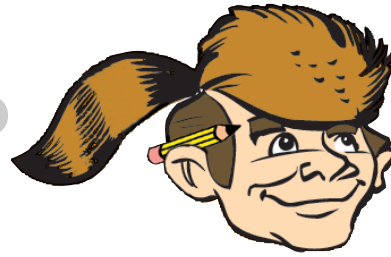


Pioneer

THE ELYRIA SCHOOLS



Press

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WWW.ELYRIASCHOOLS.ORG

Elyria Schools plugged in

ABC, 123 and ... 01010101? District leads the way in new era of tech

By Amy Higgins
TECHNOLOGY

A fingerprint is all that's needed to purchase lunch.

A smart phone provides assistance with math problems during class.

A static whiteboard becomes an interactive computer with the touch of a button. From pre K to grade 12, technology is apparent in every aspect of school life.

The guy in charge of it all isn't surprised at the boom in school technology, nor at the insatiable desire for it. What has changed over the years, he says, is the expectation.

"Years ago, if computers went down for 48 hours, it was an inconvenience, but it was something teachers and students could work around," said Brian Kokai, director of information technology at Elyria Schools. "Now, technology is the norm, and an outage of any kind is extremely disruptive. Technology is at the core of all that teachers and students do, and they expect it to be there every day, and working properly."

Technology has automated more than just the classrooms.

Grades, GPAs, schedules, lunch participation, bus routes, accounting, payroll — every essential business function of school operations hinges on accurate data and processing thanks to high technology.

In the lunchroom, a biometric system at the checkout line reads



Kindergarten students in Elyria demonstrate a SMART Board lesson.

a student's fingerprint to access the food service account.

A few of the obvious payoffs: Parents can log on from home to see what their child purchased for lunch that day, and food service workers can better manage their inventory. It also helps students maintain their anonymity if they receive free- or reduced-price lunch.

In the classrooms, meanwhile, technology is front and center.

"Automating tasks that were traditionally done by hand, like

grades, for instance, lets teachers spend less time tabulating and more time teaching," Kokai said. "It also provides more accountability because the data can be referenced by other school personnel and parents.

"For students, technology leads to more self expression," he said. "Whereas they used to have only one or two ways to express what they know, they now have a multitude of options for learning and sharing information, be it writing, e-reading, creating Power

Points or producing video or audio tracks."

SMART Boards came on the scene in Elyria a decade ago. These days, almost every classroom in the district has one. These wall-mounted interactive computers have changed how teachers teach and students learn. Even the littlest learners in preschool and kindergarten use them like pros.

"Technology like this makes



Sidewalks in Elyria Township give some former bus riders new walking paths to school.

New paths to school for township residents

By Amy Higgins
ELYRIA TOWNSHIP

It's a brand-new day for nearly 100 students in Elyria Township who live along Adelbert Street, Lake Avenue and its side streets.

They now have sidewalks to get to and from school.

For decades, school buses and car rides were the only options for those attending Crestwood, Westwood or Elyria West — now Elyria Early Childhood Village — because sidewalks in surrounding neighborhoods were few and far

Mail Call



By Amy Higgins
COMMUNICATIONS

Some months ago, I was privy to a conversation a resident had with the Elyria Schools superintendent and the treasurer.

The resident had some school finance questions and actually took time to visit for a face-to-face chat.

As a person who communicates for a living, I find most conversations intriguing on many levels. I think when you can have a conversation with someone in-person, the topic becomes very human and personal for both parties, which can only be good, especially when it's a delicate or complex subject.

This particular meeting wasn't a delicate matter, by any means, but it was a lengthy discussion about



AMY HIGGINS

numbers and needs and, in the end, there was mutual respect and understanding. The resident left feeling informed about the current financial picture and the superintendent and treasurer appreciated the taxpayer's perspective.

I heard all the nitty-gritty, but what really stuck with me was something the resident said. You see, the reason he didn't feel informed is because he hadn't received any information.

I found it a curious statement, because I knew there had been numerous articles, advertisements, on-air interviews and personal visits to community groups to explain the matter quite thoroughly. I knew because I often initiated the exchanges as the district's communications and marketing person.

"There've been numerous articles in the paper," he was told.

"I don't buy the paper," he said.

