



# The Wigwam

Southern Local School District Newsletter

Fall Edition 2019

## *New Leaders Take the Helm at Southern, USA*

The Southern Local School District has new leaders this year as four new officials assumed their roles in the district.

Jay Kiger is now in charge as principal at Southern Local High School with Bill Watson as director of the Utica Shale Academy and Richard Wright and Emily Brinker are currently in their respective posts as principal and assistant principal at Southern Local Elementary.

Kiger, who comes to Southern by way of East Liverpool City Schools, replaces Tony DelBoccio after the latter accepted a post in Columbus. Kiger taught special education for two decades at East Liverpool and was an associate high school principal for the past 15 years, plus he has acted as a career tech director and athletic director. He received a two-year contract with Southern and is ready to work with the estimated 400 students in grades 7-12. So far, the transition has been a smooth one.

"The support staff has been awesome," he said. "My game plan for this year is to continue the good work that goes on here daily. I'll be learning about our staff, our kids, our traditions, what works and what hasn't worked. I'm looking forward to meeting the rest of the staff and our kids, then getting down to the business of education."

Meanwhile, Watson is returning to his roots in a different capacity by working with students enrolled in the shale program.

He was a special education teacher at SLHS from 2012-14 but went on to become a nuclear specialist at the Beaver Valley Power Station operated by FirstEnergy Corp. in Shippingport, Pa., where his job entailed creating lessons to instruct nuclear instrumentation and control technicians. He also gained a two-year contract and replaces Wright at USA, and his knowledge of education and energy will help prepare students for a future in lucrative fields.

"It's been going well, and fortunately I



**Students returned to Southern Local Schools with new leaders at the helm this school year. Pictured are, from left, Emily Brinker, assistant principal at Southern Local Elementary; Jay Kiger, principal at Southern Local High School; Rich Wright, principal at SLES; and Bill Watson, director of the Utica Shale Academy.**

have a great mentor in Coach Wright who is helping me learn the ropes," he said." I look forward to showing the (USA) board my PowerPoint plan for shale on Aug. 21 and hopefully grow the program into a pipeline for career-ready kids who are a positive influence in our communities. We've been having many positive talks with unions and local trades and the opportunities are there, we just need to take action and seize the moment."

The USA program currently has 61 students at the main location at SLHS and the satellite site at Columbiana High School, but the goal is to increase involvement to roughly 70-80 pupils.

"I look forward to growing the charter, and with the help of our students, creating a promising future."

Wright and Brinker, who respectively received two- and three-year contracts with the district, are known to the Southern Local community. Wright has served as a high school assistant principal, football

coach and administrator of the Utica Shale Academy while Brinker has taught at SLES since 2012.

Wright replaces Kristy Sampson, who was promoted to district Title and grant fund administrator, and will oversee an estimated 460 students at SLES. He served as assistant principal at SLHS and led the Indians football team for five years, plus he helmed USA during the 2018-19 school term. He looks forward to continuing his tenure with the district and working to improve scores, increase enrollment, maintain a positive learning environment and promote more parent and community involvement in the school system.

He wrapped up his stint with USA and said the staff has been supportive during the transition, but he was ready to work with the estimated 365 students in grades PreK-6.

**(Continued on Back as LEADERS)**

# *ELA Café Modernizes Learning for SLJHS Students*

Seventh- and eighth-graders at Southern Local Jr. High School have a unique way to learn by incorporating high-tech tools and a more relaxed atmosphere through the ELA Café.

The concept was started by English/Language Arts teacher Brett Hughes this past year and alters the educational format by putting the student in charge of their projects. Hughes whipped up an intriguing menu of lessons which fall under the categories of appetizer, entrees, desserts and midnight snacks and they are interactive and easily accessible via Chromebook or smartphone. Lessons are designed in Google Form and students use a wide variety of software to show their understanding of writing concepts such as Sutori, ThingLink, Book Creator and more.

“They have a weekly menu and the appetizer is a daily language review,” Hughes explained. “The three main entrees can carry them through the week and include two Google drawings to show how they understand and learn concepts. This is where they help each other out. The dessert is an exit ticket where we get feedback. Once a week they get a midnight snack with a Flipgrid to record a 90-second video and answer questions.”

Additionally, pupils can partake of an eight-part salad where they focus on types of sentences, make Google posters and take a test and quiz. Students may use their smartphones if they are absent and projects also utilize Pear Deck Vocabulary programs to create vocabulary flashcards. One of Hughes’s classes published their flashcards to the internet and were ultimately used at another school in California.

