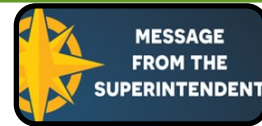




# The Grizzlies Gazette



## Office of the Superintendent



### Something Professional

As the holiday season is upon us, we find ourselves reflecting on the current year and those who have helped shape its course. Please accept my best wishes and greetings of the season. The holiday season is a time to be thankful for the gifts that we have in our lives. We are all members of a special family at Ypsilanti Community Schools and have many things for which to be grateful, especially, am grateful to serve as your Superintendent.

During this extremely busy time of year as the first semester begins to wind down and with the holiday season upon us, I want to extend my best wishes and greetings to you. The holiday season is a time to be thankful for the gifts that we have in our lives. We have many things for which to be grateful and appreciative. I certainly believe that you are a special gift to our students and families at YCS and am appreciative of you!

It is my hope that you will take this time to relax and spend time with your loved ones. Additionally, I ask that you please keep in mind those who are less fortunate or find themselves in disheartening circumstances. I look forward to seeing everyone in the New Year and working with you to continue our important work of educating our students.

We wish you a peaceful and wonderful holiday break, and we look forward to seeing you all (with masks and 6 feet apart :-)) in person on January 4th!

\*Please note that we will continue to watch the numbers. If there are changes to the return in-person date, I will write to you the week of December 28th.

### Something Personal

One of the things I am really passionate about and have dedicated a lot of time to is public speaking. I have been blessed to speak to groups worldwide, both in-person and now, virtually. I am so excited to participate in April in the Leadership Experience Tour hosted by the Fair Consulting group. This is part of my personal goal in 2021. I hope that you will find your passion, hobby, or goal for 2021! Let the 1 in 2021 mean something special to you!

### Something Profound from George Couros

Well, moving to totally different spaces and routines, instead of just jumping to new ideas, I started with what I knew worked in old spaces. For example, I know that greeting students in the hallway is a great way to start class and set the tone for time spent together. I also did a similar practice as a school administrator by greeting our school community in the morning outside the building doors. But there are no "hallways" or "front doors" in a zoom room. So, what is the equivalent?

I started using this simple "meme check-in" as people entered virtual spaces:

What it did was gave people a smile as they entered the room, a chance to hear from them and see how they are doing, before we even thought about getting into content. I have used both with adults and students, which has really helped set the tone for the learning time. But I started with what I knew and asked myself, what could this look like in a remote-learning environment?

This might be something that you can consider for your zoom class or meeting in the future.

Alena Zachery-Ross — Superintendent

Click on image to enlarge

### Meme Check-In...

On a scale of memes, how are you feeling?





**Formative Assessments - What Do Teachers Need to Know and Do?**

*“Formative assessment is a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become more self-directed learners.” (CCSSO SCASS, 2017). This definition of formative assessment comprises several key features:*

- The **formative assessment process is planned by teachers in advance**, so teachers decide when they will check for student understanding and how they will do so; teachers also determine in advance what they will do if students have or have not learned what they have been taught.
- Both **teachers and students engage in the formative assessment process.**
- The formative assessment process **provides immediate feedback** to the teacher and to the students.
- Evidence of the students’ current level of mastery is used to adjust ongoing instruction and learning.**
- The formative assessment process literally **occurs during instruction** – in today’s class or the next one. (MAC, 2015)

**Formative assessment is a process**

Black and Wiliam (2009) indicate that effective formative assessment practice includes the enactment of the following steps:

- Teachers and students **establish a common understanding of a task’s learning goals.**
- Teachers **elicit student thinking.**
- Students respond to teachers’ elicitation in ways that **reveals their thinking.**
- Teachers interpret students’ responses to make sense of **where students are relative to goals for student learning.**
- Teachers take action (e.g., trying a new strategy) to **move students in the desired direction, on the basis of their interpretation.**
- Teachers reassess to **measure the action’s success.**

**Why use formative assessment?**

Research has shown the use of formative assessment has several positive impacts. It serves to:

- Improve student learning** (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2013)
- Increase student involvement** (e.g., Brookhart, 2013)
- Help teachers to be more **reflective about students’ understandings** (Furtak, 2012)
- Support students in **identifying barriers to learning** (Marshall & Drummond, 2006)

