



**From Executive Director
Patrick Mullen**

Citizen engagement is at the heart of what we do at Reaching Heights, so it's right that we should work with The Heights Observer, home of citizen journalism in our community, to provide this four-page snapshot of teaching and learning in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights public schools. We're an independent citizen organization that has worked for two decades to mobilize our community in support of excellence in public education in Cleveland Heights, University Heights, and a slice of South Euclid. It's not work that lends itself to a "Mission Accomplished" moment, but it is important, and, for the most part, fun.

Six principles guide our work:

- Our children deserve an excellent education; our community is responsible for making it available;
- We all benefit from valued, successful schools;
- An informed public is one key to our schools' success;
- Vital schools need the support, interest, and involvement of the families and community they serve;
- An organization like ours — independent, community-based — can build confidence in our schools and help citizens contribute to their success; and
- Teachers are at the core of our children's education. Supporting teachers fosters educational success.

To put those principles into action, we support academic success with our School Team Grants and Many Villages academic tutoring program. We support musical excellence by providing private music lesson scholarships and offering a one-week Heights Summer Music Camp each June. Next April 11, we'll hold the third Reaching Musical Heights concert at Severance Hall, showcasing our students' rich talents.

And we communicate, widely and often, to tell stories of teaching and learning in our schools. This insert is part of that effort, as are the Neighborhood Newsletters from which these stories are drawn, our

monthly email newsletters, and our website, reachingheights.org.

Teaching and learning are intertwined but distinct. Great teachers identify each child's strengths and struggles, their style of learning, and perhaps most critically, figure out how to get each child to want to do his or her best. Done well, teaching seems magical. Our shared future depends on its success, because at our best, we're citizens, not consumers or spectators; all three are learned behaviors.

How do teachers teach? You'll see a few answers in these pages. We describe students' classroom experiences and the different ways they learn. And we share the stories of seven recent Heights High graduates, all at college now, who talk about what they learned in our schools.

My thanks go to the team that wrote and edited these stories: Joy Henderson, Krista Hawthorne, Florence D'Emilia and Tricia Springstubb. Let me know what you'd like to see in future newsletters and what you think of this one. You can reach me at 216-932-5110 or patrick@reachingheights.org.

Six Senior Scholars Recognized



Congratulations to six Cleveland Heights High School seniors (Louis Pollis, Alexandria Miller, Nataja Roberts, Jaiye Sampson, Erin Morris and Matt Zucker, L-R) recognized for their academic excellence by the National Merit and National Achievement Scholarship programs. Matt Zucker is a National Merit semifinalist, while Alexandria Miller and Louis Pollis are National Merit commended students. Natajah Roberts is a National Achievement Scholarship semifinalist, and Erin Morris and Jaiye Sampson are the National Achievement Outstanding Participants.

These awards, based on students' PSAT scores, make them eligible for significant college scholarships. The National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) is a privately funded not-for-profit organization that conducts the National Merit and National Achievement Scholarship programs—annual competitions that recognize and provide college scholarships to academically talented U.S. high school students. Since its founding in 1955, NMSC has recognized 3 million students and provided over 335,000 scholarships worth more than \$1.3 billion.

College Tour Piques Interest

By Joy Henderson

With Spring in the air, thoughts turned to future Falls for 79 Height High sophomores and juniors as they toured four Ohio homes of higher learning: The University of Toledo, Bowling Green State University, The Ohio State University, and the College of Wooster. Students from all five Small Schools (Legacy, Mosaic, PRIDE, REAL, and Renaissance) participated in the trip in early March, with four major goals in mind.

The trip provided students with information that will complement what they receive from the guidance department; motivated them to maintain good grades to keep their college options open; reminded them that college is a real possibility; and broadened their experience and horizons. Admissions officers at each school talked about requirements. The high schoolers also talked to current students, visited classrooms, dining halls, dorms, fitness centers, and the OSU Horseshoe.

