This quarter, OESCA is highlighting two Educational Service Centers: the Allen County ESC and the Gallia–Vinton ESC.

Located in Lima, Ohio, the Allen County ESC has a long, successful tradition of serving the rural and suburban school districts of Allen County as well as Lima City Schools. Its mission is to provide quality service options and programming for the community, school districts, families and students of Allen County. To follow are just a few facts about the ESC, its staff, and the schools and students it serves:

- Allen County ESC employs approximately 112 full-, part-time, and contracted staff.
- The ESC provides job–embedded services with ninety–five percent (95%) of staff working in the buildings of client districts each day; central office staff only represent 5% of all staff.
- The ESC serves 9 client districts with over 15,000 students.
- Allen County ESC is one of 6 ESCs as well as a JVSD to serve as statewide preservice bus driver trainers. The instruction is provided by preservice instructors who are assigned to certain counties in eight geographic regions of Ohio. Allen County serves Allen, Defiance, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Lucas, Paulding, Putnam, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, and Wyandot counties.
- The Allen County ESC has a strong history of providing high quality programs and services to its school districts including, but not limited to, special education, gifted and gifted coordination services, as well as professional development for
teachers and administrators. Last year Allen County ESC held over 380 professional development activities with more than 2,600 attendees.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

On the Allen County ESC, check out their website at: http://www.allencountyesc.org

In Southern Ohio, the Gallia–Vinton ESC, like Allen County ESC, provides customized services to meet the needs of its client school districts. Located in Rio Grande, Ohio, the Gallia–Vinton ESC has established itself as a high quality, specialize service center with expertise in a number of areas including, but not limited to, after school and summer enrichment programs. The ESC is housed in Wood Hall on the University of Rio Grande Campus. Its purpose is to serve school districts within its service area to provide leadership and build services to enhance the capacity of schools and the community to support student achievement.

To follow are just a few facts about the ESC, its staff, and the schools and students it serves:

- The Gallia–Vinton ESC has gone through an extensive external review process and received AdvancED Accreditation.
- The ESC employs 14 full–time staff, 50 part–time staff, and 230 contracted staff.
- GVESC serves 5 districts with over 11,500 students in rural, southern Ohio.
- The ESC has high quality experienced staff with an average of 20 years of educational experience.
- The ESC is a prolific and successful grant writer pursuing and receiving a number of funding opportunities that have expanded learning opportunities for students and professional alike in its service territory. Examples include: 21st Century Grant & Community Learning Centers, ARRA Learning Centers, Math/Science Partnership (MSP), Math/Science Partnership (MSP) Planning, Improving Teacher Quality, Teaching American History Grant, Improving Literacy through School Libraries, and Innovations in Literacy grants.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

On the Gallia-Vinton ESC, check out their website at: http://www.galliavintonesc.org/index.aspx

The Allen County and Gallia–Vinton ESCs are two examples of the high quality, customer–focused, and cost–effective services of Ohio’s ESCs. For more information on Ohio’s premiere network of educational service providers go to www.oesca.org or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Thank you for your ongoing support of OESCA and Ohio’s network of ESCs.

Summit County’s TOPS Program Prepares Students with Autism for Independent Living After Graduation

by Jacquie Mazziotta

On a routine Wednesday in a traditional school building, a passing glance behind a classroom door appears to see a group of teens hanging out in a kitchen at the Transition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), a program for students with autism. In reality, these teens are students who have been diagnosed with autism, are of the transitional high school age, and are learning about real–world independent living in the apartment–style classroom, also known as an independent living lab.
The TOPS program, sponsored by the Summit County Educational Service Center, provides these students from several school districts with academic, vocational and life skills education necessary for the transition into adulthood.

“These kids are smart. I want to prove to the world they can learn independent living and social skills and be productive citizens,” said classroom teacher Kim Fuller.

**About TOPS**

TOPS, which is located in Tallmadge, Ohio, uses a functional life skills approach while incorporating the state core curriculum. Students learn a variety of living skills, from running a vacuum to appropriately caring for a family pet, so they can ultimately become independent, productive members of society. The TOPS program began when parents and districts approached the ESC about expanding opportunities for their children attending Kids First, a program for students in grades K–8 with autism, who would age out of that program.

When TOPS initially opened its doors last year, two students attended. Now the program is at full capacity and has grown to serve six teens from Summit, Wayne and Portage counties. TOPS received start-up money through a grant with one of the ESC’s partners, the Summit County Board of Developmental Disabilities. This seed money assisted the program in purchasing appliances (stove, refrigerator and washer/dryer) for the living lab. Private donations poured in from others and include the furniture in the living lab (couches, dining room set, tableware, etc.).

“We provide a unique learning opportunity for students across the region. TOPS is a program where students can celebrate their differences by developing their own unique skills. We have a wide variety of community experiences for students to participate in – from developing a budget and grocery shopping to providing services at a local church where the kids learn banquet prep and janitorial skills,” said Director of Services N’ecole Ast.

Students explore various job opportunities during daily vocational lab. As they progress, they transition into internships at local businesses. Ultimately the internships can lead to paid positions.

**Who is Bella?**

Bella, a golden retriever, was introduced to the classroom and after a few days of her presence, students appeared to have a decrease in disruptive behaviors. Fuller and her team decided to research whether the introduction of a dog in a school autism classroom would decrease disruptive behaviors. The research methodology included tracking data for the
targeted disruptive behaviors of each student on a daily basis, regardless of Bella’s presence. The retriever then began attending the classroom three days per week, ultimately visiting randomly for the last two months of research.

Remarkable reductions in targeted behaviors were observed when Bella was in the class. Students improved their language skills by teaching the retriever commands and tricks. The students practiced and improved following class teachings in order to ensure Bella followed commands before she was given a treat. They also learned social responsibility by walking Bella, as well as feeding and grooming the canine. Sensory needs were also met while engaging in an age-appropriate activity. Students were also able to generalize the skills they learned in the classroom at home, as parents reported increased interaction with their own pets as well as those encountered in the community.