**Three guiding questions in formative assessment**

Research by Sadler (1989), Hattie and Timperley (2007)<sup>1</sup>, and Gotwals, et al (forthcoming) indicate that formative assessment practices may be categorized into three large observable-practice dimensions, structured around key questions that teachers and students should ask themselves as they move through the learning process:

1. Use of learning targets and goal setting — **Where are we (teacher and students) going?**
2. Evidence of student understanding — **What does the student understand now?**
3. Closing the gap/responding to students — **How do we (teacher and students) get to the learning target?**

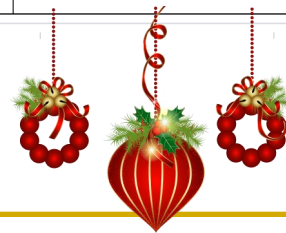
**FAME COMPONENTS AND ELEMENTS**

The components and elements to be used in the **Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME)** program in 2017 and beyond are a re-conceptualization of the components used previously in FAME. The **five components and thirteen elements of the 2017 FAME program** are organized by the three guiding questions described. These indicate key steps in the formative assessment process.

Click on image below to enlarge:

**Carlos Lopez — Assistant Superintendent**

GUIDING QUESTIONS	FAME COMPONENTS AND ELEMENTS
Where are we (teacher and students) going?	<b>PLANNING</b>  1.1—Instructional Planning: planning based on knowledge of the content, standards, pedagogy, formative assessment process, and students.
	<b>LEARNING TARGET USE</b>  2.1—Designing Learning Targets: the use and communication of daily instructional aims with the students 2.2—Learning Progressions: connection of the learning target to past and future learning  2.3—Models of Proficient Achievement: examples of successful work for students to use as a guide.
What does the student now understand?	<b>ELICITING EVIDENCE OF STUDENT UNDERSTANDING</b>  3.1—Activating Prior Knowledge: the opportunity for students to self-assess or connect new ideas to their prior knowledge 3.2—Gathering Evidence of Student Understanding: use of a variety of tools and strategies to check for understanding of the learning targets from all students 3.3—Teacher Questioning Strategies: the intentional use of questions for students to explain their thinking or to connect their idea to another student’s response 3.4—Skillful Use of Questions: a focus on the purpose, timing, and audience for questions to deliver content and to check students’ understanding
How do we (teacher and students) get to the learning target?	<b>FORMATIVE FEEDBACK</b>  4.1—Feedback from the Teacher: verbal or written feedback to a student to improve his or her achievement of the learning target 4.2—Feedback from Peers: feedback from one student to another student about his or her learning in relation to a learning target 4.3—Student Self-Assessment: the process in which students gather information and reflect on their own learning in relation to the learning goal.
	<b>INSTRUCTIONAL AND LEARNING DECISIONS</b>  5.1—Adjustments to Teaching: teachers’ daily decisions about changes to instruction 5.2—Adjustments to Learning: students’ use of feedback for improvement





## Human Resources



**E-Mail** - You must **check your email** at least **2** times per day; this is a mandatory requirement. If you are experiencing difficulties with your email please contact technology support at [techsupport@ycschools.us](mailto:techsupport@ycschools.us).

**The Emergency Family Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA) and Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA)** under the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) requests from staff will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The total amount of time you can be compensated for both leaves cannot exceed 12 weeks or 480 eligible hours combined. You must have been employed for a minimum of 30 days with YCS to qualify.

**Please answer the phone! COVID-19 Reporting** - During the COVID-19 pandemic it is important that if you receive a call from 734-221-1211 (Sue McCarty) or 248-592-7160 (Alena Zachery-Ross) that you answer the phone or return the call. All actual or potential COVID-19 exposures at the workplace **must be reported directly** to Human Resources or the Superintendent. You can call the numbers indicated above or email at [smccarty3@ycschools.us](mailto:smccarty3@ycschools.us) or to the Superintendent at [azacheryross7@ycschools.us](mailto:azacheryross7@ycschools.us).