Three students — Chase Bell, Joe Day and Sydney Gatta — appreciated the opportunity and said that talking to current college students was very helpful. Chase Bell liked hearing the college staff clearly describe college schedules and expectations. He was impressed with the number of classes offered at OSU, and he liked seeing the



Heights High students Sydney Gatta, Joe Day, and Chase Bell (L-R) and 76 classmates toured four Ohio college campuses, and liked what they saw.

athletic facilities. He plans to play football in college and study sports medicine. Joe Day liked Toledo and was impressed with the scholarships offered there. He especially remembers one student who told him that focusing on high school now will help him later. He plans to study sociology. Sydney Gatta enjoyed visiting Bowling Green. She appreciated hearing more details about

what is required for admission and was surprised to learn that many college students do not finish their degrees. She plans to study nursing or sports medicine. There was no charge to the 79 members of the Heights High Classes of 2011 and 2012, as they continued to explore where they might be members of the Classes of 2015, 2016, and beyond.

SPOTLIGHT ON HEIGHTS HIGH GRADUATES



Jimmie Hicks
Boulevard '00
Heights High '07
Jimmie is currently a
junior at Bowling Green
State University.

What's your major?
Public relations.

How about your dream job after graduation?

To represent the Walt Disney Company, doing media and community relations.

Do you have a favorite memory or two from Boulevard Elementary?

My third grade teacher, Mrs. Axner, reminded me of Mrs. Frizzle from the Magic School Bus books. She turned science and history into adventures. In fifth grade, I went to France for two weeks in Boulevard's exchange program. That was amazing.

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

I loved being in the small schools. Mine was R.E.A.L.

and I got great real life experiences, including interning at Channel 3 News, and working in the school district's PR department. A video I made about Heights High still gets shown on cable. Those experiences shaped my career goals. I had tough courses one of my college science classes duplicated what I'd learned in my senior biology class.

What did you enjoy most at Heights?

We had teachers and administrators who listened to us. We held a peaceful demonstration to support our favorite counselor, Ms. Blockson, who was being let go due to the budget. Not only did the school board retain her, but they reformed some things in the guidance department. It was great to know our voices were heard! I was senior class president, and got to make a speech at graduation, and played football and lacrosse.

What advice would you give current Heights High students?

Make friends! I have a network of people I'm in touch with we give each other tips on jobs. It's good to be goal-oriented, but don't let that stand in the way of getting to know lots of different people. High school is a sweet time. Enjoy it!



Kim Hackman
Canterbury '01
Heights High '08
Kim is a sophomore at
Ohio University.

What's your major?

Photo journalism with a minor in French.

How about your dream job after graduation?

It feels like a dream, since journalism is undergoing such transition, but ideally I'll make documentary photographs. I'd enjoy teaching French or translating. I want to travel! In fact, when this is published, I'll be studying in Avignon, France.

Do you have a favorite memory or two from Canterbury Elementary?

My three sisters and I went to Canterbury. It was like being at home—our teachers called us by each other's names. In kindergarten, we read the story of the Gingerbread Man, hunted throughout the school trying to catch him, and baked some good gingerbread.

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

There's no place like Heights! I went to preschool at Millikin and was in the system for my whole education. My parents said I could go to private school instead of Heights High, but I chose Heights. The diversity in my classes was wonderful. At college, I made friends and worked with all kinds of kids. That could be difficult for others, so I was thankful.

What did you enjoy most at Heights?

My sophomore year I took my first photography class, and traveled to France with my class. Here I am, sophomore year in college doing the same things — history repeats itself! My high school photography teacher was very inspiring. The foreign exchange students had a big influence on me. I plan to meet with some of them while I'm in France.

What advice would you give current Heights High students?

Get involved! Join clubs, volunteer. It's worth working hard in the classroom. A strong work ethic will stick with you.

Bringing What Works to Scale

By Florence D'Emilia

When Boulevard Elementary principal Lawrence Swoope talks about teaching, he cites best practices inside and outside Boulevard and says, "We are working on taking proven methodologies and moving them to scale."

One success at Boulevard is seen in the results of the third grade team's math strategy. Last year the team piloted a system of assessing students and using the information to address students needs the same day.

After the third grade teachers taught their morning math lesson, they gave a formative assessment – a short quiz that tells the teacher if the student learned what the teacher taught. Later that morning, the three teachers reviewed the assessment information and decided which students should be grouped together for the afternoon lesson and what they should be taught.