"We've had it on the radio and discussed it at public events," we countered.

"I don't listen to the radio. Guess I don't get out much." Ugh.

"Can't you just send me something to read in the mail?" he asked.

A-ha. Yes, absolutely. We can do that.

And so, the Pioneer Press was born.

Welcome to the first issue of what we hope will become an enjoyable, interesting and educational addition to your mailbox — four times a year, for years to come.

This publication is written in-house in the Elyria Schools Communications and Marketing Department. It is printed by Lorain County Printing and Publishing Company, owner of the Chronicle Telegram and Medina County Gazette, and mailed four times a year to more than 24,000 Elyria residents.

We would love to hear from you. If there's something you'd like to see featured in the Pioneer Press, or if you'd like to advertise, please contact us at

ask@elyriaschools.org

Thanks for reading.

Meal price increase

By Heather Durdil
FOOD SERVICE

Rising food costs nationwide have necessitated price increases for school meals. Lunches will go from \$2.60 to \$2.75 and breakfast moves from \$1.70 to \$1.85.

A school breakfast includes a protein, usually a cheese stick, a whole grain item, such as a nutrigrain bar, cereal, waffle or pancake, one-half cup of fruit, milk and juice. Lunches offer a protein, two sides: a fruit and vegetable, a whole grain item and milk.

"We keep up on what the kids like and what they don't and we make adjustments," said Scott Teaman, executive chef and general manager, Sodexo.

APPLE FESTIVAL PIZZA

Elyria Schools Chef Scott Teaman shares a seasonal favorite recipe for pizza, aptly named after Elyria's historic festival.

- ¼ cup of olive oil
- 2 tablespoons Tuscan Herb Seasoning
- ½ red onion; sliced thin
- 1 red pepper; sliced thin
- 4 apples, sliced thin
- 2 pounds of cooked hot, seasoned sausage; sliced
- ½ cup of bleu cheese
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 store bought pizza crust
- Rosemary (optional)

- Soak the olive oil and the Tuscan Herb Seasoning for one hour.

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees

- After the oil/herb mixture has soaked for one hour brush the mixture onto a store bought pizza crust. Place the pepper, apple, onion, and sausage slices on the crust. Next top with the mozzarella cheese, cheddar cheese, and finally the blue cheese.

- Bake for 10 minutes or until cheese is bubbly. Top with rosemary if desired.

- Wait five minutes then slice and serve.



Bon appetit

By Amy Higgins
FOOD SERVICE

Q: Hello, Chef Nellie. How did you find yourself in Elyria?

A: I was born and raised in Avon, Ohio, and after high school I attended Johnson and Wales Culinary Academy in Providence, R.I. It was a neat time to be there. Us chefs call it the "golden age," because it's when many of the culinary stars of today, like Emeril Lagasse and Tyler Florence, were in training at that very same school.

After graduating, I worked in the hospitality industry in Boston and some years later, began my career with Sodexo. I became a chef in the company's corporate division at a business in Chicago and eventually switched to the college dining

division, where I worked in multiple colleges and universities, ultimately landing back in Ohio at Denison University in Granville.

School foodservice is new for me, but the way I look at it is, feeding is feeding. And while I'm learning all about the federal regulations and dietary requirements of school settings, I find it exciting to work with children.

Q: Do you have a signature dish?

A: I have a number of dishes that I created for catered events over the years, but one of my favorites is an entrée called Zia's Nutty Chicken, which actually earned a place in Sodexo's corporate entrée cookbook several years ago, which I'm very proud of. It's a pistachio-crust chicken with apple and grape compote.

Another favorite can be served as a first



Chef Nellie

or second course: Standup Wrap Cucumber Salad, a stacked cucumber circle filled with specialty ingredients.

Q: Yum! Do you cater public events?

A: Absolutely! To learn about our catering services, call foodservice director Scott Teaman at 440-284-8287.

“Strong to the finish, ‘cause I eats me spinach”

By Heather Durdil
FOOD SERVICE

“Make You Strong Spinach.”
“Brain Boosting Bananas.”
“Zippity Good Day Fruit Cocktail.”

These are the labels that will greet elementary students as they travel the lunchline this year.

