



CHARTER SCHOOL RESOURCES NEWSLETTER

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Community Schools*

MISSION

Richland Academy of the Arts' authorizing mission is to provide the oversight, monitoring, technical assistance, resources and leadership needed and wanted by its sponsored schools for them to provide their students with superior academic opportunities while maintaining sound financial viability without violating their autonomy.

VISION

Our authorizing vision is to be the sponsor of choice for community schools in Ohio. By not limiting imagination, we will honor developmental abilities and the growth of the whole child. We will cultivate communities who believe children need to grow up experiencing the arts and contributing back to their families and communities.

State report cards show effects of COVID linger

State report cards for the 2021-2022 school year recently released by the Ohio Department of Education show continued lags in learning among students thanks to the once-in-a-century global COVID pandemic.

The first release of modified state report cards features stars instead of letter grades in five categories: achievement; progress; early literacy; gap closing; and, graduation. Under legislation previously passed by the Ohio General Assembly, districts and schools did not receive overall star ratings – or ratings on college, career, workforce and military readiness – for the 2021-2022 school year.

Report card results reveal that test scores have not returned to those from the pre-pandemic school year (2018-2019). Fourth-grade proficiency rates in English and math (62.5 percent and 63.6 percent respectively) increased from 2020-2021 to 2021-2022 but remain lower than in the 2018-2019 school year (63.3 percent and 74.3 percent respectively). Eighth-grade student proficiency rates in English and math likewise fell short of those prior to the pandemic.

The results were somewhat more positive with respect to the statewide Performance Index which increased from 72.5 in 2020-2021 to 79.3 in 2021-2022, yet remained down 5.4 points from 2018-2019. Nearly three in four of Ohio's 600+ school districts increased their Performance Index score by three points or more. Early literacy is an area of concern with only 60.1 percent of students scoring proficient or better on the third-grade English language arts assessment.

[Click here](#) to access the *2022 Guide to Ohio School Report Cards*.



Threat assessment model policy available

Legislation (H.B. 123) that became effective late March of 2021 requires districts and schools to create threat assessment teams for each school building serving grades six through 12 by March 24, 2023.

It also requires school administrators to provide a school threat assessment plan and protocol for use by building assessment teams. Schools may adopt a model policy provided by the Ohio School Safety Center or use it to inform creation of their own. [Click here](#) to to access the model policy.

Ohio's PBS stations offer virtual after-school program

Ohio's Public Broadcast Service (PBS) stations are offering a new live, virtual program called *After School 360* every Tuesday at 4 p.m., September through May. *After School 360* includes read-alongs, clips of favorite PBS Kids shows, hands-on activities and more.

[Click here](#) to sign up for the program.



Future funding for tutoring programs in question

Budget recommendations approved by the State Board of Education's Budget Committee do not include more than \$45 million needed to continue federally funded tutoring programs that lapse in fiscal year 2025.

The plan developed by Ohio Department of Education staff provided funds to continue tutoring initiatives, but an alternative plan supported by the committee chair and ultimately approved by a vote of 4-1 eliminates the funds.

Some suggest that an assessment of the effectiveness of the tutoring program should occur before allocating funds to continue it, while others argue that tutoring has been well-established as effective by research.

The recommendations have yet to be considered by the full board.



State Board members don't see eye-to-eye on search for superintendent, Title IX lawsuit

Members of the State Board of Education continue to clash over the pace of the search for a new superintendent of public instruction.

The Ohio Department of Education has been led by an interim superintendent since Paolo DeMaria retired in September of last year. The board agree by a nearly unanimous vote to solicit proposals to lead the search. They were informed by Board President Charlotte McGuire that Interim Superintendent Dr. Stephanie Siddens would like to be considered for the permanent position.

Another controversial topic of discussion by State Board members, legislators and advocacy groups is a proposed board resolution addressing school policies on transgender students.

The proposed resolution would demonstrate the board's support for a lawsuit filed by Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost challenging a proposed federal rule to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity under Title IX. The resolution begins with language calling biological sex an "objective, scientific fact."

There are plenty of advocates on both sides of the debate, which will continue.

Support for improving indoor air quality available

Students thrive in school environments that are healthy and safe, which includes clean air. Schools are encouraged to address indoor air quality, especially during the pandemic. Improving indoor air quality helps to prevent the spread of disease and asthma triggers, and reduce chronic absenteeism. Upgrades to school facilities will help improve indoor air quality, improve comfort and health conditions, support student learning and reduce energy bills.