The TOPS Team
Fuller, who has led the classroom since its inception, holds a master’s degree in education and an MBA. This is her second career, as she was a corporate controller before she began teaching as an intervention specialist four years ago.

“My son has developmental delays, and I realized that once he reached a certain age there was nowhere for him to go, so I decided to become a teacher and help provide a future for him and others,” she said.

Sean Boyd, classroom assistant for the program, has also had a career change. He holds a marketing degree and worked in the corporate world as a product manager. He, too, has a son with autism and has recently decided to return college to obtain a master’s degree in special education. He said his personal fulfillment of working with the students far outweighs any corporate goals or incentives that he may have had.

Alyson Casenhiser is the job coach with TOPS. “Once I started coaching, I loved it! Our students need to learn life skills through on-the-job training at retail shops, the local Tallmadge Recreation Center and at other participating businesses and organizations. TOPS provides this opportunity,” she said.

Steven Campbell learns painting skills

A Look Ahead
Based on area school districts’ needs for alternative placement for more intensive intervention, the Summit County ESC continues to consider and evaluate the need for the addition of a second classroom. Directors continue to explore grant
opportunities with the Summit County Board of Developmental Disabilities for community involvement—to increase partnerships in the community—a result of the Governor’s Employment First Initiative.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

About TOPS or research conducted at TOPS, visit [www.cybersummit.org](http://www.cybersummit.org) or call 330.945.5600

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**The Impact of Inter-district Open Enrollment in Mahoning County Public Schools**

*by Ronald J. Iarussi, Mahoning County ESC and Mahoning County CTC and Karen H. Larwin, Youngstown State University*

Inter-district open-enrollment (OEI) is defined broadly as the choice of families to enroll their children in school in a neighboring school district if that district has opted to participate in the state’s open enrollment option. The supporters of open-enrollment maintain that OEI is in the best interest of individuals by creating a more competitive “market” for school selection (Malugade, 2014, p. 820). Contrarily, Malugade maintains that opponents of this type of school choice believe that OEI works against equality of education for all. The “equity theory” objectors’ uphold that OEI can provide benefits for some, but not for all, thus not benefiting all of society (Malugade, 2014, p. 821). Whether or not OEI is beneficial to the students who take advantage of this school choice option is unclear.

There is a dearth of known research examining the impact of inter-district open-enrollment on academic achievement. The existing research that has addressed academic impacts has presented mixed results. These mixed results are likely mitigated by context specific factors. For example, while studies have examined the impact of OEI in Colorado, researchers have concluded that OEI is having positive impacts for students who are not economically disadvantage or academically disadvantaged (Lavery & Carlson, 2012). Colorado’s school districts, like many districts in the western states, have experienced an influx of undocumented students over the last few years, resulting in many urban district students leaving their home-districts for other types of educational opportunities (Glass, 2014). Similarly, research out of Wisconsin (Welsh & Zimmer, 2011) and California’s Los Angeles schools (Ledwith, 2010) suggest that the impact of open-enrollment on student achievement has been beneficial for students afforded the opportunity to attend school outside of their home districts. Contrarily, studies out of Florida (Juhyoung, 2012), Colorado (Carlson, 2014) and Arizona (Powers, Topper & Silver, 2012) suggest that OEI has not shown any notable impact on academics, especially when examining its impact across all student groups.

One theme that is consistent across the existing research is a question about socio-economics of the students who are electing to attend neighboring districts. Research not specifically looking at the impact on academics suggests that OEI has a “re-segregating” effect on student populations (Goodwin, Lehand, Baxter, & Southworth, 2006). Studies based on school districts in North Carolina and Colorado highlight that a large portion of students participating in OEI come from more affluent student groups, and subsequently the more academically prepared student groups (Goodwin, et al, 2006, Lavery & Carlson, 2012). Similarly, research out of Massachusetts found that
overwhelmingly parents will participate in OEI in an effort to send their children to more affluent and higher achieving schools (Fossey, 1994). The result of these types of migration can have a debilitating effect on the already struggling schools that students are leaving (Welsch & Zimmer, 2011). This “geography of opportunity” (Ledwith, 2010, p. 243) for students who have the means to attend a neighboring school (i.e., mobility and motivation) may explain why some research concludes that the option of OEI has a positive effect on the students who choose to open-enroll.

This investigation includes data from the public schools in Mahoning County, across the years of 2004–2014, that have students participating in the open-enrollment. Data is not included for students opting for private schools, or alternative schools, such as career schools, or charter schools. The data for this investigation was specifically limited to OEI from one public school district to another neighboring regular public school district. Student level data for the years 2003–2014 was provided in an Excel spreadsheet by the Executive Director at ACCESS for the purposes of this investigation. Data included student socioeconomic status (qualification for free or reduced lunches) and indicated both the student’s home-district and attending-district information. Student data included scores from grades three through eight, as well as high school achievement scores. This data included grade level exams (3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and OGT), area of standardized assessment score (reading, math, science, social science, and writing), raw scores and scaled scores for each assessment. Student data included scores from grades three through eight, as well as high school achievement scores. Lastly, data is examined at the district level.

Analysis was conducted with student scores as the dependent variable of interest. The goal of this analysis was to assess if there were differences in student achievement scores if student’s participated in open-enrollment, based on student’s SES status, based on the assessment type, the grade level, and/or the year associated with the scores. Analysis reveals no differences in average student achievement scores for those who participate in OEI relative to students who remain in their home-district. Further examination of the data for OEI status by socio-economic status indicates that no differences exist indicating that for this sample of data, socio-economic status does not differ for the students who are attending school in their home-district relative to students participating in the OEI. Additionally, analysis examined if differences exist in assessment scores across exam sections (i.e., math, reading, etc), for students enrolled as OEI relative to those students who attend their home-district, and no significant differences were found. Lastly, county data was examined by district. Results indicate differences do not exist across the two groups, with the exception of one struggling district in Mahoning County.