Sodexo, the district’s foodservice provider, is hoping this small change will help encourage students to choose fruits and vegetables more readily, and actually consume them.

“The goal is to introduce kids to nutritious foods that they may or may not have at home,” executive chef and general manager Scott Teaman said. “Anything we can do to encourage healthful choices is a plus. Kids are delighted when they taste something they’ve never had before, and they actually like it, especially if it’s sweet.

“Last year, for example, a student grabbed a grape tomato and gleefully announced, ‘I have a grape that tastes like a tomato!’” Teaman said. “Imagine his sur-



McKinley fifth-grade students pass the parmesan during a fine dining and etiquette experience hosted by Sodexo.

prise when I countered, ‘Actually you have a tomato that tastes like a grape!’”

The Smarter Lunchroom Movement is a partnership between Sodexo and Cornell University

Food and Brand Lab. It’s all about helping kids make better food choices, and the branding and

packaging of the food plays an important role.

Putting fruits and veggies in colorful containers and giving them fun names encourages children to actually eat the food, as the presentation provides some flair. Encouraging students to choose white milk with their meal adds to the nutritiousness.

Teaman says the changes will be gradual and his team will constantly review what’s working and what isn’t.

A daily school lunch contains two sides — a vegetable and a fruit — as well as a whole grain item and a milk. Students are served proper portion sizes and a well-balanced meal each day at lunch.

The new food labels are fun and colorful, and even young children can easily recognize each item.

Nellie Donato, Sodexo Food Production Manager and chef, said the new labels address childhood nutrition and obesity concerns through animation and descriptions to help kids make choices that support a healthful lifestyle.

Look for the Labels...



TECH

From 1

school more interesting for kids,” Kokai said. “And we’ve seen the benefits in improved test scores.”

Technology takes learning outside the confines of the classroom. It connects the district’s students and teachers through applications like Schoology, a web-based “virtual” classroom where assignments and discussions are shared between teachers and

students online, in a secure environment.

Another app, Socrative, lets students use smart devices to answer true/false, short-answer or multiple-choice questions in real time. Teachers can immediately see if students understand the material.

New this year are Nexus 7 tablets to encourage more reading at the elementary level.

Funded by a grant through The Stocker Foundation, the e-readers provide students direct access to a host of online text-

books, as well as software called Overdrive, which connects students to the public library system. This allows them to connect to the system from school or home, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

While technology comes with an upfront investment, the long-range benefits are undeniable.

“Take e-books, for example,” Kokai said. “The average hardbound text book costs \$75, while the average e-textbook is \$15. Its digital counterpart is one-fifth the cost.”

PATHS

From 1

between.

“The ones that did exist were only partially completed,” said Rich Nielson, Elyria Schools director of business services. “Certainly there was no continuous path to the west campus, until now.”

The sidewalks come compliments of the “Safe Routes to School” grant, a \$400,000 award for infrastructure and public education of sidewalks through the Ohio Department of Transportation.

Elyria Township Trustees and Elyria City Schools worked together to identify the routes and oversee installation of the sidewalks.

The paths now travel from State Route 113 north along Lake Avenue to Griswold Road, and west on Adelbert Street to Westwood Middle School. A new walking path connects Westwood and Crestwood schools.

To help students cross the streets safely, a crosswalk will be installed at the intersection of Lake Avenue and Emerson Drive, and crossing guards will be added there and at the intersection of Adelbert Street and Lake Avenue.

“PAC” the House

EHS Arts Center is Mecca of First-Class Entertainment

By Amy Higgins
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Q: What is the job of a theatre director?

A: Scheduling is a huge component of what I do. I keep a master schedule of all per-



Nichols

formances in the Performing Arts Center. Last year alone there were countless school events and outside performances. When outside groups and professionals wish to use the PAC, I meet with them to complete their contract and permit paperwork, and assign and oversee the technical crew for each performance. Our technical crew is made up of Elyria High School students.

Q: What is special about being the EHS PAC theatre director?

A: It was special to me to return to a familiar situation. I taught English and theatre from 1972 to 1998 at Westwood, Elyria West and Elyria High. When I was asked to return to Elyria to open the brand-new PAC, I could not resist. I've enjoyed so much working with the talented, bright students and adults who want it to be a success.