**COVID-19 LEAVE for remote or online staff** - If you are remote or online and you or a member of your household are diagnosed with COVID-19 and you are well enough to work, you **do not** have to report any days as sick or request Emergency Sick Leave Act Days. If you do become unable to work then you **do** have to use either sick days or EPSLA days. In order to use EPSLA days you must contact Human Resources at [lnowling5@ycschools.us](mailto:lnowling5@ycschools.us).

**Check Stubs:** Employees receive an electronic check stub every payroll. Attached is the link that will guide you through the setup process for an account in New World. This account will allow you to view your pay stub. It is important to note that check stubs cannot be obtained via email.

**MANDATORY! Absences not reported in AESOP may result in a loss of wages. Payroll and Human Resources will no longer track down unreported absences or issue a check outside of the payroll calendar dates.** Reporting absences is **mandatory** and an expectation of each employee. You **must** report all absences in AESOP including **daily absences and extended medical leaves**. Daily absences must be reported at least **1 hour** before you are scheduled to work. It is a professional courtesy to notify your immediate supervisor as well. Please contact your immediate supervisor for guidance on how to contact him/her. **Do not request a substitute until you have consulted your building administrator.** Contact Lois Nowling if you do not have access to AESOP.

**Criminal Convictions** - If you are arrested any time during your employment with YCS, you **must report** any and all convictions to Human Resources. Failure to report convictions may lead to further disciplinary action up to and including termination.



**Medical Leaves and substitute Requests** Medical leaves whether short or long term must have a doctor's note when submitted for approval to Human Resources. A doctor's note must also be submitted **prior to your return** directly to Human Resources. **It is imperative that you DO NOT request a substitute unless directed by the building administrator when reporting an absence.** The process of not requesting a substitute is new and temporary for the 2020-21 school year. The process is subject to change as we phase in return to school or need to step back to Phase 3.

**Mandatory Meaningful work assignments** are mandatory assignments. You must be available during your regular work hours in order to be paid. Failure to report to meaningful assignments will result in a loss of wages.

*"A problem is a chance for you to do your best."* –  
**Duke Ellington**

**Sue McCarty — Human Resources Director**



## Data Coach



Since we are in December please remember that your NWEA data is available to you to help make instructional decisions. That data is loaded in both NWEA and Illuminate DnA with various reports on both platforms to show trends over time and individual progress on specific areas.

Also, a reminder about our new platforms (Remind, Seesaw, and many more in Clever). The WISD is also offering courses on Seesaw (and Google Classroom as well). [Click here](#) to register!

Please don't hesitate if you need any assistance with any of the platforms or the data analysis.

**Solomon Zheng — Data Coach**





## Communications Department



The Marketing and Communications Department has been working on updating the website, re-launched in late December 2020 or January 2021! Jerilyn Lynn has been working hard to make updates and create a new look for staff, parents, and community members.

The Sunshine Committee has a lot of cool things planned for YCS staff! Check out the new website that will let you know all the fun happenings with the staff!

Each year YCS receives support from the Magic of Christmas Foundation. Over 100 students were blessed with their giving this year, which was truly appreciated, especially during the pandemic. Thank you to the YCS volunteers who worked hard to get all the gifts ready for distribution.



Taryn Willis — Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Upcoming Community Event:

Click on image to enlarge:



**Christmas Dinner**  
**IN THE COMMUNITY**  
**WEDNESDAY**  
**DEC. 23**  
**4PM TO 7PM**  
Downtown Ypsilanti in  
Trojans Cleaners Parking lot  
located at 20 N. Adams Street.

Women & Men Working For  
Change in partnership with YCS  
and Frank James "Good Eats" will  
be serving Christmas Dinner to  
those that may be facing troubled  
times.

We welcome you to come have a nice Christmas Dinner on us.





## Technology



Hello YCS, the rumors are true; we have been distributing new laptops for instructional staff this month. We have a very limited number of new laptops available and the priority is for our instructional staff. We will be receiving additional laptops in the coming months if we run out this month. So please, please be patient. Technology staff have been contacting instructional staff to schedule a pickup, and they will contact you when we have a laptop ready for you.

We did an RFP request for a new security camera system and have received multiple bids. After reviewing the bids, we will be recommending a vendor to the board for approval. If approved, we will be looking at replacing and upgrading all the security cameras in the district to a centralized managed platform with high definition recording and historical recordings to increase safety. We will be looking to start this project at the start of the year and hope to be complete by summer. That means every building in the district will be on a new security camera system.

