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Northeastern teams with NW Ohio service center, earns big grant

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Northeastern Local Schools has joined forces with the Northwest Ohio Educational Service Center and earned a substantial 21st Century Community Learning Grant from the Ohio Department of Education.

Northeastern officials report the grant "supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children" in grades 2-8.

The district's learning center is funded by a five-year grant totaling \$544,000. Funds broken down each year are: \$128,000 for each of fiscal years 2010-12, \$96,000 for fiscal year 2013 and \$64,000 for fiscal year 2014.

The program is designed to work with its students in order to meet state and local standards, particularly in reading and math.

The center is open from 7-8 a.m. and 3:15-5:15 p.m. weekdays. Family activities for Saturdays will also be scheduled throughout the year.

The learning center has also partnered with the Defiance Public Library, Defiance Area YMCA, Defiance College, Sauder Village, Wright Studios and Price Fitness to offer literacy, recreational, mentoring, historical, cultural and healthy habit programs.

"The Tinora Community Learning Center will focus on grades 2-8," explained district superintendent Jim Roach. "We will have a satellite at our Tinora Elementary School and Tinora Junior High School. Both satellites will be open 15 hours per week, which will include before- and after-school academic and enrichment activities. Transportation will be provided for the afternoon satellite.

"Field trip expenses will also be a part of our satellite programs and our Tinora staff will be utilized to provide the academic instruction for the satellite," he stressed.

School officials anticipate starting the learning center on Sept. 28.

Principals Larry Acocks and Kent Adams will finalize the center's selection of students for the program.

Parents will receive a letter this week providing information about the opportunity. Registration must be completed by Friday, Sept. 18. Space is limited.

"Our 21st Century satellite, I feel, will be a wonderful extension of our educational programming," added Roach. "By utilizing our staff for student academic instruction and partnering with local agencies, I feel this program has the potential to be one of the highest student-impact programs in my 30 years at Tinora."

Akron Beacon Journal

Ohio merging language tests

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Associated Press

The state plans to create a new type of language test by merging the writing test, dropped because of budget cuts, with the surviving reading exam. There are also plans to restore the fifth- and seventh-grade social studies test in two years.

Lawmakers cut the writing exam for fourth- and seventh-grade students and the social studies tests to save \$4.4 million needed to balance the tight state budget.

Those were the logical candidates to be dropped because the federal government requires testing in reading, math and science, said Stan Heffner, an Ohio Department of Education associate superintendent.

Most educators were happy to have four fewer tests to administer, he said.

Heffner said the new reading-writing test will be dubbed an English language arts exam.

That change pleased Bruce Bradley, director of curriculum and instruction for Keystone schools in Northeast Ohio.

"That makes all the educational sense in the world," Bradley said. Language arts are so closely linked at Keystone that middle school teachers have started teaching them in a combined block.

Heffner also said the plan is to return the social studies test after the current budget cycle ends in June 2011.

That's good news to some educators who worried about the effect of losing that test on students.

"It's all about citizenship, and that's not a piece we should lose when this generation will be electing our future leaders," said Sandy Williams, an instructional consultant with the Mahoning County Educational Service Center.

Ohio teachers will likely get more guidance as the Education Department overhauls state standards as part of Gov. Ted Strickland's education plan. Those standards outline skills and content students are expected to learn in every subject in every grade.

"We're looking at removing redundancies and organizing them by themes and topics so they'll be clearer and make more intuitive sense to the teachers," Heffner said.

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