

February 6, 2012

Good afternoon:

This week I am proud to announce that our recently updated content standards for science scored higher than those for three-quarters of the nation's states in a study released last week by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. These standards were developed with the input of practicing scientists and educators from the primary, secondary and postsecondary levels with the goal of strengthening the content and rigor to better reflect expectations of universities and employers. This report confirms that they accomplished their goal.

Also, Ohio is observing Digital Learning Month in February. With our partners eTech, INFOhio and KnowledgeWorks - ODE will share tips and tools for using digital education strategies in the classroom and at home. Click on the new digital activities banner on the ODE home web page for details, or check out our new Facebook page for teachers to find tips and share your own. On Facebook, go to Ohio Teachers' Homeroom and "like" the page. Facebook provides ODE with one more tool to communicate with Ohio educators and to keep the discussion going as we use today's exciting new digital tools to prepare students for the future.

As you know, Ohio was recently awarded a \$69.9 million grant by the U.S. Department of Education to make systematic improvements in our state's system for early childhood education. This crucial work will fundamentally change how we prepare our state's youngest learners, especially those with high needs. Ohio's schools cannot improve unless more students come to us ready to succeed in school.

Unlike the larger Race to the Top grant that Ohio received in 2010, the federal government structured this grant very differently. States were explicitly asked not to use funds to expand or create new early learning programs or to make blanket awards school districts. As a limited-time grant, there would be no way to fund new programs after the grant expires. Instead, states were asked to use the funding to build coordinated state level systems and that raise the quality of existing early learning and development programs.

I encourage you to learn more about the Early Learning Challenge Grant by going to this [link](#) where you can view several webinars that explore this initiative in detail.

Thanks for your continuing hard work on behalf of Ohio's students. Make it a great week.

Sincerely,



Stan W. Heffner

Note: Below are news items of interest to all superintendents and principals. Please share these items as appropriate with other suggested educators who will benefit from the information.

For school superintendents and treasurers – BASA and OASSA sponsoring a professional development tour to China, Ohio Innovative Learning Environments conference issues call for breakout sessions, Jon Peterson Scholarship providers sought

For curriculum directors, administrators, teachers and counselors – Body Mass Index Screening Webinar, NASA offers STEM opportunity for female high school juniors, February 16 Webinar on Opt-Out Graduation Provision

Good news for everyone – Join Ohio's advanced manufacturing discussion

For school superintendents and treasurers –

BASA and OASSA sponsoring a professional development tour to China

The Buckeye Association of School Administrators and the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators, in partnership with Education First, are sponsoring a two-week professional development tour to Beijing, Xi'an and Shanghai this summer. The dates are Monday, June 4, through Friday, June 15. The tour will include a visit to the Western Beijing Academy International Baccalaureate School, a rural school district outside of Xi'an and a language immersion school in Shanghai, as well as the famous landmarks and cultural experiences available in those locations.

If you are interested, call Jim Harbuck at OASSA (614) 430-8311, or Kathy Lowery at BASA (614) 846-4080. You may also call *Education First* directly to register. The toll-free number is (800) 872-8439. Please refer to professional development tour #1081772 and ask for Katie Redman.

Ohio Innovative Learning Environments conference issues call for breakout sessions

Bridging the Knowing-Doing Gap of Innovative Practice is the theme for the Ohio Innovative Learning Environments conference to be held July 30 to August 3 in Hilliard (Central Ohio).

March 1 is the deadline for educators who wish to share innovative practices in the following areas: inquiry-based instruction/assessment; transformative leadership; global education; technology-supported learning; and college, career and community connections. For more information, click [here](#) and see the "Call for Breakout Sessions."

Jon Peterson Scholarship providers sought

The FY2012-13 budget established the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program (JPSN) for students identified as having a disability and who are eligible to enter grades Kindergarten through 12th grade for the 2012-13 school year. Public School districts and buildings may choose to become providers for scholarship students who reside outside of their district. To sign up to be a provider of JPSN, superintendents or building principals should sign into their SAFE account and click the link in the top right corner titled *Request Access to GED/SES/Scholarship*. Information about the program can be found by visiting the [ODE Web page](#) and searching for keyword *Peterson*, or by emailing Peterson.scholarship@ode.state.oh.us

For curriculum directors, administrators, teachers and counselors –

Body Mass Index (BMI) Screening webinar is February 8

The Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Health will conduct Part Two of the BMI Screening webinar Wednesday, February 8, from 3-4 p.m. This session will discuss the significance of conducting BMI screenings to schools, families and communities. It also will highlight resources, support services and next steps.

This webinar is open to all school nurses, administrators, school board members, school personnel, community members and parents. Registration is available in [STARS](#) under the Event Search, keyword BMI. Registration deadline is February 7. Please direct questions to Dawn Ayres at (614) 466-9271 or dawn.ayres@ode.state.oh.us.

NASA offers STEM opportunity for female high school juniors

This summer, the NASA Johnson Space Center is offering high school juniors an opportunity to take part in the *Women in STEM High School Aerospace Scholars* program. Collaborate with girls from across the

country and female NASA engineers and interns. The application deadline is February 22 for this special program. For more information and application materials, click [here](#).

February 16 Webinar on Opt-Out Graduation Provision

Mike Hubbell, Operating Standards for Ohio's Schools, ODE, and Judy Maver, Ohio School Counselors Association and Akron City Schools, will provide information to help districts explain, initiate and implement opt-out plans for students who entered high school for the first time on or after July 1, 2010. The Opt-Out is a path to graduation without completing the Ohio Core curriculum requirements. This provision is temporary and was designed to provide some students with a period of transition to the more rigorous curriculum requirements of the Ohio Core. Registration in STARS is required for the live webinar on February 16, from 1:30-2:30 p.m. The presentation will be recorded and posted on the Opt-Out [page](#).

Online community to benefit safe and supportive learning practitioners

ODE's Office of Family and Community Support is inviting educators and administrators to join its Safe and Supportive Learning Collaborative on NING, a social networking platform. Each of the office's program areas has formed a NING group that is concerned with content related to that area. Educators can request to join groups titled 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Safe and Supportive Learning, Coordinated School Health, Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council, Race to the Top (RttT) Community Engagement to Address Nonacademic Barriers, and RttT Parent Leaders. Group members will enjoy numerous benefits, including policy updates, program resources, the ability to exchange dialogue and resources with peers, and the option to take part in group events.

Click [here](#) to logon, and follow instructions for submitting a profile and requesting membership in a group. Please direct questions to Jill Jackson at (614) 466-9540 or jill.jackson@ode.state.oh.us.

Good news for everyone –

Join Ohio's advanced manufacturing discussion

Jeremy Bout, former manufacturing engineer and producer of the *Edge Factor* show, is among more than 50 representatives of industry and education who are offering a current and future perspective on careers at the Ohio Economic-Education Summit on March 7. Check out the advanced manufacturing industry sector, including details about Jeremy's presentation, [here](#). An overview of the fifth annual state Summit is [here](#). Register [here](#).

ODE is interested in your thoughts about how EdConnection fulfills your information needs. Please send any comments or suggestions to superintendent@ode.state.oh.us.

Follow our new Facebook page for Ohio families by clicking [here](#).

Follow ODE's Twitter feed by clicking [here](#).