



The Wigwam

Southern Local School District Newsletter

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Best Practice Grants Awarded to Southern Local Schools

The Southern Local School District has gained a total of \$1,800 to help expound young students' minds in innovative and exciting ways.

Three teachers each received a \$600 Best Practice Grant from the Jefferson County Educational Service Center during the Dec. 11 school board session. JCESC Supervisor Ron Sismondo awarded the educators and lauded them for their unique projects.

"On behalf of the Jefferson County Educational Service Center, we are proud to present three recipients with \$600 each for earning the Best Practice Grant. There were 49 applications from all our districts and three applications from Southern Local. All applications were excellent and innovative submissions. JCESC is pleased to provide funding to put these great ideas into practice," Sismondo added. "Thank you for the work you do for your students and continued success to you and your students."

The recipients included Kimberly Adams, an art teacher at Southern Local Elementary, and high school teachers Alyssa Lockhart and Ashley Bergman.

Adams, who teaches grades K-6, is using her windfall to continue her community art project with "Take Pride 2.0." The program aims to engage students and help them understand the value of community by being an active participant in it. She said about 200 students in grades 4-6 would transform a public place into a work of art by painting wooden fence slats that will be installed in a local area.

"Each fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade student will paint a fence slat with their self-portrait while incorporating other elements of art. Students will be exposed to various types of self-portraiture and utilize various styles to complete theirs. Once all fence slats are completed, we will install them in a location within our community," Adams commented.

She received a similar grant last year for the first installment of "Take Pride," which led to the creation of a mural by SLES students with help from a professional artist and SLHS pupils. The mural was unveiled at the Salineville Municipal Building during the village's Salt Festival celebration in July.



The Jefferson County Educational Service Center presented three \$600 Best Practice Grants to Southern Local teachers Ashley Bergman, Alyssa Lockhart and Kimberly Adams to enhance education in their classrooms. Pictured are, from left, are Bergman, Lockhart, Adams and Ron Sismondo, JCESC supervisor.

"It's a privilege and an honor to receive one of these grants and I am grateful that Jefferson County ESC provides us with the opportunity for additional funding for unique projects that otherwise would not be realized," Adams said. "The students are excited about working on this project. My fourth-graders are especially excited since this is their first opportunity to create something for public display."

Lockhart, who teaches Integrated Math 2, Pre-Calculus, Calculus and AP Calculus to grades 9-12, plans to purchase five new TI-84 graphing calculators for her classroom to replace outdated equipment. The TI-84 models have more capabilities and will help improve math skills and deepen understanding of material. The calculators will benefit an estimated 90 math students.

"My students currently use a mixture of TI-83 Plus and TI-84 Plus graphing calculators, many of which have been around a long time," she

said. "The new calculators have updated technology and more capabilities including a higher screen resolution and enhanced graphs and provide the opportunity for students to distinguish between different graphs through color coding. Having access to the upgraded technology would help improve students' math skills; deepen their understanding; and help them make better connections with the material and to its applications."

Lockhart said she was a first-time applicant and was pleased to receive the funding, adding that it will help provide more opportunities for her students to understand the material.

Bergman, who instructs grade 11-12 English/Language Arts, hopes to help 100 students through "Flexible Seating." The project will enhance best instructional practices by meeting the needs of students. Flexible seating will

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TEC Team Uses Skills at Southern

Tech-savvy students at Southern Local High School are lending their skills to a program that helps them help the district.

Students Curtis Ebert, Nathan Ward and Gary Naylor are interns in the Technology Entrepreneurs Club (TEC) at SLHS and spend their time working with district Technology Director Josh Manist. In return, they obtain credit towards graduation and some impressive additions to their school and job portfolios.

"I get three to four interns a year and they get more life lessons and skills by doing this," Manist said. "They have built all the Chromebook carts and inventoried and programmed them. They attend regularly for two to four periods a day and have to be academically successful to participate."