Each third grade teachers leads a group of students who need to work on similar skills. The groups change because students learn different skills at different rates.



Third graders at Boulevard get help from teacher Tamika Bradley as they use inference to answer questions about a story.

This year, the third grade team of Tameka Bradley, Rekyta Carr and Toni Dilillo are using a similar model for reading instruction.

Each teacher gives formative assessments on Fridays. Intervention groups are formed and re-formed, and lessons are adapted that meet students' strengths and weaknesses. "Our goal is to take a successful instruction model and bring it to scale, in the grade level and the building," said Mr. Swoope. ■

A Strategy For Success

By Florence D'Emilia

How do teachers ensure that at least 75% of third grade students pass the Ohio Achievement Test in the spring?

Roxboro Elementary School Principal Tara Grove and third grade teachers answer that question by focusing on teaching, learning and extras. Their strategy includes collecting data during the teaching and learning cycle, careful planning of instruction, and an emphasis on richness that ensures every child experiences significant growth — even those who can pass the exam when they enter third grade. Their strategy worked last year and is being used again this year.

Early in the school year, students take a benchmark exam that reveals what skills they need to master. At weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, principal and teachers review the skills students need, set goals and plan teaching strategies. Based on constant review of her students' reading skills, third grade teacher Christina Lambert creates four reading groups — two reading below grade level, one on grade level and one above grade level.

On a January afternoon, Christina Lambert sits with a small group of students at a semi-circular table. These students need to work on letter recognition. Lambert begins by showing flash cards with vowels and letter blends. The children respond by saying a sound and making a gesture. They respond to the letter "a" by saying the short



Third grader Zenzele Pelligree says the short "a" sound and pantomimes eating an apple.

"a" sound and pantomiming picking up an apple and eating it. When they say the short "u" sound they put the knuckles of both hands together, move one hand up against the other and say "up umbrella." Incorporating movement into the lesson is a learning technique that is grounded in cognitive neuroscience research.

Later in the lesson, Lambert asks students to write a word on their dry erase board and use it in a super sentence. With help from Lambert, the students create complex sentences. Again, science tells us that difficulty hearing sounds, spelling words, or reading isn't connected with the ability to think or to understand complex ideas. The students are developing higher level critical thinking skills that ensure success at school and in life. ■

It's a Tie! Attorneys, Musicians Share Top Bee Honors



Reaching Heights has supported teachers by funding innovation, collaboration, and student achievement through the School Team Grant program since 1992. The 19th edition of the Reaching Heights Adult Community Spelling Bee, the main fund-raising event for the program, took place April 21 at Cleveland Heights High School. Executive director Patrick Mullen, center, holds the Coveted Plastic Bee Trophy, flanked by this year's co-champions. Barratrous Orthographers, made up of Squire, Sanders, & Dempsey attorneys Bonnie Bealer, John Lazzaretti, and Becky Bynum (L to R, left side of photo), tied with Cleveland Orchestra musicians Beth Woodside, Lisa Boyko, and Carolyn Warner (L to R, right side of photo), of O.O.P.S.A.L.A. (Orchestral Orthographers Publicly Support Annoyingly Lengthy Acronyms). In the 8th round with the hour growing late, the barristers correctly spelled *zeugma* and were matched by the musicians, spelling *bouquiniste*, to bring the competition to a close. This friendly yet serious competition among more than 20 teams representing school-related groups, colleges and universities, merchants, law firms, churches, the orchestra, and others, raised more than \$13,000 this year. Thanks to this year's Bee judges: Cleveland Heights Municipal Judge A. Deane Buchanan, Heights Library Director Nancy Levin, CH-UH Schools Superintendent Doug Heuer, and Rev. John Lentz, pastor of Forest Hill Church. Big Fun impresario Steve Presser served as master of ceremonies, Notre Dame College professor Tony Zupancic pronounced the words, and, for the 19th straight year, Steve Titchenal served as word projectionist. Thanks to all participants!