The results of the current investigation suggest that students who leave their home district to attend an open-district perform at or above those remaining in the home district. However, these differences were not found to be practically or statistically significant, with the exception of the poorest performing district. This finding is consistent with existing research that found that OEI did not have a significant impact on student achievement for those electing to enroll in neighboring public school districts (Hong & Choi, 2015). This finding, however, is contrary to the generally held perception that by allowing students from poorer performing districts to open enroll...
into higher achieving district, this migration will have a negative impact the district that they attend (Barney, 2002). While students who migrate to higher performing districts may arrive with lower scores, the data consistently suggests that these students are, on average, performing slightly above their in-resident peers in that same district.

Secondly, the data suggests that students, who migrate out of the poorest performing district included in this investigation, perform significantly better in the districts that they elect to attend, when compared to their peers who continue to attend that same district. (Iarussi & Larwin, 2015)

Morris (2013) suggests that parents and caregivers are motivated to participate in OEI if they believe that this choice will academically and socially benefit their student. Some parents will participate in OEI for reasons of convenience (before and after-school childcare) as well as out of nostalgia: the wish for their school-age children to attend a district that they attended. Regardless of why families participate, the current investigation suggests that there is no association between participating in inter-district open enrollment and student achievement, with the exception of the poorest performing district. For many of those students and their families, they seek to participate in OEI because they believe this “choice” to attend another local public school provides them access to the educational environment and resources they need to be academically successful.

References
Barney, J. S. (2002). The effect of open enrollment on high gaining and low gaining districts. Published Dissertation, Bowling Green State University, UMI: 3054682


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**Connect, Secure, and Protect Our Students with School Apps FAST**

*by Tony McHale, Account Executive, School Apps FAST, a division of FastAppz*

As the 2014–2015 school year heads into the final days before summer break, The Ohio Educational Service Center Association, "OESCA," and School Apps Fast (a division of FastAppz LLC), strategic partners, will be providing great opportunities for Ohio ESCs, schools and school districts all across Ohio to obtain a powerful Mobile App product to help them better connect, secure, and protect our students and staff in today's volatile environment. With the threat of bullying, violence, and potential active shooter situations unfolding, schools are looking for ways to protect and stay connected in real time using the most popular and fastest growing resource, "The Mobile App."

OESCA and School Apps FAST are offering several ways to help schools purchase their very own Mobile App, customized for their individual school or district, now through June 30, 2015 at half price!

During this promotion, any Ohio school or school district or ESC can purchase a custom Mobile App for $1,500 – a one-time development charge. That's a 50% discount off the retail price. In addition, if any ESC buys their App from now till June 30, any school or district App with in their service region will get an additional $100 off the $1,500 development cost.

**Offer number two:** if any school district purchases a district App and One High School App, OESCA and School Apps FAST will include for that district, for FREE, an "Internal Security App" (private in nature) for secure internal use at "NO CHARGE."

This is an additional $2,995 savings to the district!
**Offer number three: “Revenue Sharing.”** This option allows schools to purchase their App by using the sponsorship and advertising feature within the App to pay for the App totally and even generate additional revenues for their schools. School Apps FAST works with the school by using the school’s own sponsors and current advertisers, or jointly with national advertisers from School Apps FAST, to sell space or add on their App to raise additional money for band uniforms, pay-for-play programs and many other needs in schools today.

Today nearly 1,000,000 new smart phone devices are being activated **each day** in the US and it is quickly becoming the preferred way parents and students communicate.

Take a quick look at a few sample Apps below and see what other schools and districts and ESC’s are doing to better connect.

**SAMPLE APPS:**
1. Pickaway ESC
2. Mid-Ohio ESC
3. OESCA
4. BASA
5. Montgomery County ESC
6. Clermont County ESC
7. Lake Erie West ESC
8. Ashley High School (Sponsors & Ads)
9. Washington Local Schools (Sponsors & Ads)
10. Werner Elementary (Sponsors & Ads)
11. Thurgood Marshall Middle School (Sponsors & Ads)
12. Robertson County Schools (Sponsors & Ads)

Last fall, the Wall Street Journal featured an article that stated, "**The Web is dying, and Apps are killing it.**"

Forbes published an article that showed that Web activity went **DOWN 11% in 2013** and is expected to drop that much or more in **2014**.

If you and your schools are relying on **OLD** technology to alert parents and staff without using the fastest growing Mobile product, "The Mobile App" you are quickly falling behind!

Take this opportunity and great offers to step up your game and give parents and staff a better tool in the bag, to connect, alert, and improve communications across the board.

Please contact **OESCA**, your **regional ESC**, or **School Apps FAST** as soon as possible as June 30 is quickly approaching.
City has embraced the “shop local” concept by featuring products from local merchants and artists with an emphasis on Painesville, Lake and surrounding counties. The unique items can be bought separately or assembled into gift baskets.

The Lake County ESC is providing services to adults with special needs to be able to work in a real world work environment.

Dr. Brian Bontempo, Superintendent
Lake County Educational Service Center

The Lake County Educational Service Center has been operating vocational programs for students with disabilities for years with students participating in the Lake County Transition to Work Program (LCTTW). LCTTW provides transition for students and offers them the opportunity to work their way up to working in the community to the greatest extent possible. Many of the students are able to work in the community for five full days per week by the end of their time in this program. The difficulty comes when they transition to adult programming; often the same individual is placed in a setting that is too restrictive in that they are not in the community and with no services available to them. Vocational Solutions for Adults provides new opportunities for adults with disabilities in Lake County to experience meaningful and integrated work within the community allowing individuals to put their skills into action. It is a real benefit when the individual participates in LCTTW and transitions to Vocational Solutions for adults as we are able to initiate the adult services at the exact point where the individual was performing in the school age program.

