hallways or lunchroom speak at a level 1 – a whisper or lower. Lines along the hallway floor indicate where children should walk when traveling through the hallway. These two structures tell children the expectations for behavior in easy to follow child-friendly vocabulary.

Kelli Cogan, Principal of Roxboro Elementary, had a vision of how to make the transition for all of her students and families as smooth and positive as possible.

The whole Roxboro team – principal, teachers, staff, bus drivers, lunch aides – worked throughout the summer of 2007 to create the plan for communicating the structures to students and families.

Mrs. Cogan and her team realized that even with a clear set of expectations, some students might struggle with change. To help students adapt, they created a place for students to "touch base" with adults. Students in these small groups set goals, discuss issues and receive additional academic and social support.

Are these structures helping students transition to a different school? Mrs. Cogan sees that students are feeling success behaviorally and teachers are spending more time teaching and less time on behavior issues. 🌟



ROXBORO Middle School

Team Conferences include Students

by Kirsten Radivoyevitch, Roxboro parent

As a mother of four and a preschool teacher, I have attended many parent-teacher conferences. This fall my oldest entered sixth grade and I attended my first conference with the Extreme Team at Roxboro Middle School.

When my children were in grade school, I left them at home, and discussed each child's strengths and weaknesses with their teacher for about 15 minutes. Then at home I'd relay to each child what the teacher said. I didn't need to do that with my sixth grade son this year, because he went with me and took part in the conference.

All four team teachers — math, science, English and social studies — spoke directly to him, offering comments and critiques about his work and about responsibility, work load and projects. They also offered my 12-year-old their advice, motivational tips and friendly smiles.

Mostly, I observed, occasionally contributing to the conversation, but mostly listening and learning about my

child and his Roxboro experience. These teachers know my son — his writing, ideas, sense of humor, how he handles responsibility — and they know what 6th graders need.

This method of conducting conferences as a teaching

"This way of communicating with parents and students is the most effective format I've seen in my eleven years of teaching."

–Darnell Robinson

and learning team more effectively reaches students and improves achievement, says Roxboro Middle School Assistant Principal Allison Byrd. "Conferences that include students use the beauty of teaming at the middle school level and give the students an important role in their own learning."

This type of conference will become more common in the next few years. The new format is encouraged, but not required by school administration.

"This way of communicating with parents and students is the most effective format I've seen in my eleven years of

teaching," says Extreme Team math teacher Darnell Robinson.

Having walked away from the experience with a happy child who felt confident about his learning and supported by a team who know and understand him, I agree. 🌟

Time for Academic Support

After School Study Sessions

The school day at Roxboro includes eight periods plus a ninth period extra help session. This year, ninth period attendance is required for all students participating in clubs or athletics. Students use the time to complete homework, get clarification from teachers on assignments and ask questions about ideas presented in class. After ninth period, students attend their team or club activity.

"Now that ninth period is mandatory for many students, attendance at the extra help sessions has increased and more students are staying on top of their school responsibilities," says Roxboro Middle School Principal Brian Sharosky. 🌟

Joining the Roxboro Family

Two Families Reflect

Roxboro Elementary welcomed many new families in August of 2008, most of who came to Roxboro from Coventry as part of the CH-UH elementary reorganization. Two families reflect on their expectations and experience.

Thriving Academically and Adjusting

By Vivian Lucky

Our experience at Roxboro got off to slow start – my daughter was at Coventry for two years and changing schools was a big transition for us.

But after a semester at Roxboro, my daughter has singled out Mrs. Windham as her favorite teacher and she knows and really likes Principal Cogan.

I volunteer in Mrs. Windham's classroom several days a week as a Village Volunteer. There are usually five students in my group and we call ourselves The Lucky Charms. I see why my child and the other students are thriving and learning. The teacher creates a warm and welcoming classroom and gives students work at their exact level – everyone is challenged and everyone feels great when they accomplish the task.

My child's current challenge is calculating 100 math problems in five minutes, she is almost there and I know she will be so proud when she hits that mark. She is enrolled in the gifted program and it has been wonderful for her.

As a parent I love being in the classroom, I am fortunate to have a job with flexible hours that allows me to help out and learn about my child and the other students.

Transitions take awhile. My daughter is feeling more at home at Roxboro – we both feel welcome at comfortable in Mrs. Windham's classroom. But most of the parents I know are from Coventry – it may take a while to get to know the other parents.

Next year we will learn about third grade at Roxboro.



