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# The Talk at Teays

NEWS FROM THE TEAYS VALLEY LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



## IMPORTANT DATES

### December

- 18** End of 2<sup>nd</sup> 9 Weeks  
**21** Winter Break -  
 No School Dec 21-  
 Jan 4

### January

- 1** No School  
**4** No School -  
 Teacher Work Day  
**5** Classes Resume  
**18** No School

### February

- 2** Parent/Teacher  
 Conferences @  
 Elem, 4-7 pm  
**4** Parent/Teacher  
 Conferences @  
 MS, 4-7 pm  
**9** Parent/Teacher  
 Conferences @  
 HS, 4-7 pm  
**15** No School

### March

- 12** End of 3<sup>rd</sup> 9 Weeks  
**29** Spring Break -  
 No School Mar 29-  
 Apr 5

### April

- 5** No School

### May

- 26** End of 4<sup>th</sup> 9 Weeks  
 Last Day of School  
**27** Teacher Work Day

## Vikings demonstrate Adaptability

I usually try to use this newsletter to keep the Teays Valley community informed about all the great things that are taking place in our district. Those "great things" continue, but many have experienced some type of adjustment because of the pandemic. Athletic events, music programs and award celebrations have been replaced with virtual formats or downsized.

The key word for us as educators has been adaptability. When I plugged that word into Google I received this explanation:

"It's your willingness to learn, make mistakes and learn some more. It's your ability to render adequate feedback and make adjustments or changes in your behaviors that produce positive and productive results."

That is certainly what we are experiencing as educators. We have been learning, making mistakes, adjusting and learning again. We have learned that we can educate students in different ways and that we are becoming more adventurous and proficient as we move forward throughout this year. Educators have had to develop positive mindsets that allow them to experiment and try new methods. This year we have seen teachers learn and grow in amazing ways.

Our students have also experienced this adaptability challenge. We have kindergarten students who have been introduced to school that looks much different than what they may have anticipated. We also have seniors who have spent their entire educational careers looking forward to the day when they would get to enjoy certain milestones and events during their final year as a Viking. Students have experienced in-person and online instruction and they are learning and growing. Although this is not the best of circumstances, the by-product is they are learning how to adapt and be successful in unpredictable situations. Those are skills that will stick with them long after they leave the classroom.

As the leader of the district, I am continuing to learn as time progresses as well. None of us went to school to learn how to navigate a pandemic. We are all learning as we go. I have come to accept that a decision that is made one month may be altered the next as new information is at our disposal. The rules and guidelines are constantly being adjusted. Because of this, we continue to adjust our plans too. Our goal is to provide our students the best education we can during these unique times. We must do this while keeping both our staff and our students safe and healthy.

It is my hope that we will be able to return to a regular school schedule in the very near future. In the meantime, we will continue to promote a safe learning environment and quality instruction that may be delivered in varied formats. We will continue to encourage our students to work to their potential and keep a strong grip on faith and hope for the future. As we begin winter break, please keep in mind that your actions will affect our ability to educate our students in person when we return from break. Wear a mask, practice social distancing and limit interactions with those outside of your household. We continue to rely on Viking Nation to help us to keep our schools safe.

Robin Halley, *Superintendent*

### Board of Education

Kevin Archer, *President*

Bill McGowan, *Vice President*

Roxanne Davis, Karen Karshner  
 & Charles D. Morrison, *Board  
 Members*

### Coronavirus Data Dashboard

The Coronavirus Data Dashboard is available on the TV homepage at [www.tvstd.us](http://www.tvstd.us). Here, you will find a spreadsheet that includes information about current positive COVID-19 cases for both staff and students, as well as cumulative numbers since the start of the school year. For the direct link to the information, go to <https://bit.ly/2RIhO49>.