Hughes also restructured the classroom to make it more conducive, and gone are the traditional desks in favor of repurposed tables from the library where his students work in a more casual fashion.

“I wanted to switch up to alternative seating,” he said, adding that lessons could be accessed at school or at home at any time. “We’re open 24/7. All of the students have access to the curriculum through their smartphones and online, so it’s a paperless classroom. They can sit anywhere—on the floor or at a table. I find that when students are comfortable, they learn better, they create better and they are successful.”

Hughes said much of the work will entail creating projects throughout the year, but the class dynamic will change.

“After the first of the year, this class will be running itself and I will be a facilitator. It’s powered through Google Classroom and



**Southern Local eighth-grader Gianna Rodgers reviews her work in the ELA Café held in English/Language Arts teacher Brett Hughes’s classroom. Hughes altered his lesson plan to provide a more modernized way of learning using technology, while students work at their own pace and follow a unique menu of assignments that are interactive and accessible via Chromebook or smartphone.**

is a comfortable place for the kids to learn.”

Students work at their own pace and Hughes said the objective was creative learning. Hughes even utilizes the Screencastify program that allows him to give video-based lessons when he is not in class. He noted that technology is constantly evolving with the changing times and the students also grow with it.

“At the end of the school year, we’d made gains on Language Arts tests since this was introduced. The students are all engaged with their work and they are talking about what they are doing and it makes them feel good. I’m going to see gains in their work,” he concluded. “Every professor I’ve had has always said, ‘The more you can get them to create, the better the classwork is.’ This is where the world is going. The days of pencil and paper are slowing going away, in my opinion.”

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## **Anti-Virus Program Designed to Develop Positive Character**

### *Assistant Principal Leads 10-Week Discussion for Junior High Classes*

Seventh- and eighth-graders at Southern Local Jr. High School are taking part in a special 10-week program designed to develop positive life character.

Assistant Principal Ron Sines leads the Anti-Virus program each Friday in Brett Hughes’s English class and about 140 students will address such topics as ambition, responsibility, common sense and generosity. Sines said it also gives him a chance to be more proactive with the pupils.

“It’s a different way for me to have contact with the students other than when they come to my office,” he said. “The program was offered to schools in Columbiana County after

somebody stepped up and donated money for them to be offered. I don’t know who it was, but I would like to say thank you.”

Anti-Virus was provided by Leader’s Edge, an organization that trains, equips and challenges leaders to leverage their influence to change the world through workplace leadership, personal development, team development, organizational leadership and youth development. The group promotes Anti-Virus program in Ohio middle schools to teach seven character principles to foster sound decision making.

“The program has been done in a variety of countries and I’ve just introduced it. It’s for students to get a better understanding of themselves and to stop and think before they make a decision that could affect them and their reputation.”

Sines noted that students will be surveyed at the conclusion to gather insight.



# Aiming High Program Returns to SLES

Southern Local Elementary students are learning about good decision-making skills and character traits as the latest installment of the Aiming High program gets under way in classrooms.

Leslie Rivera and Tiffani McAfee, education specialists with the Family Recovery Center of Lisbon, are hosting sessions for first- and fourth-grade classes on Wednesdays from Sept. 18-Oct. 9 and topics focus on life skills such as making good decisions, promoting good health and knowing how to be a good person or citizen.

Carmen the Cool Cat is featured in first-grade rooms for lessons about differences, anger, stop and think and good health while fourth-graders will learn about respecting differences, peer pressure, decision making and medicine safety.

Larry Rudloff, SLES guidance counselor, said each program is age appropriate and more lessons are slated for this year.

Fifth- and sixth-grade classes will participate on Wednesdays from Oct. 16-Nov. 13 while kindergarten and second-grade students will take part in Febru-



**First-grade students at Southern Local Elementary School learned about differences during a lesson from representatives of the Family Resource Center in Lisbon. Education specialists Tiffani McAfee, pictured at left, and Leslie Rivera kicked off the Aiming High program and are speaking to first- and fourth-grade classes about making good decisions.**

ary.

This is the education unit and through a grant they received they also have a therapy unit," and it provides kids with the support they need." Rudloff said. "We provide this

## New School Resource Officer Acclimated to Post

There's a new school resource officer in town, or rather, at Southern Local Schools.

Deputy Chase Askounes took on his new role Sept. 12, replacing longtime SRO Deputy Brandon Hoppel. Deputy Askounes is a new member of the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office, having joined the force about two months ago, but he previously served as an officer for the Liverpool Township Police for 2 ½ years. He has been busy making the rounds at SLES and is getting acquainted with the staff and students. The new SRO said everyone has been welcoming and he was excited about the role.