Q: What has been the most interesting project at the PAC since the opening in 2010?

A: Of all the great concerts and performances thus far, the most interesting has been the Carl Acuff Jr. concert last year because of the dynamics sur-

See NICHOLS, 5

LIGHTS...CAM

Performing Arts Center Schedule

- Oct. 15** EHS Band Concert 7 p.m.
- Oct. 16** EHS Choir Concert 7 p.m.
- Oct. 22** EHS Orchestra Concert 7 p.m.
- Nov. 15** EHS Fall Play 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 16** EHS Fall Play 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 17** EHS Fall Play 2 p.m.
- Dec. 2** LCMT Festival of Carols 7 p.m.
- Dec. 4** Ely School K-1 Holiday Concert 7 p.m.
- Dec. 5** Northwood School Band and Choir Concert 7 p.m.
- Dec. 10** McKinley Grades K-1 Holiday Concert 7 p.m.
- Dec. 11** Franklin Grades K/2/4 Winter Concert 7 p.m.
- Dec. 12** Crestwood Winter Concert 7 p.m.
- Dec. 15** EHS Choral Concert with the EHS Sign Choir 3 p.m.
- Dec. 17** EHS Band Concert 7 p.m.
- Dec. 19** EHS Orchestra Concert 7 p.m.
- Dec. 22** EHS Choir Concert 3 p.m.

Student theatre technicians make

By Amy Higgins
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Elyria High School's state-of-the-art performing arts center offers all the bells and whistles a director, performer or theatregoer would expect from a multimillion-dollar facility. What often surprises folks, however, is the age and makeup of the technical team running the show.

Behind the curtain, at the soundboard and in the light booth is a very capable crew of students. They are freshmen, sophomores, juniors or seniors at Elyria High School. They're good with computers and highly interested in technical theatre.

"They are really a unique group of students who are as dedicated as anyone I've ever met in this business. They take their time and they do it right," said Jim Nichols, theatre director. "Other directors and performers have called them the best tech team they've ever worked with, including professionals.

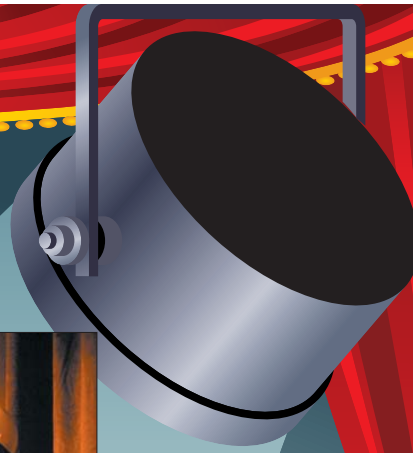
"Performers like Carl Acuff Jr. and his band who've played or performed at the PAC are stunned at how professional and helpful the students are," Nichols said. "Acuff was so impressed, in fact, he said he wished his own theatre crew would take lessons from our team."

To be on the PAC crew, you have to be willing

(l to r)
The PAC team,
Sierra Coon,
Katie Panic,
Maddy Massey,
Emily Briner,
Bridget Kuehne,
Sierra Mortier, and
Mary Dorsey.



ERA...ACTION!



NICHOLS

From 4

rounding it. Carl Acuff Jr. and his band had car trouble on the way to the show and arrived two hours late. My student tech team kept the audience entertained and informed and, when the band did arrive, they quickly unloaded the band's equipment, set them up and ran the sound and lights like professionals. Carl Acuff Jr. put on a wonderful show and the audience enjoyed it immensely.

Q: What has been the funniest thing to happen at the PAC since the opening?

A: Well, anyone who's been to the PAC knows food and drink is not allowed in the facility and we strictly enforce that rule to keep the place looking as new as it did when it opened. One night before the show began, my crew and I were preparing for sound and lights when we inhaled an unmistakable whiff of French fries. I had to laugh because the smell of French fries is pretty distinct and all we had to do was follow our noses to find the source.

Q: What does the community have to look forward to this season at the PAC?

A: There is so much. There are three main shows this season and dozens of student concerts and performances. The holiday season kicks off with the Lorain Community Musical Theatre and December is chock full of events. There are also numerous special events to be named later, but a good sampling of this season's events is offered with the published schedule.