The trio spent about 10 hours on their largest project to date: creating a supercomputer known as "Big Bertha." Housed in a 24-inch-by-24-inch case, the computer has a water-cooled, 12 CPU Intel and 64 gigabytes of RAM. It also includes solid state hard drives and a Nvidia graphics card and uses a 1,000-watt power supply. To those who are not as knowledgeable in modern technology, Manist said that is an impressive piece of equipment.

"They assembled the components and did over-clocking (updating) of factory parts to improve them," he continued. "It took about 10-20 hours to assemble and load Windows. We build these supercomputers and give them to [Media teacher] Jody Lockhart, who uses them for video rendering and editing."

Manist said the white case will be painted by art students and bear a "Star Wars" design. Meanwhile, he added that current TEC members select new participants each year and the fruits of their



Southern Local High School students have assisted the district for the past school year as interns with the Technology Entrepreneurs Club (TEC) at the school. Pictured are, from left, Curtis Ebert, district Technology Director Josh Manist, Nathan Ward and Gary Naylor reviewing their creation, Big Bertha.

labor can be seen throughout the district.

"The kids tend to gravitate towards it and it's hands-on. [Seeing their work is] a reward for them," he said. "We build computers like this all the time and they've literally built every computer in the labs and buildings. A lot of students have gone on to technical colleges and have successful careers."

The students themselves say they have enjoyed being involved.

"It's an experience and I love it," said senior Gary Naylor, who ultimately hopes to enter the medical field.

Series Connects Students and Veterans

Students at Southern Local High School are gaining an understanding about the impact of war on returning veterans through a special series conducted in their classroom.

Seniors in the Language Arts IV class have been reading weekly stories about American vets who have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan as part of "Human Connections Invisible Wounds." Amanda Wroblewski, Language Arts intervention specialist at SLHS, said it was an important topic and students learn how returning military personnel have been impacted by their wartime experiences.

"Students read and respond to stories that show a wide array of views and experiences from the veterans, and there is an undeniable love for America, but different ideas on what that exactly means," she said. "The stories shed light on the hardships of returning veterans, so the title I chose was 'Human Connections Invisible Wounds.'"

The project began during the Fall of 2016 and Wroblewski was inspired while looking for lessons.

"I was searching for ways to have the seniors make

meaningful connections to people in their lives and situations outside the classroom," she explained. "When I came across the stories of the veterans, I knew they would fit in perfectly."

The series runs from the start of the school year through mid-November and coincides with the observance of Veterans Day.

"The purpose of the series is to highlight stories of men and women veterans and have students connect, relate and respond to these stories in a meaningful way. Many of these students know veterans or are planning on entering the military, so I think this connection is important to life outside of the classroom. It allows the students to see situations through the eyes of a soldier," Wroblewski added. "Students have thanked me for doing the series and their responses have been very powerful, and at times, overwhelming."

"I love doing the series [because] my dad was a Navy veteran and I believe that by shedding light on the stories of veterans, it is a way to honor his service, and the service of all our area veterans."

From the Principal's Desk

By
Tony
DelBoccio



As we begin the second semester, I would first like to reflect on the previous semester.

During the fall, Southern Local athletics have continued to display great improvement that are very evident during the games, as well as within the classroom. Most, if not all, of our student athletes have taken more of a "leadership" role in and out of the classroom.

Communicating with students, parents and community members have shown enthusiasm and eagerness for our winter sports. Everyone, including staff, students, parents, community members and administration, is raising their expectations and it is carrying over to the classroom as well.

Furthermore, the second semester unfortunately brings more stress and less patience. Students will start testing in February and seniors will be ready to move. Other events that will be taking place include the following:

—CPR training for seniors on Jan. 10;

—Winter Homecoming on Jan. 27;

—ACT testing on Feb. 27 and March 8;

—AIR assessments in April.

Project MORE Unites Students in Learning

A special project at Southern Local Elementary School has junior high and elementary students working together so the youngsters can succeed in the classroom.

Teens visit third-grade students for four days a week as part of Project MORE (Mentoring in Ohio for Reading Experience), in which the upperclassmen assist the younger children in reading-based activities. Linda Swearingen, school reading tutor, said the students have 40-minute sessions and participate in learning and fellowship.

