

January 30, 2012

Good afternoon:

It's always heartening to recognize outstanding middle schools that have found ways to help their students find success, while developing a series of best practices that can serve as an example to other schools across the state. Last week, three middle schools joined a growing group known as Ohio Schools to Watch (OSTW).

Coventry Middle School and Dodge Intermediate School, both in Summit County, and Kings Junior High School in Warren County will be recognized at the 2012 Ohio Middle Level Association's Conference next month in Columbus. I want to extend my congratulations to each school. For more information on the program and criteria for eligibility, click [here](#).

In addition to these outstanding middle schools, last year ODE identified 122 schools around the state as Ohio Schools of Promise. These schools provide innovative ways for students to succeed, whether they live in rural or urban areas, and despite their economic disadvantages. The Schools of Promise program, which has been in existence for 10 years, identifies essential elements for success, case studies and lessons learned from successful schools. These can be found [online](#). I encourage you to see what these schools do to make a difference and decide if there are some ideas that you think would help your district to raise student achievement.

Finally, with today's technology, school can happen anywhere, anytime. As we celebrate Digital Learning Day on February 1 (see article below), we recognize that students and educators are no longer bound by classroom walls or bell schedules for learning opportunities. Today's reality is that students use technology for entertainment and social interaction, but the educational community often provides little opportunity or incentive for students to use that same technology for learning. By expanding digital learning options, students can use technology as an education tool to expand their horizons. Changing the way we view education can change results!

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 – Ohio Core Opt-Out information available online; Ohio Resident Educator Program updates coming; Innovation grants and loans available; Apply now to become a Green Ribbon School; Kathe Shelby Leadership Award announced; Webcast on Ohio's Transition to Next Generation Assessments scheduled February 1

For curriculum directors, administrators, teachers and counselors – ODE to offer resources to celebrate digital learning throughout February; Teen Dating Violence Prevention webinar February 1;

FAFSA completion help available

Good news for everyone – Blended Learning – Transforming the Classroom conference scheduled March 5

For school superintendents and treasurers –

Ohio Core Opt-Out information available online

SB 311 provides students who entered high school for the first time on or after July 1, 2010, a path to graduation without completing the Ohio Core curriculum requirements. The Opt-Out 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.

ORC 3313.603(D) sets forth the requirements for students and parents to provide consent to opt out of the Ohio Core, consequences for utilizing the Opt-Out provision and requirements for districts to provide both support and counseling to students who opt out.

To help districts in explaining, initiating and implementing opt-out plans, informational resources have been added to the ODE Opt-Out [Web page](#).

Ohio Resident Educator Program updates coming

This week, ODE will email information about the Resident Educator Program to program coordinators regarding funding for first year participants, as well as end-of-year requirements for Year 1 participants.

- Funding – Information will be provided on the process to be used to request \$350 for each first-year Resident Educator working in a public district, chartered community school, Educational Service Center, career center or joint vocational school. Because these are federal funds, they may not be used for private preschool or chartered nonpublic organizations. Funds must be spent by June 30, 2012, with a Final Expenditure Report due by August 30.
- End-of-Year requirements – Information also will be provided about the requirements and processes for documentation and report of Resident Educators' Year 1 progress. This will include resources, guidance documents and a webinar.

Information about the Ohio Resident Educator program is available on this [Web page](#). Questions about the program can be addressed to REProgram@ode.state.oh.us.

Innovation grants and loans available

The Ohio Department of Development has announced that school districts may apply for Local Government Innovation Funds (LGIF). Ohio's FY2012-2013 budget bill established the funds to improve efficiency and effectiveness of government services. The grants and loans may be up to \$100,000 for a single entity or \$500,000 for a collaborative project. The deadline for the first award period is February 15 for a "pre-application" and March 1 for a full submission. More information and the application are available on the Development [website](#).

Apply now to become a Green Ribbon School

How "green" is your school? If staff, students, local officials and communities work together to save energy, reduce costs while protecting health, foster wellness, provide environmental education, and boost academic achievement and community engagement, then your school may be eligible to be for Green Ribbon recognition being launched by the U.S. Department of Education. As one of 35 participating states, Ohio will nominate up to four schools by March 22, 2012, for the national recognition.

The Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio School Facilities Commission are partnering with the Environmental Education Council of Ohio to promote, facilitate and select Ohio's four nominations. Schools wishing to participate must submit their completed application by **March 1**. For more information, view the Ohio Green Ribbon Schools [Web](#)

[page](#). Contact [Brenda Metcalf](#), Executive Director of the Environmental Education Council of Ohio with questions.