The Shoppe in the City was developed to meet the needs of adults with disabilities in Lake County and to fulfill Ohio’s Employment First Initiative. Building on another highly successful Lake County Educational Service Center vocational skills training opportunity of the LCTTW program already in existence for students, Unique Like Me, which provides a retail environment where students make and sell all of their handmade items, The Shoppe in the City came to life. The employees receive ongoing training to learn new job skills necessary to be successful and to maintain employment. Some of which include; work schedules and timeliness, attention to task, attention to detail, care of work equipment, work appropriate dress, follows safety precautions, and ability to work independently.

“I have been helping to put together baskets of assorted items here in the store and I vacuum and I do whatever else is needed here,” said employee Chris Rychnowsky. Al Simpson also helped assemble gift baskets but enjoys doing other jobs at the store. “I get to do the cash register stuff too,” he added. More than 20 local vendors have their products on sale at the store. Some local Lake County favorites include Humphrey’s Popcorn and Fowler’s Mill mixes. The Shoppe in the City currently employs three people and anticipates hiring more to meet the needs of Lake County’s adults with disabilities.

The Ohio Employment First initiative, created by an executive order signed into law by Governor John Kasich in March 2012, changed how services are provided to people with developmental disabilities by making it a priority to expand employment opportunities for individuals in Ohio. The initiative identifies key areas including: all individuals with
disabilities shall have competitive employment in an integrated setting in the community, enhance the individual’s self-determination, and provide opportunities for greater wealth, quality of life, and increased sense of self-worth.

The Shoppe in the City provides employment opportunities in retail for adults with disabilities in line with the Governor’s initiative. Individuals who were students in the LCTTW vocational program can easily transition into the Vocational Solutions for Adults, thus ensuring that they receive the services that they are ready for and meets the goal outlined in the Employment First initiative. This program and the unique collaborative partnerships that have been created are providing positive results for all including working with local and state agencies.

“Adults who work with us each day get the experiences of checking inventory, stocking the shelves, organizing the products. This program provides individuals with the opportunity to not only showcase their abilities and become employed, but also creates community awareness that individuals with disabilities should be integrated into workplaces,” Julie O’Neil, Director of Special Education said. The Shoppe in the City is one venue for the Vocational Solutions for Adults program. Staff will work with individuals on job development, job seeking, and job coaching in an effort to ensure that all are working in a setting that meets their needs and interests.

To learn more about The Shoppe in The City, the Vocational Solutions for Adults program, and the many benefits individuals are experiencing please contact Julie O’Neil Director of Special Education at 440.350.2563 or at joneil@lakeesc.org.

In partnership with ServeOhio and AmeriCorps, the ESC of Central Ohio has recruited, trained and deployed a cadre of dedicated volunteers to help Ohio elementary school students catch up on their reading skills. Grant funding for the project is provided by ServeOhio.

Currently, there are 120 AmeriCorps members serving schools to help build elementary students' reading skills through the Ohio Reading Corps.
program. The number of volunteers has more than doubled since its inception in 2012.

These volunteers, referred to as Corps members, are working daily in classrooms, each helping about 20 students overcome various hurdles to literacy, such as fluency, comprehension or letter sounds. That’s approximately 2,400 students in Central Ohio.

“With the advent of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, reading intervention is a critical need in most elementary schools across Ohio,” said ESC of Central Ohio Superintendent Tom Goodney. “This is a very specific population of students. They are the ones who struggle with reading and really need the extra help. These volunteers are invaluable to classroom teachers who do not have time or resources to provide targeted help in the course of a school day.”

After earning his doctorate in early language and literacy, Sean Noe joined the ESC in 2012 as project coordinator to launch the program and oversee its day-to-day operation.

“We are working with teachers, literacy coaches, helping the volunteers find out how to help with each child,” he said.

Each student receives 20–30 minutes of service every day in one–on–one and small group settings. “I thought this would be a great opportunity to reach out to my community,” said Gail Stone, a Corps member who is a reading tutor for J.W. Reason Elementary School in Hilliard.

The former preschool teacher said she’s always felt called to work in education. At Hilliard, the reading program has been so successful that Stone has surpassed the teachers’ expectations for her current students, allowing her to work with another group of readers.

“If you can comprehend what’s been handed to you, that allows you to apply what you know,” Stone said. “Then, these students can move forward a little easier through life.”

“Our goal is to utilize our AmeriCorps volunteers to help accelerate second and third grade student learning in literacy through targeted assistance,” South–Western Superintendent Bill Wise said. Throughout Central Ohio, most volunteers are assigned to South–Western, Westerville and Whitehall schools; however, there are also placements in Hilliard, Marion, Marysville, Olentangy and Reynoldsburg.

Recently, the Ohio Reading Corps has partnered with other educational service centers to assist some of their local school districts. They currently serve six districts in the Cleveland area (through Cuyahoga County ESC): Bedford, Maple, Warrensville, Garfield, Lorain and North Royalton schools; 13 districts in the Youngstown area (Mahoning County ESC): Columbiana Exempted Village, Columbiana County, Brookfield, Trumbull County, Campbell, Struthers, Youngstown, Youngstown Community School, Austintown, Boardman, Poland, Jackson–Milton and West Branch schools; and two districts in the Dayton area (Montgomery County ESC): Northridge and Dayton schools.

Through their service, AmeriCorps members are improving learning and strengthening local schools to increase individual student academic achievement.

William Hall, Executive Director ServeOhio

“The Ohio Reading Corps is an excellent example of AmeriCorps program design and AmeriCorps
Member service coming together to address a critical state and local issue,” said ServeOhio Executive Director William Hall. “Through their service, AmeriCorps members are improving learning and strengthening local schools to increase individual student academic achievement.”