Cherish the Past, Embrace the New

By Jodi Parras

Change. Some run from it and some embrace it. I fall somewhere in the middle. This year has been full of changes for our family. A new baby and a new school.

And although everything feels different, the many transitions we are experiencing have all been smooth and pleasant.

When you get down to it, change is best weathered when you surround yourself with loving, supportive friends and family a community. We were blessed to be part of the wonderful community of Coventry Peacemakers and are now happy to be part of the Roxboro community.

From day one our family has been welcomed into the Roxboro community by the school's caring staff and friendly families. We have enjoyed the Roxboro traditions such as Rock 'N Roll for REAP, Multicultural Night, and the Roxboro Cabaret to name a few. Our girls, Isabel and Kyra like their new school and are having tons of fun. They're making new friends, love the art room and have great teachers. The hallways may look different but the sense of community is strong. Roxboro feels familiar and new all at the same time.

At Coventry, students recited the school motto, "Peace, love, respect for all." While that will be forever etched in our hearts, we know that change is constant and a strong community is one of the best blessings you can have. You CAN cherish the past while embracing the new. As the song goes, "Make new friends but keep the old. One is silver and the other gold." We are happily doing both. 🌟



"From day one our family has been welcomed into the Roxboro community..."

– Jodi Parras, Roxboro parent

Strong Relationships Create Strong Students

By Karen Reinhardt, Roxboro parent

Harvard researcher Ronald Ferguson has studied many students in many schools and has concluded that strong relationships between teachers and students—those in which students feel that the teachers genuinely understand and care about them—encourage academic excellence. The teachers at Roxboro Elementary are acting on Ferguson's research and making relationship building a top priority.

The CH-UH school district focuses on the three R's: Relationships, Rigor and Relevance. Kelli Cogan, Principal at Roxboro Elementary explains that building relationships with students must take precedence.

"You can't get to rigor or the relevance without first building the relationships," she says. Children come to school with concerns other than academic issues. "Part of teaching is reaching out to students," she continued.

How are Roxboro teachers reaching out and getting to know their students? New this year is Prime Time - the first 30-45 minutes of every day. During this time students stay with their classroom teachers for activities that include:

- class meetings
- reviewing material
- completing a challenging assignment
- working out an incident that took place outside of school
- solving earlier disputes in non-punitive ways

When students and teachers work through social issues at the beginning of the day, teachers get to know their students better and students can focus on academics for the rest of the day.

Professional development for teachers includes information about relationship building. During the November professional day, a children's behavior consultant discussed very specific ways for teachers to talk to children who have behavior challenges.

Other staff members – the building support staff - are also receiving instruction in the area of relationship building.

Is all this focus on relationship building working? At her state of the school presentation, Principal Cogan reported that the number of students that teachers refer to the principal for behavior problems are down significantly from last year – from 71 to 20 for the same time period. No kindergarten or first grade students have been referred to the principal during that time period.

Measuring success is very important at Roxboro and having more students engaged in Rigor and Relevance during the school day and less time spent away from class is a VERY measurable success. 🌟

It Takes a Village

By Tonya Passarelli, Village Volunteers Coordinator

The Roxboro Village tutoring program was started five years ago by the PTA as a collaborative effort among teachers, parents and the community. The goal is to improve the academic achievement of Roxboro students.

About fifty committed volunteer tutors work one on one or in small groups, primarily in math and reading, with all grade levels. Each teacher receives two half days of tutoring a week.

The program to date has been incredibly successful and has become an essential part of the efforts at Roxboro. One example of a typical teacher response to having teacher tutor support reads: "I love the program and can't imagine how the classroom would be without it."

The Village Coordinators and a Reaching Heights staff person recruit, orient and schedule tutors. More recently, the Village leaders have developed materials to improve tutor effectiveness – standards - based learning packets, created & designed to be easily administered by the trained volunteer.

This year a second grade pilot program focuses on one very important skill - phonics. Halfway into the pilot period, results are encouraging. Sound recognition scores have jumped from an average of 71% to 93% and word decoding has risen from 62% to 78%.

Equally important, tutors see students progress because they work with the same students each week. Kim Conklin, a volunteer in the pilot program, has tutored for eight years and is sold on the focused tutoring approach. "The skill-specific interventions are good for the student, the teacher and the tutor." The progress she sees in students is satisfying. "Students confront obstacles and build on their success - I feel privileged to witness these quiet, life-changing moments."

If you are interested in becoming a Village tutor, contact Tonya Passarelli(tonyapass@sbcglobal.net) or Denise Rynes (suzie13@roadrunner.com).village 🌟