Kathe Shelby Leadership Award announced

Kathe Shelby was the director of ODE's Office for Exceptional Children from September 2008 until her untimely death in August 2011. To honor Kathe's efforts and passion for the improvement of the education of children with special needs in Ohio, ODE has developed the Kathe Shelby Leadership Award to be presented to an outstanding special education leader currently employed in Ohio who has demonstrated exceptional skills in improving the quality of special education programming for Ohio's school children.

Nominees should display daily evidence of initiative, influence and respect toward children with special needs, their parents, special and regular education teachers, related services personnel and school administrators. The deadline for [nominations](#) is March 30. The first annual Kathe Shelby Leadership Award will be presented at Ohio's 6th Annual Special Education Leadership Conference on September 26-27, 2012 in Columbus.

Webcast on Ohio's Transition to Next Generation Assessments scheduled February 1

ODE and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium staff will host a joint webcast on the PARCC consortia assessment development on February 1 from 9:30-10:30 a.m.

As you know, Ohio has become a full member of the PARCC consortium of states that is collaborating to develop common K-12 assessments in English and math for grades 3-8 and at the high school level. These assessments will be aligned to the Common Core State Standards and anchored in what it takes for students to be ready for college and careers.

A webcast is technology through which you see and hear the presentation through a computer. If you would like to participate in the live webcast, click here to [register](#). The webcast will also be recorded and posted on the ODE website for later viewing.

For curriculum directors, administrators, teachers and counselors –

ODE to offer resources to celebrate digital learning throughout February

February 1 is Digital Learning Day in Ohio. ODE will use Digital Learning Day, sponsored by the Alliance for Excellent Education, to kick off a month-long initiative to promote the integrated use of technology as a teaching tool.

Schools across Ohio are currently embracing various forms of digital learning. We are partnering with KnowledgeWorks, eTech and INFOhio to share success stories, digital tools and other resources available to teachers on our homepage each school day through February.

Another event that will be taking place on February 1 is a [Virtual Town Hall](#) meeting from 1-2:30 p.m. that will feature Cleveland Metropolitan School District's New Tech West, a member of the [New Tech Network](#) of innovative schools. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan will be a participant. For more information about National Digital Learning Day, including detailed instructions for the Virtual Town Hall meeting, click [here](#).

Teen Dating Violence Prevention webinar is February 1

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network and the Ohio Department of Health are hosting a free webinar on Wednesday, February 1, from 3-4 p.m. to address teen dating violence. This is part of a monthly series of one-hour webinars designed for school professionals, parents and community-support personnel. The series is sponsored by ODE and several statewide agencies. Each webinar will accommodate the first 100 participants who register, with registration open 30 minutes before each program. The webinars will be recorded and posted on this [Web page](#), where visitors may link to webinars the day of each event. Questions may be directed to Jill Jackson at jill.jackson@ode.state.oh.us or (614) 466-9540.

FAFSA completion help available

As students apply to colleges and celebrate their acceptances, the University System of Ohio reminds them to fill out their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) has set up a process to help students pay for college, and it starts with filing the FAFSA. The USDOE allocates billions of dollars in federal aid to students. FAFSA is the primary tool used to determine eligibility for federal and state financial aid, as well as aid from many colleges and universities.

The University System of Ohio has a video on its [website](#) to help families complete the FAFSA. It provides tips and advice for filling out and filing the FAFSA. The OhioHigherEd.org website also features a [fact sheet](#) about the FAFSA that answers potential questions.

Good news for everyone –

Blended Learning – Transforming the Classroom *conference scheduled March 5*

For the last three years, Learn21 has been a grassroots effort among school districts across the state of Ohio. The mission and vision of Learn21 is focused on collaboration, innovation and cost-effective delivery of blended and online learning.

Now in its third year, Learn21 will host its annual conference on Monday, March 5, at the Tolles Career & Technical Center, Plain City. The conference theme is *Blended Learning: Transforming the Classroom*.

With more than 15 member districts from across Ohio collaborating on blended and online learning, this year's event will have sessions on the digital classroom, digital content design and delivery and infrastructure support for mobile technologies. The conference is a free event and any superintendent, curriculum director, technology director or teacher may attend. For more information or to register, click [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.

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