The AmeriCorps members have found welcoming environments in all participating districts.

“They are beginning to feel like they are really part of the building staff,” Noe said.

In return for a minimum of 900 hours of service with AmeriCorps, Ohio Reading Corps members receive a modest stipend and an Education Award that they can use to repay student loans or use toward current education expenses.

Ohio Reading Corps members include retired teachers, recent graduates, licensed educators and even individuals from other professions looking to get into the field of education.

“They have a wide range of experiences and educational backgrounds,” Noe said. “However, each AmeriCorps Member on the Ohio Reading Corps project shares a common goal: to help children gain valuable reading skills that will impact all areas of their lives.”

The one–on–one work of the volunteers greatly contributed to an improvement in Hilliard’s reading test scores, said Sharon Esswein, an Ohio Reading Corps coordinator within Hilliard City Schools.

“Reading is a part of every single subject area,” Esswein said. “Our bottom line is the children sitting in our seats. If this helps give our children more personalized attention and more practice with those reading strategies, then we really hope to be a part of it.”

The Ohio Reading Corps is planning for a larger program next year. Noe said they hope to recruit up to 160 volunteers and potentially expand from their current list of 22 school districts.

“Districts are excited,” Noe said. “There’s a huge burden with the Third Grade Guarantee, and they’re feeling a lot of pressure. Districts appreciate our AmeriCorps people going in there and giving teachers extra support.”

The support, cooperation and excitement from the AmeriCorps members, districts, students and the ESC bode well for the program and for its goals, Noe said.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Sean Noe at sean.noe@escco.org or 614.542.4173

“The training the members have received, along with the support from the districts, has created a group of motivated, informed, dedicated people who are already making a difference for hundreds of students.

To apply to become an Ohio Reading Corps volunteer, please visit http://www.escco.org/Pages/OhioReadingCorps.aspx, click on “Application” within the box marked “Apply.”

Free Job-Posting!

Did you know? OESCA will post your open position to our website FOR FREE!

Simply email Donna Burge (dburge@oesac.org) with your application and job description, as well as application deadline, and OESCA will post it!
Dear INFOhio Supporter,

For the third year, we’re looking for energetic individuals employed within Ohio school buildings and districts to join the 150+ member INFOhio District/Building ICoach team. This team supports the teaching and learning of INFOhio resources while strengthening the technology skills of students, teachers, and staff. Individuals accepted to be part of the FY16 INFOhio District/Building Level ICoach team will be trained at no charge to help their peers incorporate INFOhio resources and other digital tools successfully in the classroom. D/B ICoach training also counts as required professional development hours in most districts.

Here’s what one of last year’s D/B ICoaches had to say about the program:

"I am so thankful for the chance to serve as a Building Coach. It was exciting to see teachers at other buildings learn what INFOhio could do to help them in their day to day classroom!"

You can nominate teachers and librarians who might be interested in becoming a FY16 INFOhio District/Building Level ICoach or complete the application yourself. Find the program guidelines and application at https://www.infohio.org/goto/dbicoach-fy16.

We will be accepting applications through April 15, 2015. Notification of acceptance into the District/Building ICoach program will be confirmed by April 30, 2015. Training for the District/Building Level ICoach is through an online course and allows flexibility for the trainee. The course will be open from May through August 2015.

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A LeanOhio for Sustainable Local Government and School Districts
Partnerships & Opportunities for ESCs

by Brad Hollingsworth, P.E., Assistant Director, Center for Innovation and Data Services, Muskingum Valley ESC

Abstract
Ohio’s schools and local government entities are under great pressure to generate operational efficiencies. ESCs can help them make their processes simpler, faster, better, and less costly as regional service centers providing LeanOhio Boot Camps and process improvement support.

Introduction
Rising costs, stagnant tax revenues, and a decreasing population put Ohio’s local schools and government entities on a burning platform to develop operational efficiencies (Ross and Keen 2012). In a 2012 letter to Governor Kasich and the Ohio General Assembly summarizing the Beyond Boundaries report, Ross and Keen describe the current situation for these organizations: “Ohio’s local schools and governments have reached a critical juncture. Service expectations continue to grow and costs are rising faster than the economy. Our school systems and government entities must find ways to reduce costs and improve efficiency. The status quo simply can’t continue.”
It is unlikely that a single solution exists to completely solve all issues around the increasing service expectations and the need to improve efficiencies. Instead local school districts and government entities will most likely need to utilize several methods to create their own long term sustainability. The 2012 Beyond Boundaries report emphasizes the opportunity to improve efficiency through shared services (Ross and Keen 2012). Process improvement is another proven method to effectively increase service performance and operational efficiency.

The Ohio General Assembly allocated funding for process improvement training and project support through the Local Government Efficiency Program. This program provides the knowledge, skills, and guidance necessary for transformational change. Ohio’s local schools and government entities simply need to devote the time, effort, and commitment to pursue excellence. Educational Service Centers can connect local school districts and government entities to process improvement training and contribute to their success implementing these methods.

**Process Improvement and Lean**

Process improvement is synonymous with continuous improvement, which is striving for perfection in quality through the relentless pursuit of improving existing processes according to the American Society for Quality (2014). There are several methods for continuous improvement including PDCA, Lean, Six Sigma, and Total Quality Management (TQM) as well as blended approaches like Lean Six Sigma. Common denominators of these methods include a respect for people that do the work as well as a focus on customers, systems thinking, and process analysis.

The plan–do–check–act (PDCA) cycle is a set of four simple steps that are repeated indefinitely. Lean is a model based on the Toyota Production System that pursues the identification and elimination of waste from processes and improves flow. Six Sigma is a problem solving approach that uses statistical tools to reduce variation in processes.