# ASHVILLE ELEMENTARY

## *Supporting Local Veterans through Ashville Freedom Project*



Each November, Ashville plans its Ashville Freedom Project, through which they support local veterans and their families. While they were not able to hold their annual Veterans Day assembly, they did not let Veterans Day go by without still honoring our local veterans. This year, they sold dog tags for a donation, which were hung in the cafeteria. The money raised was used to purchase hygiene and toiletry items that were delivered to the Pickaway County Veterans' Office.

Title I teacher Jennifer Gregg helps to organize this project each year and said the students were excited to see the dog tags displayed and find the one they bought in honor of their veteran.

"It is important for our students to understand the sacrifice the veterans have made for us. Veterans Day is their special day and we want to show them how much we appreciate them," she said. "It is important to remember those who served for us so that we can enjoy the freedoms that we have."

This is the fifth year they have made a donation to the local veterans' office.

"It is important to give back to our community," Gregg said. "So many of our students have many family members who are veterans. We want our donations to go to our community members."

"Even a small gesture to support our local veterans can have a huge impact. Our veterans may have needs or challenges because of their military service, and they can use our support in a variety of ways that may not always be obvious," secretary and project co-organizer Holly Powell said.

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## SCIOTO ELEMENTARY

### *Getting creative in Music Class*

During this year of safety precautions and reformatting the way lessons are delivered, music teachers have had to get creative as well. Music teacher Rebecca Japikse notes that flexibility has been the key this year. She has made adjustments to her classroom to still educate her students and make it fun, while staying safe. For example, when the weather allows, she takes her students outside. She has also modified many of her music games so that students stay in their own space. She is incorporating everyday household items to use as musical instruments, such as pool noodles, yogurt containers, dowel rods and Easter eggs, because they can be sanitized.

"My number one goal this year is for the students to enjoy and have fun in music class because that's what the students and I need this year," Japikse said. "There is a lot of stress everywhere in the world right now and I want the music room to be a safe space away from all of that stress. This year, I just want my kids to have fun and enjoy themselves in music class."



One unique project she did with the students included teaching them to sign America the Beautiful for a video created for veterans.

"America the Beautiful is a patriotic song commonly performed for Veterans Day and is one we use every year for our Veterans Day assembly. With the changes in wearing masks and not being able to see the kids' faces, singing wasn't going to be our best option this year. Sign language gave us the ability and opportunity to still perform this song in a way that could reach all veterans in a meaningful way," she said.

"Mrs. Japikse's approach to her classroom is an example of how many of our teachers have responded to this unique school year. While she isn't able to do things how they have been done in the past, she has made adjustments to her lessons to still provide our students with a great education while remaining safe, and it is clear they enjoy the time they spend in her classroom," principal Bruce Bryant said.

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## SOUTH BLOOMFIELD ELEMENTARY

### *Meeting Students' Social-Emotional Needs*



Meeting the students' social-emotional needs has always been a priority, but in these unique times the students' are living in, it has become even more crucial to focus on it. Social-emotional learning is defined as how children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions, set goals, show empathy for others and establish positive relationships. Students and teachers have been participating in several exercises to better understand these concepts and to reflect on how they perceive these skills in themselves.

Something new that was incorporated this year district-wide is the Panorama survey. Students in grades K-12 are taking this short online survey to self-reflect on their feelings, their feelings about school and their overall sense of belonging.

"We believe social emotional development is critical to success in other areas of development such as school, career and life. We want our students to increase their capacity to do well in school and life, feel safe and inspired to take risks as growing learners and build healthy connections and relationships while learning," school counselor Brooke Adkins said. "The survey results give us insight on our students' social-emotional needs and sense of connection and belonging. This information will be used to better understand our population and most importantly, develop strategies to support their needs."

According to Adkins, the district believes in educating and supporting the whole child. This survey is one way to help to do that.

"We hope that our students see that staff cares about them and we want to help them," Adkins said. "This survey allows them to assess their own thoughts and concerns about their self and school beliefs, as well as communicate their needs in a beneficial format. We want our students to know they are important to us and so are their needs. The results will allow us to thoughtfully implement support in areas where our students need it."

