



The Wigwam

Southern Local School District Newsletter

Fall Edition 2020

Southern Local Teachers Earn Best Practice Grants

Educators in the Southern Local School District earned a total of \$1,800 to enhance learning for students.

Three teachers were among the recipients of the Jefferson County Educational Service District's 2020-2021 Best Practice Grant awards and were recognized during the monthly school board session on Nov. 9. JCESC Director of Curriculum and Professional Development Ron Sismondo disbursed the mini-grants and congratulated teachers Janice Pierce, Justin Krulik and Eric Sampson on their achievement.

Pierce, who teaches fourth-grade math and social studies at Southern Local Elementary, will use her windfall to form "Wonder Workshop: Introduction to Coding" to benefit about 50 math and English/Language Arts students. The Wonder Workshop will provide students with a powerful sense of collaboration and hands-on learning with robots Dash and Dot. The workshop's comprehensive solution provides educators with a concrete way to teach the abstract concept of coding which some consider to be the new literacy. Teachers and students will be able to apply coding and robotics across the curriculum.

Pierce was a prior grant recipient while serving as a fourth-grade intervention specialist in 2016 and was grateful to have another opportunity to help the kids.

"I think it's an awesome opportunity to be able to purchase some STEM materials to incorporate into my math curriculum," she said. "I would like to thank JCESC for making the funding available for Southern Local Schools."

Krulik, who teaches grades 10-12 at Southern Local High School, said it was his first mini-grant and will help create an outdoor learning environment for his estimated 125 science students.

An aquatic environment will be built in the school courtyard that enables students to have hands-on application, including testing procedures and the practice of maintaining a homeostatic site. The pond will include plant life, fish, frogs, insects



Ron Sismondo, director of curriculum and professional development for the Jefferson County Educational Service Center, presented three Best Practice Grants totaling \$1,800 to teachers at Southern Local Schools for their innovative ideas. Pictured are, from left, Sismondo with Eric Sampson and Justin Krulik of Southern Local High School while Janice Pierce of Southern Local Elementary is absent from the photo.

and other abiotic features to create a real-world learning environment with application though water quality testing, experiments of introducing new species and observations and experiments.

"I wanted to thank the selection committee for the opportunity to enhance student learning and understanding," Krulik said. "I was pleased to be informed that my grant was selected this year and look forward to the process of implementation of the pond and its aquatic environment. Students will benefit from this and have hands-on, real-world experience just outside of my classroom."

Sampson, who instructs grades 10-12 at SLHS, has earned Best Practice Grants while previously serving the Utica Shale Academy. He said his most recent award will be a great asset to his Introduction to Surveying class and roughly 11 students could gain experience to potentially work in the field. The grant will help purchase

equipment to teach the art of surveying and aid in passing the surveying certification exam. Along with guidance from volunteers within the surveying industry, his students will be able to get hands-on experience in the proper operation, use and care of important surveying equipment.

"It allows us to purchase necessary equipment for learning. It is far better for students to get hands-on experience with equipment as opposed to just talking about it," he commented. "I am grateful to the JCESC for offer this opportunity that will have a tremendous impact on student learning."

JCESC Superintendent Dr. Chuck Koko lauded the teachers for offering innovative ideas to benefit their students.

"The 2020-21 school year has brought new challenges for classroom teachers given the current pandemic. JCESC is pleased to have the funding for continued support of the Best Practice Grants."

Pilot Program: Aviation Taking Flight at SLHS

New Course Inspiring Students to Operate Planes, Drones

One new course at Southern Local High School is definitely taking off as students learn all about aviation.

Emily Bowling may be known for directing the band, choir and theater at the school, but she is also a licensed pilot who is sharing her knowledge with students. She said this was the first year for the class and it is currently offered as a semester elective. Currently, there are five students taking part in grades 10-12 and she plans to have another class during the second semester.

In addition to completing classwork, students learn to fly unmanned aircraft systems also known as drones. Bowling said she began offering the course because there were many opportunities to have a career in the industry and the sky's the limit.

"Students learn about all aspects of aviation. They are learning about both traditional and fixed-wing airplanes, as well as drones; about the science that allows these machines to fly and the regulations we have to help keep the skies safe," she added. "They are also exploring careers and educational opportunities in the aviation field. With the proximity to several major airports, along with the growing use of drones in industry, students from Southern Local have a variety of opportunities for careers in the aviation field. Since many of our students may not know much about aviation, I thought it would be great to expose them to all the options we have right here in our region."

Unfortunately, the advent of COVID-19 led to remote classes and prevented the group from experiencing field trips to local airport facilities, so Bowling has found a way to bring the facilities to them. She said students have held Google Meets videoconferences with officials from the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics (PIA) and the U.S. Air Force, but she hopes to one day take students on an actual visit.

Bowling said she has always loved airplanes and was fortunate enough to take her first flying lesson at age 15, commenting that she knew that day she wanted to pursue her pilot's license.

"Any student can get a student pilot certificate, but you must be 16 to fly solo in an airplane and 17 to test for your private pilot certificate," she explained. "To earn the certificate, you need a certain number of flight training hours and must have a variety of set flight experiences. After you pass the FAA written test, you have to take the practical exam, which consists of both an oral exam and a flight test by an FAA federal examiner. All maneuvers must meet a high level of proficiency in order to pass this 'check ride.'"

Now she enjoys sharing what she's learned with another generation.