Lean provides the best approach for Ohio’s local schools and government entities to begin creating their own operational efficiency and sustainability. Unlike Six Sigma, the tools used in Lean are simple and can be used by front line staff without statistical training and software. Schools and government entities typically lack the extensive operational data required for the statistical tools in Six Sigma. Most importantly, the focus of Lean is eliminating waste such as unnecessary steps and decisions that need to be removed prior to optimizing the process with Six Sigma tools.

The Muskingum Valley ESC (MVESC) has successfully used Lean to eliminate waste and improve processes within the organization. Hollingsworth, 2015

The Muskingum Valley ESC (MVESC) has successfully used Lean to eliminate waste and improve processes within the organization. After the merger with the Perry–Hocking ESC, the hiring process became overwhelming and unsustainable due to the sheer volume of contracts to be approved by the governing board each month. The MVESC created a process map of the current hiring process that revealed 116 steps, numerous handoffs, and several decisions were required. A key element of Lean is the fundamental understanding of the current state of
an existing process. The MVESC used this insight to develop solutions to streamline the process, which saved 5 hours per month that were re-allocated to more critical tasks.

The Local Government Efficiency Program
The Local Government Efficiency Program (LGEP) was created through House Bill 59 of the 130th General Assembly, based on the success of the LeanOhio Office, a section within the Ohio Department of Administrative Services. The LeanOhio team consists of several consultants that provide state agencies with a variety of services to improve performance. Their mission is to make government services simpler, faster, better, and less costly. The team consistently demonstrates this commitment by leading Lean projects for state agencies that reduce the number of steps in a process and the time to provide a service by over 50%. Through the LGEP, Ohio’s schools and local government entities have access to similar resources that allow them to take ownership of improving their performance.

The LGEP provides funding for scholarships to attend a LeanOhio Boot Camp as well as grants for process improvement projects. Ohio schools and local government entities can apply for up to 48 scholarships per year (12 per quarter) for leaders and staff to attend a one week course on Lean through a certified training partner in their local area. This course, developed by LeanOhio, provides participants a practical, interactive approach to eliminate waste with a focus on government processes.

Process improvement involves untangling the complexity of processes that have evolved over time. Agencies typically need expert guidance and support as well as an impartial perspective to analyze internal processes. The LGEP grants provide local entities up to $100,000 for resources that include consulting, facilitating, and training. ESCs can provide Ohio’s local schools and government entities both training and support through collaboration and partnerships.

Collaboration and Partnerships
There is a clear need for ESCs and Information Technology Centers (ITCs) in Ohio to extend their services beyond education into local government (Ross and Keen 2012). The MVESC demonstrates the capability of ESCs to meet this need by offering LeanOhio Boot Camps locally and regionally. The MVESC has seven boot camps scheduled during the 2014–2015 school year in Zanesville.

The MVESC has partnered with the Ohio University Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs to make LeanOhio Boot Camps available to local schools and government entities in Appalachian Ohio. These boot camps are offered at Ohio University locations including Athens, Chillicothe, and Proctorville.

The MVESC has also partnered with Zane State College to provide LeanOhio training and project support to their staff. The potential growth for this relationship includes assisting in the development of a lean program within the college demonstrated by other universities (Krehbiel 2015). There are also opportunities to expand the availability of the LeanOhio Boot Camps to eastern Ohio at the Cambridge campus.

Other ESCs have entered this arena and are offering LeanOhio Boot Camps throughout the state. The ESC of Lorain County held its first boot camp in Elyria in July 2014 with the instructor support from the MVESC. This boot camp included participants from the ESC, Job & Family Services, the Board of Mental

The LGEP grants provide local entities up to $100,000 for resources that include consulting, facilitating, and training. ESCs can provide Ohio’s local schools and government entities both training and support through collaboration and partnerships. Hollingsworth, 2015
Health, a public health district, and the Sheriff’s Office. They have completed 2 more boot camps and have 2 additional boot camps scheduled this school year.

The Southern Ohio ESC (SOESC) has assisted the MVESC with the instruction of five boot camps this school year. The SOESC hosts its first boot camp beginning on February 26th in Hillsboro. Through partnerships and collaborations the ESCs have trained over 140 school and local government employees across the state of Ohio.

Conclusions
Lean and the Local Government Efficiency Program provide clear opportunities for schools and local government entities to reduce costs through improved efficiencies. This training and consultation performed by three ESCs demonstrates that ESCs can provide services to member districts and extend beyond education to serve local government. Collaboration and partnerships are necessary to develop successful regional shared service centers. The existing ESC network provides a strong framework to support process improvement as well as additional shared services.

Brad Hollingsworth is the Assistant Director for the Center of Innovation and Data Services at the Muskingum Valley ESC. Brad is an ASQ certified Six Sigma Black Belt and a registered Professional Engineer with over 11 years of process improvement experience.

References

Decades of research have suggested that the initial years of the principalship are critically important. Existing research has suggested that mentors can provide needed knowledge, time, and commitment to support educational leaders who are transitioning from classroom teachers to leaders of change. There are standout programs that are heavily involved in supporting principals through high-quality, sustained mentoring and professional development. In some areas, mentoring is provided during pre-service training and into the first years of the principalship (Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2012). The activities are embedded into the district culture and may include several days of collaborative learning with national experts, receiving up to two years of mentoring by highly trained retired district...
principals, completion of a self-assessment, role playing and simulations mimicking the realities of an actual principalship and providing seminars or group exercises (Corcoran, et al., 2012).

The current manuscript describes the impact of a Beginning Principals’ Mentorship Program (BPMP, 2013). The BPMP began as an outgrowth of Principals’ Discovery Network in in Northeast Ohio. The Principals’ Discovery Network was a piloted with 10 principals during the 2012/2013 academic year. The planning process was to develop a program that could capitalize on principal expertise, leadership theory and practice from the state level, and extend that which was already in place for existing principal preparation programs. The intention was to form a professional learning community which would expose new administrators to development activities to improve their leadership skills.