There is unprecedented support from Congress to improve indoor air quality. American Rescue Plan (ARP) education funds can be used to make upgrades and improvements. ARP funding can be used for inspecting, testing and maintenance of current ventilation systems, to purchase filters and portable air filtration units, and to upgrade HVAC systems. Schools can also purchase equipment to run outdoor classes.

The Ohio Department of Education has developed a new website to assist schools in improving indoor air quality. The website provides links to toolkits, action steps and financial opportunities to help with the implementation and planning processes. Upgrades to school facilities such as increasing fresh air ventilation and upgrading HVAC systems can improve comfort and health conditions, and reduce energy costs.

[Click here](#) to access the website.

Student poster contest brings awareness to fire prevention

The Ohio Department of Commerce's Division of State Fire Marshal invites students in kindergarten through grade six to participate in the 2022-2023 Fire Prevention Week Poster Contest. Students should submit entries on 8.5 X 11-inch paper to their local fire departments October 9-15. The theme of this year's Fire Prevention Week is *Fire Won't Wait. Plan Your Escape*. [Click here](#) to access contest rules.

Indoor air in schools

- > One out of every thirteen school-aged children suffer from asthma
- > Every year, more than 10 million absentee days are accumulated on account of airborne related illnesses
- > EPA study in 2000 determined 50% of nation's schools had improperly maintained equipment

SOURCE: AIR Quality Testing



U.S. math, reading scores still down

According to a report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), math and reading scores declined from 2020 to 2022.

Math scores for nine-year-old students on a National Assessment of Education Progress long-term assessment decreased from 241 to 234, while reading scores during the same period fell from 220 to 215.

“During the pandemic, NCES continued and enhanced other data collections on education challenges, and they paint a sobering picture,” NCES Commissioner Peggy Carr said. “School shootings, violence, and classroom disruptions are up, as are teacher and staff vacancies, absenteeism, cyberbullying, and students’ use of mental health services. This information provides some important context for the results we’re seeing from the longer-term trend assessment.”



Lorain Bilingual Academy thrives despite pandemic

There’s a lot to like and respect about Lorain Bilingual Academy’s (LBA) academic performance – even against the backdrop of a global pandemic. Its three-star rating for the Progress component on the school’s 2021-2022 state report card is impressive. Even more so is the fact that its students did not suffer learning losses experienced by so many as a result of the pandemic. Instead, they progressed, meeting the state’s academic growth expectations.

What makes the school’s academic performance even more impressive is the fact that nearly 30 percent of LBA students are English language learners, and about two-thirds live in Spanish-speaking homes. Under the state’s accountability system, schools serving disproportionately large percentages of students for whom English is a second language are held to the same standard as all other schools despite the clear challenges ELL students face.

So, what’s the secret to Lorain Bilingual Academy’s success? Head of School Jay Saez credits two factors: effective classroom management and a team of dedicated teachers who truly care about their students and want them to succeed.

Education is a second career for Saez, who served in the U.S. Coast Guard for more than 23 years. His no-nonsense style, and the school’s culture of mutual respect between staff and the students and families they serve, are informed by his military experience – something parents and caregivers understand and appreciate.

“At the beginning of each school year, I encourage our teachers to focus on classroom management,” Saez said. “Establishing routines for students and communicating expectations around behavior are essential to learning. All kids have the ability to achieve academically, but we must create and maintain environments conducive to learning.”

In a country in which immigrants are not always made to feel welcome, Lorain Bilingual Academy is a shining example in its appreciation and support of all students. With a diverse team of Spanish-speaking teachers and staff, the school’s supportive culture extends to students’ families.

“Our team includes staff from several Spanish-speaking countries – Peru, Mexico and Puerto Rico, as well as those born here in the U.S.,” Saez said. “There are many Spanish dialects, so diversity is beneficial. This year, we’re fortunate to have an international teacher who brings a unique perspective to the classroom.”

“Our teachers who do not speak Spanish understand that they must find ways to engage with ELL students – they can’t be left behind,” he continued. “We are all invested in each and every student.”

The school complied with mandatory closings early in the pandemic but resumed in-person learning in the school years that followed. Consistent with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, safety precautions were closely followed.

“COVID is still here – we have to accept that,” Saez said. “But now that it’s better controlled and safety protocols are well-established and practiced, we’re all less stressed. As stress levels go down, engagement goes up, so we’re excited to return to a more ‘normal’ school year. We’re committed to providing students and their families – 100 percent of whom are economically disadvantaged -- with even stronger support in the classroom and beyond.”



Lorain Bilingual Academy was honored to be recognized by its management company leaders, accepting an Accel Gold Award for its strong academic performance in the 2021-2022 school year.