"Although some of the students in flying airplanes, most are interested in drones. Many industries have started using drones for businesses, and a commercial drone license requires only a written exam. In our class, we cover much of the material needed to pass the official FAA written exam."



Darrel Kramer, a sophomore at Southern Local High School, tests his skills while operating a drone in the new aviation class. About five high school students currently take part in the elective course and learn all about aircrafts and the science behind them, and hopes are to one day expand it to a four-year career pathway.

Bowling said she has received plenty of positive feedback from her students and several of them said they have enjoyed the class.

Senior Hunter Morris, who is eyeing a future as a surveyor, likes the aspect of learning about drones since they are widely used in that field.

"It brings you closer to certification and there is a surveying job to fly a drone," he said.

"It's a pretty fun class. It's not like I thought it would be," said senior Nick Wade. "I want to go to college to major in working on airplane engines."

Meanwhile, Bowling is looking to eventually expand the class to a four-year career pathway.

Southern Local Wellness Center Opens

The Southern Local Wellness Center is now available to promote health among staff and students.

The center, which started prior to the district going to remote learning, is located in a former weight room behind the high school gym. The site will be open during gym time as scheduled by athletics through the FMX facilities management system. However, officials said it would be available to use at other times including early morning and afternoons. Participants must adhere to strict COVID protocols with athletes kept in small groups for contact tracing and other guidelines but the hope is to help focus on fitness. The idea was formed by high school English/Language Arts teachers and coaches Kyle Exline and Gerard Grimm, who approached school leaders to utilize the space. Exline said officials quickly got on board and the site has already been put to use.

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-Coach Kyle Exline

We wanted to create a multi-faceted space to benefit all of Southern Local,” Exline added. “We started working on the idea during the pandemic in late May and early June. When you consider the cost of equipment and renovating a whole room, it was a tall task. Luckily for us, [district Director of Federal Programs] Kristy Sampson was able to find creative solutions to support this endeavor. Without her and her hard work, this project wouldn’t have been possible.”

A \$12,000 wellness grant helped acquire plates, dumbbells, bars, squat racks, benches, landmines, prowlers, MedBalls, jump stretch bands and stationary bikes, among other items while old equipment was also being repurposed. Those include a utility machine, elliptical and jump stretch stations. More equipment to be procured range from a treadmill and adjustable bench to a GHR station and additional storage units. In addition, the room will be repainted over Thanksgiving Break and signage is also being created. Exline, who also serves as assistant athletic director, head golf coach and junior varsity head boys’ basketball coach, said he and Grimm, who is also head boys’ basketball and baseball coach, also wanted to incorporate former athletic trainer Michaela Bragg, physical education teacher Eric Sampson and Coach Mike Skrinjar into the process to ensure staff and students’ physical needs were met.

“With [Superintendent Tom Cunningham’s] support, Kristy’s hard work and our vision of the space, we were able to make this thing happen,” Exline continued. “It was truly rewarding. Oftentimes, you have great ideas, and quite frankly, some of them are lofty and difficult to make happen. Being able to enter that room as a coach, faculty member and student-athlete, you feel that this space is clean, organized and updated with the best equipment possible. It really encourages you to better yourself from a fitness standpoint.”

Members of the girls’ basketball team began using the facility at the end of October while other sports teams will take advantage of the offerings. Exline said feedback has been positive



Southern Local High School senior Brad Sloan works out on some of the equipment now available in the Southern Local Wellness Center located in the building. The site, which opened prior to the school going to fully remote learning, is housed in a former weight room which was revamped to help staff and students get fit and live a healthier lifestyle.

and hopes the wellness center will become a popular draw.

“I am sure I am more excited about this than the boys but they were impressed with the room and the new equipment when they saw it. We are very fortunate to have this new asset,” he noted. “The girls’ basketball team enjoyed the new equipment and some of the new exercises they were introduced to with the equipment. In this space, we are doing everything we can to develop our young students’ athleticism. Olympic lifts, functional movements and resistance training are pivotal in this regard. I look forward to hearing input from the staff as well.”

Exline thanked everyone for implementing the center and helping the district promote health.

“Collectively, we want to thank everyone who was involved. I cannot stress enough how great of an asset the wellness center is to staff, students and student-athletes. We look forward to maintaining the quality of this space and the integrity of the equipment. The Wellness Center will not go unappreciated.”



Trick or Treat

Southern Local Elementary School was full of little boos and ghouls celebrating Halloween a little early on Oct. 29. Superheroes, princesses, witches and more enjoyed a host of frightfully fun activities during parties in their classrooms, including games, snacks and movies. Pictured are some first-graders who donned their holiday finery for the day, including witches Jocelynn Jackson, Zarrah Mallary and Mariah Shields, Spidermen Zackary Tennant and Deegan Bach and skeleton Parker Lockhart.



Fire Prevention Week

Southern Local Elementary School observed Fire Prevention Week on Oct. 5-9 with visits from local fire departments. Presentations were conducted at Wigwam Stadium to allow for social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic while students also gathered in the parking lot to view a display of safety vehicles and equipment. Preschool and third-grade classes were treated to activities from the Salineville and Franklin Township Volunteer Fire Departments on Monday, which also featured a fire hose demonstration. Highlandtown VFD officials stopped by Tuesday to speak with grades K-2 and provided educational and safety materials, plus students took part in a home escape plan contest to create a functional idea that could be implemented during an actual housefire. Commemorative pencils and videos were also shared with classes. Pictured is Highlandtown VFD firefighter Luke Frischkorn explaining thermal scanning equipment to first-graders during their program.