The BPMP program delivery followed a coaching model in which trained mentors would focus on the beginning principals’ individual needs, provide feedback on performance, and offer technical assistance in such areas as communication, team building, instructional leadership, family engagement, time management, and the use of data to improve student achievement. Each first-year principal was assigned to a mentor, and mentors and the beginning principals had specific responsibilities that they are to carry out to completion of the program, including but not limited to ongoing communication, meetings, assigned readings, and feedback on inventories and surveys.

The purpose of the data collection was to examine the effects of mentoring on beginning principals. The research sought to understand if there are benefits of a mentorship program for beginning principals, did the mentoring provided the participants with the support needed to navigate their first year experience, and was there an impact on the participants’ leadership perspectives, as measured by Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), and their self-efficacy, as measured with the Ohio Leadership Advisory Committee (OLAC) assessment.

Participants included eight female participants and 11 male participants. Nine were employed as high school principals, five were employed at the middle school, and five were employed at the elementary school. Five were hired as assistant principals, of which, three were at a high school level and two were at a middle school level. The majority of the districts represented were suburban, with two that were rural, and one that was urban/suburban.

Data included responses from a pre/post administration of the OLAC and the LPI and an open-ended questionnaire developed to understand participant’s perception of the program activities. The LPI measures five factors regarding principal practices: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. The OLAC is used to help individuals determine their level of self-efficacy, useful for school improvement. In addition, to allow participants an opportunity to expand or react to specific topics, qualitative, open-ended questions were utilized.

Qualitative feedback revealed a number of themes related to participants experiences including the mentor/beginning principal relationship, support through communication, and the networking opportunities. Jones & Larwin, 2015

Results from the repeated administration of the LPI and the OLAC indicate that participants scored significantly higher on all sub-measures of these instruments, with the exception of the “Encourage
the Heart” measure of the LPI. While participant’s responses indicate an increased score on this factor, this increase was not statistically significant. The greatest area of increase was found for Inspire a Shared Vision on the LPI, and in the area of Collaboration on the OLAC.

Qualitative feedback revealed a number of themes related to participants experiences including the mentor/beginning principal relationship, support through communication, and the networking opportunities. Participants report building relationships throughout the course of the program were important as one principal shared, “Having a ‘point person’ to address concerns with was highly valuable this year. It was helpful when meeting with my mentor and sharing my concerns, successes, and failures, to hear from a veteran that I am normal, that my experiences are normal, and that I am working in the right directions.” More than one principal described the program as providing a “safety net” and one went on to say that the “safety net relieved some anxiety for me in my first year.”

Participants also felt that the support received through communication was a positive aspect of the BPMP. One participant said, “I have continually called on (mentor name) experiences, being able to bounce my ideas for specific situations. This is done with the assurance that we are speaking in confidence and I can continue to develop my leadership style.”

Networking was the third theme that stood out as vital as a sustainer for the participants more than the program. As one participant shared, “The establishment of a network of other beginning administrators is highly valuable as we face challenges typical of entry year administrators.” One noted that just being with people outside of district proved especially enlightening, “This allowed me to hear fresh perspective on the content taught in college. This widening of perspective was one of the highlight [sic] for me of this mentorship program.” Others commented that “the large group meeting allowed for new principals to not only create a social network, but helped us in creating an outlet for issues.” To sum it all up, one participant said, “If I had to choose only one benefit of the BPMP, it is that the program exposed me to a support system that includes other ‘rookie’ administrators being led by seasoned veterans who are thriving and surviving in the profession.” It is evident that many of these participants will continue reaching out to one another and networking due to the implementation of this program.

Mentors also provided a self-reflection about the program. Most mentors indicated that they experiences benefits from being a mentor. Several statements addressed this mutual benefit from the mentors’ point of view, as they indicated: it allowed me to reflect on my practices...learned a few new ideas; and the discussions and sharing of information benefitted all members of the program. This feedback from the mentors provided an unexpected consequence of their participation that could facilitate acquiring new mentors in the future. Every participant indicated that communication, collaboration, and group discussion were program highlights. The participants stated that having an actively involved, currently employed mentor was important. The investigation findings are consistent with the findings of Hipp and Bredeson (1995) when they reviewed items that indicated those that could influence a difference within the classroom. Some of those influential items were collaboration and communication, which was highly rated to items on the OLAC. Additionally, Hipp and Bredeson suggest that the LPI factors of Enable Others to Act, Inspire a Shared Vision, and Model the Way are those types of behaviors that are found in effective educational leaders.

By taking a proactive stance in principal preparation through early supervising, supporting, and mentoring, the impact of first-year principal on student achievement can be accelerated.

Jones & Larwin, 2015
According to a Wallace Foundation study, there is not a “single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership” (Wallace Foundation, 2012, p. 1). By taking a proactive stance in principal preparation through early supervising, supporting, and mentoring, the impact of first-year principal on student achievement can be accelerated. Mentoring can make a difference in providing support through communication, networking, and building relationships as new principals improve their instructional leadership skills.

References


*Full study results are available upon request.

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Online Tutoring: A Flexible Way to Develop Students’ Full Potential

by Amy Gareis, Public Relations Coordinator, Jefferson County ESC

Abstract
Technology has made it possible to receive help at our fingertips. The Jefferson County Educational Service Center (JCESC) is providing even greater access in a venture with an online tutoring program so students within the seven districts it serves could reach their full potential.

Individualized Attention
In partnership with One on One Learning, the JCESC offers a customized learning program to target the student’s specific needs. Each child is assigned a tutor to fit his or her needs and address specific learning styles. Goals are then set and continuously evaluated through the use of individualized benchmark assessments. Since the tutoring occurs online, it gives the student options to conduct sessions either in school or at home.