Paving a Path to Literacy

By Joy Henderson

Children enter school at different points on the pathway to literacy. The challenge for teachers is to help students crack the reading code and become competent readers.

Noble teachers have been successful - last year all third grade students passed the reading portion of the Ohio Achievement Test. That success is partly due to work done last summer, when Noble teachers reviewed each incoming student's reading assessments and set specific grade level goals. The first grade goal: 83% of all students would read at or above grade level by the end of this school year.

Once teachers identified each student's reading skills and challenges, interventions were developed for students performing below, at, and above grade level. "Our goal is to design each student's day to include extra reading time whenever possible," said Principal Julie Beers.

Older students read to younger ones while they share lunch, senior citizens read with students and teachers work with small groups of students to address specific skill needs. Second grade students who are reading above grade level spend time with enrichment teacher Mrs. Dawson. In one activity, eight students wrote stories about animal characteristics, based on the style of "How the Camel Got its Hump." Then each student read their story and received input from the



Noble second graders Daisha Gardner (Left) and Sky-lah Houston wrote "How the Bear Became Brown" in Michelle Dawson's enrichment reading class.

class. "Maybe you could add some talking," suggested a student. Mrs. Dawson noted that this technique, called dialogue, adds detail to a story and makes it more exciting.

Meanwhile, first grade teacher Mrs. Schramo was working with her below grade level readers. The seven students looked at word cards and listened as she read the words aloud. The children pointed to each distinct letter and made its sound. When Mrs. Schramo said "last," six students repeated the word but one child said *land*, unable to differentiate between *s* and *d* sounds – until the third try. When he got it, his classmates erupted in clapping and a round of "Yeah!" While the activities for these two groups of children are different, the goal is the same: using knowledge of each student's needs to make sure every child learns. ■

SPOTLIGHT ON HEIGHTS HIGH GRADUATES



Jordan Zirm
Fairfax '00
Heights High '07
Jordan is a junior at the University of Missouri in Columbia.

What's your major?
Journalism.

How about your dream job after graduation?
I'd love to write for a music publication. I'm especially interested in hip hop music and culture, and I'd like to review releases and write artist profiles. It'd be great to discover and introduce new music to a wide audience.

Do you have a favorite memory or two from Fairfax Elementary?

That seems like a long time ago! I remember in kindergarten or first grade, I got the lead in the class play "Cock-a-Doodle Dandy." I was the rooster who had to wake up the barnyard. And I loved that playground.

At recess we had huge soccer and football games, with everyone running around.

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

The city of Cleveland Heights is all about diversity, and the high school embodies that. Going to a college so far from home, I've met people from all over, with all kinds of backgrounds, and it's been easy for me to feel comfortable and make friends. Heights prepared me academically, too. I had lots of outstanding teachers, and the transition into college work was pretty smooth, no surprises.

What did you enjoy most at Heights?

My senior year I covered sports for *The Black and Gold*, and that gave me valuable experience for college journalism. I was in Heights Singers for three years, and was president my senior year. Those were some good times, involving lots of great people.

What advice would you give current Heights High students?

Make sure you finish strong. Focus is really important in college—the work load requires it.



Deidre Walker
Gearity '01
Heights High '08
Deidre is a sophomore at Cleveland State University

What's your major?
Early childhood education.

How about your dream job after graduation?

I'd love to be a kindergarten teacher. It's important for kids to have positive influences as early as possible, while they're still young and impressionable.

Do you have a favorite memory or two from Gearity Elementary?

Making friends. I went to Heights schools all the way from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Many of the kids I met at Heights stayed my friends all those years.

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

I took lots of AP classes at Heights, and the transition to college level work was easy.

What did you enjoy most at Heights?

I had some wonderful teachers who both inspired me and made class fun—one even got me interested in physics, and I am not a science person! I was a member of the Minority Student Achievement Network. Among our activities, we went to the middle schools to encourage kids to work toward taking AP classes. In my senior year, I did a project assisting a kindergarten teacher at Gearity. That's what steered me toward teaching as a career.

What advice would you give current Heights High students?

Don't get distracted! Heights has so many academic opportunities—you can go in so many different directions, try so many different programs. Be prepared, and use your time well.