# WALNUT ELEMENTARY

## *A new twist on the Veterans Day Assembly*



Traditionally, Walnut plans an assembly for veterans in our community, which is followed by a reception to honor them on Veterans Day. Like many things this school year, they had to get creative to honor veterans while following new safety guidelines. Their unique approach included filming a “gallery walk” of art displayed by each grade level, as well as a recording of presentations. Each classroom took a unique approach, including making books or creating poems, along with the art that was displayed. In addition, art teacher Sarah Gaal created a flag with self portraits made by students and staff. The video was shared with the community through social media and emailed to parents.

“We knew that we would not be able to do our usual Veterans Day assembly this year, but knew that we still needed to do something to let our veterans know that we appreciate all they have done and that we have not forgotten them during these trying times,” music teacher Cheryl Vorus said. “It was great to see the final product. I hope that it was as encouraging to the Veterans as it seemed to be to those here at Walnut. It gave us the opportunity to reach out to others to make a connection with the greater community that we have become isolated from. These people are why we are free to make choices about our lives and we should never forget the sacrifices they have made for all of us.”

While creating the flag, Gaal discussed with students the sacrifices veterans have made to enable and protect the freedoms we enjoy.

“We are grateful for the freedom to go to school, work, play and worship, as well as many other liberties we enjoy here in the United States. I want my students to know that they are part of something great. They are the future of this nation and have a responsibility to honor and show gratitude to the people who have afforded them their freedom,” she said.

## EAST MIDDLE

### *Exploring future options through College and Career Connections Course*

As early as the middle school level, students are introduced to future career opportunities and begin exploring various careers. At East, this is done with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students through the College and Career Connections (C3) course. According to C3 teacher Kellie Wolfe, the purpose of this course is to explore career fields by offering hands-on projects and activities. The goal is to provide two to three group projects per semester to introduce students to pathways available at the high school and the career centers in order to help them make decisions as they move into high school. They are currently working on a project to create a prosthetic leg that involves the biomedical field.

“I hope the students learn whether this is a field they are or are not interested in pursuing. I think knowing the things you dislike is just as important as the things you do like, and many students will have no idea what biomedical means before this project.”

They have worked on a number of other projects as well, including a crime scene investigation, a roller coaster engineering project, a marketing project promoting events at East, a landscape design project using 3-D modeling software, coding a website and drone driving using block coding. They also participated in numerous individual activities and created an electronic portfolio of their work with Google Sites.

“Students love hands-on activities where they can work together to accomplish goals. If you make it fun, give them some choice in the process and let them be creative and explore, the results can be excellent,” Wolfe said. “I think it is critical to introduce students at the middle-school level to the world of work and opportunities in various career fields. Having this knowledge prepares them not only for the next step, but sets them up to make even better decisions moving into life after high school. Making it fun and engaging is key, and teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like collaboration and communication are essential components of helping them be successful now and in the future.”



## WEST MIDDLE

### *Students take part in Signs of Suicide Program*

West students annually participate in a program called Signs of Suicide (S.O.S.), which is a school-based suicide prevention program supported by leading national and local suicide prevention organizations. Teays Valley partners with Nationwide Children’s Hospital to bring this program to the district. The goal of the curriculum is to prevent and reduce suicidal behavior by expanding the safety net for students experiencing psychological and emotional distress.

During the program, staff and students are trained to recognize the warning signs for suicide as well as an appropriate response. Additionally, students are provided the opportunity to request to speak to someone if they are concerned about their emotional well-being. Screenings to assess for depression and suicide risk are also used with the curriculum. At West, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students take part in it, as well as any 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who have not yet taken part in it. This program is incorporated at East and TVHS too.