Q: How does one get tickets to a performance at the PAC?

A: Most performances are free, but for those that require tickets, guests can purchase them at the box office the week before an event or at the door the evening of the performance. Some events also offer online ticket purchases at www.elyria-schools.org

Make the magic happen at EHS PAC



PHOTO BY REINKER PHOTOGRAPHY.

to work hard and put in the time to learn very sophisticated technology. Prospective crewmembers go through an application and interview process and spend up to 15 hours training before they can touch a single button.

Their final task is to run lights, sound and stage for a fictitious show.

"I take them through multiple scenarios and up to 35 cues to test if they can handle what comes up without assistance," said Nichols.

As freshman and sophomores, crewmembers gain experience working school events, like plays, musicals, concerts and assemblies. Once they've mastered the technology and the process, and they are at least 16 years old, they

can begin working rentals and getting paid an hourly rate.

For most, though, the paycheck is an added bonus because they're there primarily for love of the theatre. Most are also members of the drama club and they earn thespian points for their technical theatre work. They also begin qualifying for flex credit, an extra half credit toward graduation and college.

"Some of my former students who've gone on to college have kept in touch and said their experience on the PAC team helped them get a paying gig on a college tech theatre team," said Nichols. "It has helped them offset tuition and room and board."

No new taxes

Levies in November and May are renewals



Approval of the renewal levies in November and in May keeps the district financially solid until 2017, without raising taxes and without cutting programs or resorting to 'pay to play' sports.

By Amy Higgins
FINANCE

This November and again in May, voters will be asked to approve renewal issues for Elyria Schools.

Together, the levies account for more than \$18 million of the district's budget to pay for essentials like classroom materials, utilities, transportation and salaries.

The issues in November and May are renewals of existing levies and won't increase taxes.

"This is not new money," Superintendent Paul Rigda said. "Our public has said they can't afford any more, and we've listened and made cuts."

In just two years, in fact, the district has slashed \$6 million from the budget and eliminated more than 100 positions.

While it's been difficult for staff to make do with less help in the classrooms and fewer central resources like building maintenance, clerical, support and administrative staff, through it all, the district has kept programs intact for kids.

"To call programs like

sports, music, art and social clubs 'extracurricular' implies they aren't essential to student life. We disagree," Rigda said. "Programs like these, that build character, and other 'extras' like tutoring so students don't fall behind, or advanced programs to give high achievers a leg up for college, these are all vital to student success in school and in life."

And while terms like "pay to play" are tossed around in districts during tough financial times, Rigda said it's not where Elyria wants to go.

"Elyria is a big urban school district with a lot of success under its belt," he said. "We don't believe measures like this are good for us, our kids or our community."

"We've done our best to keep programs intact and accessible to everyone, despite difficult economic conditions," Rigda said. "That's what we will continue to do for as long as possible."

Approval of the renewal levies in November and in May keeps the district financially solid until 2017, without raising taxes.

Go, go gadget: Wireless gadgets make their way to school

By Amy Higgins
TECHNOLOGY

Smart phones, laptops, tablets, game systems.

Practically everything our children use today for entertainment or communication connects them to the Internet, opening a seemingly endless stream of information about nearly every subject imaginable.

Card catalogs have been replaced by search engines, and that's the way today's students work best.

"The old style of 'sit and get' learning doesn't apply any longer," said Ann Schloss, director of Academic Services. "Students today are visual learners. They like all things electronic. Technology gives them an outlet to learn the way they best learn."

That's why teachers are opening their classrooms to WiFi and letting students bring their smart devices to school.

It's called Bring Your Own Device, or BYOD, and it's a pro-



Fifth-grade students at Ely Elementary use their personal smart phones during a Social Studies lesson.

gram that was tested by fifth-grade students and teachers at Ely Elementary last May.

"It was a great opportunity for the students to see how the devices they use in their everyday life are applicable to a school setting," said Dr. Jack Dibee, Ely principal. "It made instruction

much more relevant and motivating for the students.

"I'm excited that we are going to expand this program so all students will have the opportunity to embrace technology, as it goes hand in hand with learning," he said.

This year, BYOD expands to all grade levels at Ely, and it goes online in other schools throughout the district as the wireless infrastructure is established.