"It was initiated by Principal Kristy Sampson," she said. "She asked the Title teachers to get it started and we started small. They meet on Monday to Thursday and the junior high students volunteer. There are about six seventh- and eighth-graders tutoring third-graders and we are going to add more students to it after Christmas and make it bigger," Swearingen said. "They read a story at their reading level and go over vocabulary, do word skill activities and a lot of times there is a quiz they do at the end. Our goal is to improve their progress, and we will look at progress monitoring in January to see if we need to tweak the program."

She added that the groups also build verbal interaction and she has seen a positive response since the program began in late September.

"We usually work in the computer room and select materials based on their reading level, plus we use the 'Reading A to Z' online resource. These mentors want to be here and the students want to be here with them."

Meanwhile, Sampson explained Project MORE was a process used in other Ohio schools to provide focused individual help to improve



Emily May, an eighth-grade student Southern Local Jr. High School, works with third-grader Khali Veglia at Southern Local Elementary four days a week as part of Project MORE (Mentoring in Ohio for Reading Experience). The program began this year and six junior high students volunteer to mentor elementary students to build reading skills.

skills for struggling readers.

"We have done the process differently each year," she said. "It depends on financial resources as well as available personnel to be able to run it effectively. The students participate in the district benchmark assessments during the year to identify areas of weakness with reading skills. Then teachers identify students and refer them to Mrs. Swearingen to begin the process."

Sampson added that the students are paired with junior high mentors who have been trained by Swearingen and the students work together for at least a half-hour four times a week, while the online resources are used to help hone those skills.

"Some districts use adults from the community, but we chose to use the junior high and high school kids since they are right here on our campus," she continued. "The activities that the struggling student and mentors work on are adjusted as the students make progress."

She said officials were fo-

cus on third-grade students because of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee and want to make sure those students who are weak in certain areas have the most opportunities to improve themselves. In turn, they become better readers and improve their abilities to pass their state assessment and move on to the fourth grade.

"In previous years, we have targeted grades 1-3, but the number of students we can serve with this process depends on how many mentors we have available. We are hoping to add second grade next semester if we can get more mentors from the junior and senior high school."

Sampson concluded that Project MORE has been effective for both the younger students and their mentors.

"We have seen positive results with both an increase of confidence in the students serving as mentors and the struggling readers, as well as increases in the struggling student's skills and abilities in the classroom related to reading and peer interactions."

Class Notes

By
Kristy
Sampson



As we approach the second half of the school year, I am honored to share that Southern Local Elementary received all A's for student growth on the value added portion of the Ohio Report Card, earning the state Momentum Award for the second year in a row. This is a tribute to the staff and students for their hard work and dedication throughout the year.

As the second semester begins Jan. 3, students and staff will be busy preparing for our state AIR Assessments in the spring. Spring testing will begin in April and conclude in May and intervention sessions will be offered to those students identified by their teachers beginning in March. If you have any questions regarding the state assessments or Southern Local Elementary's assessment process, please contact Mr. Larry Rudloff in the guidance office.

The school will also host the first annual Family Literacy Night on Jan. 31 for students in kindergarten and first grade. This will be a night for parents to spend with their children reading, making story-related crafts and more. Additional information about this event will be sent home in student folders in early January. Please RSVP to ensure that enough materials are available.

Finally, our annual Jump Rope for Heart fundraiser will kick off in February. This is an exciting benefit for our students and the community. Over the past few years, our community has donated close to \$10,000 to the American Heart Association. Our goal for this year's moneymaker is \$4,000 and we hope to have your continued support for this great cause.

Mitten Tree Spreads the Warmth in Community

Students at Southern Local Schools are sharing the warmth through the Holiday Mitten Tree project.

The project, which ran from Dec. 6-15, was established by district Food Service Director Kerry Morrissey as a fun way for students to give back to others during the cold winter months. Both elementary and high school pupils, as well as school staff, contributed 110 pairs of gloves for kids and the collection went to a community cause. She said the event coincided with National Mitten Tree Day on Dec. 6, which was created by school teachers as a Christmastime activity for children while they were in school. Students gathered accessories to place on a holiday palm tree in the elementary school cafeteria, and those who donated had a chance to earn a special reward with a prize drawing.