“We bring this program to our school each year because we find it helpful in reducing the stigma of depression and mental illness. We want students to know that these are treatable illnesses. We also want to give students the tools and steps to take to help other students who may be in need of support,” school counselor Joyce Duchak said.

Students learn to ACT, which stand for Acknowledge, Care, Tell, so they are prepared to get help for themselves or a friend. They are taught to Acknowledge that they see signs of depression, to show the friend that they Care and to Tell a trusted adult.

“There is clear evidence that using a prevention program like S.O.S. lowers the risk of a student making a suicide attempt and does not put the idea in a student’s mind,” Duchak said. “Our hope is that we increase awareness of mental health and suicide and that students recognize the signs and symptoms of suicide and depression in themselves and others. We also want to make sure that students know it is ok to tell a trusted adult if there is concern about a peer. We want to encourage conversation around mental health issues, including depression and suicide. The impact we see is in the number of students who request to talk to someone and the increase of concerned reports we receive afterward. The program has enabled us to identify struggling students, inform parents and collaborate to get help.”



## **+ FROM THE NURSES**

We encourage the TV community to celebrate the holiday season safely. What we do at home, eventually affects our schools. The best way to protect yourself, your friends and loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic is to celebrate holidays at home with members of your household. Try to find new ways to reach out to friends and distant family members through technology, drive-by visits or send cards, packages or video messages.

If you decide to get together with others, please keep the gathering small (10 people or fewer) and stick to the basics:

- \*Wear a mask
- \*Stay 6 feet away from one another
- \*If you are sick, remain home and isolated
- \*Wash hands frequently/use hand sanitizer
- \*Regularly disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- \*Do not host or attend gatherings with anyone who has COVID-19 or has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.

Following these steps will help to keep you and your family from becoming ill in the New Year! ~[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

### *Working to meet Students' Mental Health Needs*

Teays Valley's first Guiding Principle states "We must do what is best for the students." While this means providing the students with a strong education, it means making their mental health a top priority as well. Most people are aware that school counselors work to meet the students' mental health needs, but they also have the opportunity to receive services from school psychologists and a mental health specialist. At TVHS, students work with school psychologist Shannon Horvath and mental health specialist Sydney Grace.

"Our primary role as school psychologists involves identifying students with special needs and providing recommendations for serving students. However, we are also trained in counseling, consultation, intervention and research and data analysis," Horvath said. "Our aim is to help students develop resiliency in every facet of their lives. Whether faced with a learning, social or emotional challenge, school psychologists try to provide the information necessary to help students gain a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and develop ways of supporting those weaknesses. Our hope is that students will enter the world of adulthood armed with the skills needed to maximize their independence and live a good life, however they themselves define it."

As a mental health specialist, Grace said her main role is to provide school-based mental health therapy to students when they need more in-depth and ongoing clinical counseling that the school counselors are unable to provide. Grace's position was added to the district this school year, so she is working to create the format that will best serve our students.

"I currently work with students at school on an individual basis in ongoing mental health counseling. In the future I hope there may also be room to conduct counseling groups with students and allow family members to participate in counseling as well," she said. "I hope that the students will benefit by having an additional support at school that can help them navigate mental health issues. My goal is that providing school-based counseling will remove barriers to students getting mental health support when they need it."

Both Horvath and Grace work closely with the staff to learn about the students' needs and provide guidance from their expertise.

"I consult with teachers to develop academic and behavioral intervention plans, for both general and special education students. I also observe classroom dynamics and provide instructional recommendations when teachers work with challenging students," Horvath said.

"In order to provide a strong education to our students, we must also meet their mental health needs. The work that Mrs. Horvath and Ms. Grace do helps to make a positive impact for many of our students," principal John Keel said.

~If you have questions about "The Talk at Teays" or if you would like to submit information for the next edition, contact Julie DeLisio, Director of Communications, at **740.983.5048** or at [jdelisio@tvsd.us](mailto:jdelisio@tvsd.us).

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