There is a catch.

Students can only use their devices in lessons designated by the teacher as BYOD lessons. At all other times during the school day, their gadgets must be stowed in lockers or bookbags.

They also may only use wireless Internet provided by the district, which is filtered in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act. Outside sources for 3G or 4G are not allowed on school grounds.

For a complete look at the BYOD school policy, go to elyri-schools.org/board-of-education/

Standards for all...

Melding Common Core standards with basic skills

By Amy Higgins
SPECIAL EDUCATION

Elyria's special education teachers are testing new learning practices so students with significant cognitive disabilities have the same access to the state content standards as everyone else.

What they are doing is working, because Elyria Schools is now a model district for work in this field, according to the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence.

As Ohio rolls out new Common Core standards, a new norm for students with moderate or intensive needs is called Academic Content Standards Extended. Known simply as "extended standards," the plan links Common Core content with functional skills. It encourages multiple ways for students to learn and to show what they know.

"When the state began asking how its content standards could be embedded into functional skill building, we were asking our-

selves, 'Why shouldn't these kids have access to the standards while still working on basic skills?'" said Kristen Metz, autism specialist for Elyria Schools. "So we began creating units that aligned with the Common Core, but kept the material relatable and tangible. A unit on the solar system, for instance, required students to look at the moon each night and describe what they saw."

A typical practice in Elyria's classrooms is called guided reading: focused reading instruction in small groups.

Metz and her colleague, Kathy Pero, use this guided reading method with children in the moderate and intensive needs program.

Still, the approach is different. "It's very visual-based and uses lots of supports and assistive technology," Metz said. "Sight words are paired with pictures, for instance, and writing assignments may be done using pictures or label makers. It all depends on the

child's abilities."

It's a delicate balance to expand learning without overwhelming the child, Metz said, but the rewards are apparent.

In one particularly heartwarming story, Metz recounted how one student with moderate to intensive disabilities was able to relate what he learned months earlier about the moon while in a totally unrelated setting.

"That's huge," Metz said.

Working as a district team, Elyria's special education teachers are building extended standards into their day-to-day lessons in kindergarten through 12th grade, and streamlining processes so teachers and related services can work together to best meet the needs of children at all levels, no matter where they attend school in the district.

"Every child should have access to the curriculum to expand their interests," Metz said. "That's what we are doing. It's exciting for us and for the children."

Mapping success

Elyria teachers collaborate to design success plans for new standards

By Amy Higgins
CURRICULUM

In Elyria, teachers give teachers the support they need to meet Ohio's rigorous content standards and design roadmaps to navigate a complex curriculum in core subjects like English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies.

They do it through a process called curriculum mapping, a series of meetings at year's end where teachers of all grade levels come together to review content Ohio deems imperative for students to know.

In their meetings, the teachers determine the best way to teach this material and test students' understanding of it. While this practice is not new to Elyria, it is especially welcome this year, with school districts across the nation ushering in new Common Core standards.

In the world of education, rigor is a word that means depth of understanding or knowledge of a particular concept or subject matter. New Common Core standards up



Teachers collaborate during the summer months to map out curricular materials and plan lessons for the upcoming school year.

the ante on rigor, and state tests — like the Ohio Achievement Assessment and the Ohio Graduation Test — require students to provide evidence they understand concepts.

In English Language Arts, for instance, students may need to read multiple sources of text, explain how they are related, define points of view and relay their own perspective in writing, to prove they understand a concept.

To help students “get it,” teachers are combing through the standards and designing content paths to keep them going in the right direction. This curriculum roadmap streamlines the standards and helps ensure teachers across the district are teaching the same concepts in the same subject matters at approximately the same time throughout the school year.

This is good for students and for teachers: Students are

assured continuity, and teachers have support and guidance in lesson planning.

While Elyria's teachers have grown accustomed to curriculum maps, these are not the standard in other school districts, where it is not unusual for teachers to have to “figure it out” without assistance from their peers.

“Curriculum maps are a starting point and a very important pacing guide for delivering content throughout the year,” said Amy Keir, content specialist in English-language arts and social studies. “They offer a logical way to roll out material and meet state standards.”

More than 70 teachers attended the summer curriculum mapping sessions that took place the week following school's end, and they spent many hours pre-planning their work.