"I love it," he said. "I go at lunchtime and speak to a lot of the kids so we can have positive interaction. When I get the opportunity, I will go to sporting events so they can see me and have more contact with me after school."

He said law enforcement has always



**Deputy Chase Askounes is the new school resource officer at Southern Local Schools.**

been an interest of his and he took courses at Eastern Gateway Community College after graduating from high school, which ultimately led to his stints with the township police and CCSO.

"It's one of the things I've always wanted to do, just to get to help somebody," he said. "To help one person change their view or help with something in their life is a proud accomplishment."

Being around the students should also come easily since he is the third child in a family of nine and his siblings range in age from five to 27. He plans to work with the schools and continue the Kelly Bear character-based program for youngsters as well as a drug awareness and positive behavior initiative for the fifth- and sixth-grade classes. The Kelly Bear program will take place this spring and he expected to coordinate the latter program with SLES Principal Rich Wright and guidance counselor Larry Rudloff this year.

# College Credit Plus Program Evolves at Southern

## High School Teachers Now Instructing College-Level Courses in the Classroom

The College Credit Plus program has evolved at Southern Local High School and more teachers are becoming certified so students can remain in the classroom.

This is the first year that high school teachers are leading college-level classes and about 45 students participate. Students generally have travelled to Kent State University's East Liverpool Campus or Eastern Gateway Community College, but Ron Infanti, facilitator at SLHS, said there were myriad benefits to conducting classes on-site such as saving on travel time to keeping students in a familiar environment. But the biggest advantages are that today's SLHS students could graduate with both a high school diploma and a college associate's degree and save costs in the long run.

"It's a high school setting, but when you leave here you are a college student," Infanti said, adding that it also helps build students' confidence when they actually head to an institution of higher learning.

SLHS currently offers English, Spanish, history and online psychology and art classes—the latter two of which Infanti facilitates—while students may catch up on work in any course during flex time in the media center. To qualify, teachers must provide their college transcripts to EGCC and among the present instructors are SLHS Assistant Principal Ron Sines, teachers Kelly Clark, Mary Lou Taylor and Bob Shansky and Spanish teacher Carla Calderon.

"Our goal is to try to get more teachers to be able to teach classes here," Infanti added. "There will actually be 10 classes here this year and will hopefully add sociology and communication next semester. We've



**Southern Local High School junior Arianna Goley reviews her critical essay assignment with English teacher Kelly Clark as part of College Credit Plus program. About 45 students participate and can earn a diploma and an associate's degree when they leave high school and also save costs on education when they go on to college. This is also the first year for some SLHS teachers to instruct college courses in the classroom.**

got 45 students taking one or more college classes."

CCP is available to grades 7-12 and Infanti said one middle school student is actively involved. While the teaching concept is new, he said it truly benefits students.

"I like it because the kids can go to any technical school," he added. "Whether it's a one-year school, two-year school or four-year school, it starts here. They really have 10 credits or more when they start college and this is free."

English teacher Kelly Clark likes the concept because it prepares high school students for college-level studies.

"I like the fact that we offer this so they have an advantage when they get to college," Clark said. "English class is the best place to start because we work on how to write college papers. Being able to give them the advantage of true college writing

in a high school classroom is instrumental to their success in college."

Several SLHS students said it was hard work but it would help them in the long run.

"It's great," said junior Brock Smalley. "I like being able to get a head start on my future."

Ninth-grader Nicholas Sabbato said he was studying art history and psychology and it was a real challenge.

"It prepares us for what we're going to have to deal with once we graduate," noted junior Delainey Mellott.

SLHS Principal Jay Kiger said the program a valuable educational resource.

"If a kid starts his or her freshman year, they could literally walk out with an associate's degree with Eastern Gateway Community College their senior year."

Hopes are to add more courses including medical terminology and statistics.

## LEADERS

(Continued from Front)

"I have been depending on Mrs. Brinker for a lot of the elementary agenda so far, but everyone has been extremely helpful and nice," he commented. "I hope to continue building positive relationships with the Southern Local students, staff and community."

Brinker, who also acts as the curriculum director, said her transition has been smooth and she couldn't wait to get the school year started.

"It has been going well. I'm definitely getting into the swing

of things and learning the role," she said. "I am excited to get this school year going."

She taught third-grade during her first two years at SLES and later instructed first-graders before obtaining her master's degree in administration from Franciscan University of Steubenville in 2018.

As for her new position, Brinker hopes to keep building off the positive school culture and working towards student achievement.