One on One Learning has worked to strengthen student learning since 2000. In 2010, the company expanded its services from face-to-face tutoring to online help, enabling it to assist more children across the country. To date, One on One works with some 9,500 students throughout the U.S. By joining with the JCESC, it is giving local students access to the program and a chance to increase their test scores and grades.

“We just formed a new partnership with (JCESC) in September,” said Marcel Monnar, Ed.S., founder and president of One on One Learning. “One on One has provided educational services to ESCs and schools throughout the nation. [Our services] are geared towards the needs of the schools and students.”

“How It Works
The program is primarily geared towards students with learning deficiencies and those who are at risk, but it also works with high achievers and gifted students. Each student begins with a benchmark evaluation in order to provide an individualized program and examine his or her learning styles and habits. Additionally, it focuses on the student’s strengths to help build confidence. Following the evaluation, the student will receive a recommendation suggesting a number of sessions to help address any deficient skills. The tutor will communicate with the parent, teacher or school contact to ensure the student is on a path to successful learning and a progress report will be generated at the end of each week to help strategize improvement.

“We identify what the needs are, why the student is struggling and how much time to tutor, and then we develop the program of study.”
Marcel Monnar, Ed.S., Founder and President
One on One Learning
one-on-one or in a group, but the online program is also done one on one or in a group."

**Local Connection**

JCESC connected with One on One Learning in an effort to reach two types of people: families and school districts. Since the program is flexible, it works both at home and at school. Monnar said that is a major benefit.

"We're excited with the possibility of being able to offer schools a 21st Century way of providing assistance. It's more flexible to schools and for students, as well as low cost," Monnar commented.

"[One on One Learning has] been fantastic for us... We've helped 150 kids each year over the last two years and now it’s down to 40."

John Wilson, Superintendent
Southern Local School District

**Seeing the Benefits**

The Southern Local School District in Salineville, Columbiana County, works with JCESC and is one of two local sites utilizing the program. Superintendent John Wilson said the district has had it for three years and officials have seen much success.

“It’s been fantastic for us,” said Wilson. "We’ve been able to pull kids and give them the intervention they need to help them. We’ve helped 150 kids each year over the last two years and now it’s down to 40. I think it's a great product."

Wilson added that the tutoring has also benefitted students who take the Ohio Graduation Test.

Meanwhile, the company’s statistics support the level of improvement seen at Southern Local. A report on program gains showed jumps in online math and reading assessments between fall of 2013 and spring of 2014. Math assessment results for seventh graders went from 40 percent pre-test to 56 post-test; 31 percent to 47 percent in eighth grade; 23 percent to 40 percent in ninth grade; and from 21 percent to 33 percent in 10th grade within the same timeframe. Similar success was seen on reading assessments, with seventh grade students increasing from 21 percent pre-test to 34 percent post-test; eighth graders moving from 39 percent to 53 percent; freshmen going from 43 percent to 52 percent; and sophomores jumping from 32 percent to 45 percent.

**Conclusion**

Progress like this has JCESC leaders eager to help more students help themselves.

“We are excited to form this venture with One on One Learning. This is a valuable asset to the students and schools we serve,” said Teresa Silvestri, JCESC director of education and outreach. “One on One Learning is providing a pivotal tool to improve learning and help students reach their full potential.”

Contact the JCESC at (740) 283-3347 or tutor@jcesc.k12.oh.us or view the website at www.jcesc.k12.oh.us/OnlineTutoring.aspx

Amy Gareis handles public relations for the Jefferson County ESC and four school districts through a shared services program.

**FY 2016-2017 Executive Budget Proposal & ESCs**

On February 2, 2015, Governor John Kasich unveiled his FY 2016–2017 biennial state operating budget. The budget, as introduced, contains several funding
and policy proposals that negatively impact Ohio’s ESCs. Among the funding decisions, the Executive Budget cuts the ESC operating subsidy by −5.8% in FY 2016 and −20% in FY 2017. This is contrary to funding recommendations of the State Board of Education.

Additionally, the Executive Budget proposal would allow “high performing” school districts to opt out of 1) the requirement to align to an ESC, and 2) the requirement to consult with an ESC regarding the provision of services to students with disabilities. These provisions are unnecessary as flexibility already exists that allows districts to choose the ESC they wish to work with every two years preceding the biennial budget.

That being said, there are a number of policy priorities contained within the Executive Budget proposal and HB 64 as introduced that OESCA and Ohio’s ESCs support including:

- Increased Funding of Special Education Weights;
- Expansion of Early Childhood Programs;
- Early Literacy Grants;
- Standards and Professional Development for Guidance Counselors;
- Mental Health Services for Young Learners;
- Continuation of the Straight A Program;
- Expansion of Community Connectors;
- Competency Based Education Pilots; and
- Regulatory Relief for Ohio’s school districts.

As the budget advances through the process, we encourage the General Assembly to maintain state support for Ohio’s ESCs. ESCs and school districts should take the opportunity to communicate openly, effectively and actively with their elected officials.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

On the state operating budget, go to [http://www.oesca.org/vnews/display.v/SEC/Advocacy](http://www.oesca.org/vnews/display.v/SEC/Advocacy)
About OESCA

The Ohio Educational Service Center Association (OESCA) represents the superintendents, teachers, supervisors and other personnel of Ohio’s Educational Service Centers and seeks to promote excellence in education through the quality services provided by its member organizations.

OESCA provides legislative updates, coordinates member lobbying efforts and organizes communications among its member organizations. OESCA also provides professional development opportunities for service center administrators and personnel through issue–related seminars and major conferences.

Mission

OESCA and its members provide leadership and services that enable school districts to increase student achievement and improve Ohio’s educational system.

Vision

OESCA will be recognized at state and national levels for educational leadership and superior member services.

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