“Teams of teachers working together creates buy-in,” said Kathy Koepp, content specialist in math and science. “They do it because they are invested in this district and in the success of our students.”

Cornerstones of success

Law aims to bolster literacy at young age

By Amy Higgins
THIRD GRADE GUARANTEE

A cornerstone of learning and lifelong success is reading, and students who struggle with reading at an early age can fall behind quickly as they advance to higher grades.

Enter the Third Grade Guarantee.

This state initiative emphasizes early literacy and encourages help for students who may be having difficulty keeping up with reading in kindergarten through third grade.

It says students should be reading at a third-grade level by the time they finish third grade. Teachers will evaluate students along the way and, if help is needed, they'll work with students and their parents on ways to improve.



“Right to Read” week and Dr. Seuss celebrations are just a couple of the many ways teachers and staff engage students in reading throughout the school year.

There are many ways parents can help their children learn letters and sounds and build vocabulary at home.

Reading books together is a great place to start, as is encouraging conversation and reading, writing and drawing at home. Playing word games like “I Spy” and singing, or repeating rhymes like “Itsy Bitsy Spider,” are fun ways to connect with young children while reinforcing literacy skills.

Parents should never be shy about checking in with their child's teacher to see how they are doing and discussing ways to boost literacy at home.

For a great reference on how to boost literacy and help kids of all grade levels in core subjects, visit us at elyriaschools.org

A look at the Common Core classroom

By Amy Higgins
COMMON CORE

Parents and residents will soon be hearing a lot about Common Core State Standards, or CCSS, if they haven't already.

CCSS has become a driving force in education, aiming to bring national uniformity to what public school students learn — and how they learn it — in core subjects like English-language arts and mathematics.

Ohio adopted CCSS in 2010 and districts across the state have begun rolling it out, including Elyria Schools.

It's designed to ready students for college and the workforce by digging into and enhancing their reasoning skills and their ability to explain how they reached a solution. CCSS will change how lessons are taught and how state tests are written and administered.

Here's what a CCSS classroom looks like:

- **More nonfiction:** From fourth grade on, students will largely read nonfiction works.

- **More speaking and listening:** Students learn better when they talk about what they're learning.

- **Different tests:** Bubble tests are out and long-form tests are in. Short answer and essay format helps build reasoning and explanatory skills.

- **Digital state tests:** Computer-based state tests are rolling out thanks to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, simply know as PARCC.

- **More reasoning in math:** It's less about learning numbers and more about learning what they mean and how they relate in new math lessons.

- **Less is more:** CCSS tells teachers to cover fewer topics, but go more in-depth with the material at hand.

- **More teacher collaboration:** CCSS emphasizes big ideas that stretch across multiple areas so teachers of core subjects will work together.

- **Who, what, when, where, why and how:** Teachers and students will build questioning, inquiry and argumentation skills.

- **Rigor and relevance:** CCSS wants students to learn complex ideas using real experience. Students can expect to see more project-based and writing assignments.



Are You Ready for Some Football?

Elyria High School 2013 Varsity Football Schedule

Aug. 30 — Amherst Steele
Away, 7 p.m.

Sept. 6 — Elyria Catholic
Away, 7 p.m.

Sept. 13 — Midview
Home, 7 p.m.

Sept. 20 — Valley Forge
Home, 7 p.m.

Sept. 27 — Mayfield
Home, 7 p.m.
(Homecoming)

Oct. 4 — Brunswick
Away, 7 p.m.

Oct. 11 — North Royalton
Away, 7 p.m.

Oct. 18 — Shaker Heights
Home, 7 p.m.

Oct. 25 — Stow-Munroe Falls
Away, 7 p.m.

Nov. 1 — Medina
Home, 7 p.m.
(Senior Night)



Doing it Disney-style...

By Heather Durdil
FINE ARTS

This summer marked the 21st year in a row Elyria High School Madrigals have traveled to Walt Disney World in Orlando to perform at Disney World. They complete an application process and submit samples of their work to get invited.

"It's very rewarding to perform for audiences other than your family and friends," said Mark Jessie, choir director. "The smiles and positive feedback we get from impromptu or informal performances is rewarding to the students and myself."