"I decided to make it an activity for both cafeterias," Morrissey said. "One kid gave me 12 pairs and another gave me nine pairs.



Each pair got their name in a drawing for an Amazon gift card. The staff encourages the students to bring them in and I couldn't do this without them."

She added that it was the first time she held the program and the mittens were sent to the Salvation Army in East Liverpool. Morrissey said the food program normally holds some activities during the year and the most recent event was Rudolph's Countdown to Christmas, where small prizes were given each day to tick off the days until holiday break.

"It's something fun for the kids. I added this as a philanthropy and to encourage kids to do something different as they come through the food line."

Southern Local Elementary preschoolers Nate Forbes and Sadie Plunkett show off a few of the 110 pairs of gloves collected for their holiday mitten tree and donated to the Salvation Army in East Liverpool.

Superintendent John Wilson Recognized by OME-RESA

Southern Local Schools Superintendent John Wilson has gained distinction by recently being recognized for his contribution to education by the Ohio Mid-Eastern Regional Education Service Agency.

Wilson received a certificate of special appreciation for his outstanding educational leadership on the OME-RESA Board of Directors, which he served on for four years and chaired from 2015-16. The distinction adds that Wilson was lauded for his service "to advance the delivery of effective and efficient programs and services of OME-RESA to its members." Among the 14-member board's accomplishments during his tenure was the restructuring of salary schedules at OME-RESA to make them more competitive and fair. Wilson said he was surprised by the honor and equally humbled that officials chose to recognize him.



Wilson

"I am overwhelmed and appreciative," he said. "I wasn't expecting it. To be recognized by my peers for excellence in education is a great honor."

Meanwhile, Wilson has served Southern Local Schools for the past nine years, first as an assistant high school principal from 2008-09 and then as superintendent since 2012.

OME-RESA is an Information Technology Center (ITC) of the Ohio Education Computer Network (OECN) serving school districts and related agencies in Eastern Ohio. OME-RESA was organized in 1975 to provide various services to school districts and has continually added and updated programs through a cooperative effort that enables school districts and related agencies to expand services at a financial savings.

The board comprises superintendents from the areas the agency serves including Belmont, Carroll, Coshocton, Columbiana, Harrison, Jefferson, Muskingum, Noble and Tuscarawas counties and the Belmont-Harrison Career Center.

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allow students to break into groups quickly and comfortably and provide a close area for novel

discussions, independent work stations and encourages an excitement for reading.

"I provide students with many different seating options in the classroom. This allows the students to sit where they feel comfortable as long as work is being done, and this in return is teaching them responsibility and ownership. We do not go to a library or a college study area and sit in desks lined up in rows," she said. "We do not read books in the comfort of our home sitting straight up in a cold hard metal chair, so why would we want our students to learn like that? Round

tables, standing tables, moon chairs, lounge chairs, and bean bags are all the different types of seating I would like to offer."

She noted that while 90 students currently benefit, the sustainability of the furniture will aid hundreds of students in the years to come.

Like Lockhart, this is also Bergman's first time as a grant recipient, and she said it will help her fulfill a longtime plan.

"Flexible seating is something I have thought about and worked on since last spring. I have brought many different furniture pieces from my own home and have seen a difference in my students and their excitement to learn since doing so," she

continued. "Thank you to the Jefferson County Educational Service Center for believing in my project as much as I do. Approval and recognition goes a long way in encouraging educators to continue on with their missions in the classroom and in the school community."

JCESC has distributed a total of 165 Best Practice Grants over the past 10 years to local school districts, including Buckeye Local, Edison, Indian Creek, Harrison Hills, Southern Local, Steubenville City and Toronto City as well as the Utica Shale Academy. Meanwhile, Southern Local has been awarded nine grants since joining JCESC in the 2015-16 school year.