We continue to do technology distributions on Tuesday and Thursdays. This means swapping out damaged equipment or receiving replacements continue to this day. If you have a student or even you yourself are in need of swapping out a device, please reach out to [techsupport@ycschools.us](mailto:techsupport@ycschools.us) to get additional information or begin the process.

Thank you YCS and please be safe.

**Nik Jackson — Technology Director**

## Transportation



Greetings, I hope that you and your family are well and had a restorative Thanksgiving.

Transportation staff should be checking district email twice a day for information about the district and information regarding meaningful work. If you are experiencing issues with accessing your district email, you should speak with the office coordinator. For security reasons you can only access the district zoom meetings using your district email.

All drivers and monitors have been assigned meaningful work. This work is different from being on a school bus. Please be mindful of the special handling each position may require for your safety and the safety of others. This meaningful work is the district's way of continuing employment while classes are remote for students. Meaningful work is Monday through Friday.

If you are unable to report for your assignment, you are required to report your absence. An AESOP account has been set up and pin number assigned to each employee. If your contact information has changed or if you haven't received calls or texts from me, please confirm your contact information with the transportation office.

**UPCOMING**, the tablet training was postponed and will be rescheduled. This is required training for bus drivers. This training will be provided by Tyler Technology using the tablets. The new training date is TBD.

Please continue to look out and take care of yourself and others. It's still okay to smile with your mask on. When you smile, your eyes show it.

**Kim Searcy — Director of Transportation**



## Food Service



The Foodservice department was awarded a 10 cent meal grant from Michigan Department of Education. This grant is used to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables for our students. We have not received the exact dollar amount, but nonetheless we are excited to be awarded the grant.

On Thursday, December 3, Tiffany interviewed for the Rockin for Hunger Campaign on 107.1. I was able to highlight the partnership between YCS and Food Gatherers in hopes of raising funds to support Food Gatherers.

For the duration of the winter months, foodservice has changed our distribution schedule. Please see the YCS website for all updates.

**Happy Holidays!!!!!!**

**Tiffany Houston — Food Services Director**







## Instructional Technology

Ford Media Center: Most of the books can be saved for the media center, but we are also looking to add books. We will set up a committee to discuss how to find funds and donations to add to the collection. Our committee will meet to discuss this and also book subjects that we need to include.

We have added a Tech Tutorial section to our Technology web pages. The name is **TECHNOLOGY TIPS, RESOURCES, AND MORE** - This page gives tech tutorials and websites for staff members. The link is <http://www.ycschools.us/staff/technology/technology-tips/>

Kendra Wilson, one of our Instructional Technology team members has created a blog called: **AT / UDL TIPS & TRICKS FOR EVERYONE BLOG** - The blog gives technology tips and information for staff members. The link to the blog is: <http://at-udl.blogspot.com/>

With so many changes in technology the Instructional Tech team members are attending free virtual workshops when offered to see how we can further assist the YCS staff. One new workshop has been offered is Nearpod. It is an interactive website that allows staff members to make Google Slides interactive. It creates engaging media and formative assessments to make every lesson interactive. A staff member does not have to start from scratch. They can upload and make any of your favorite PowerPoints, Google Slides, and now, any video interactive. They can even upload videos directly from YouTube or search the standards-aligned library of 8,500+ interactive lessons and videos across all grades and subjects. Nearpod Silver Edition is entirely free and most users are very happy with it.

**We still hold tech office hours for staff 3 times per week.**

## Facilities



The YCS Facilities Department is preparing our buildings for the return of students! In preparation for our phasing in of additional face to face students, our team is in the process of transforming classrooms into socially distanced learning labs. YCS is also supporting the creation of community based learning labs at Parkridge Center on the city's Southside and Christian Love Fellowship in Superior Township.

Buildings, districtwide, will receive increased signage that promotes good hygiene, communicates expectations for mask wearing, and prompts visitors to follow our screening process upon entry. Social distancing markings, mask wearing reminders and traffic flow arrows will be present in hallways and other public areas.

Additionally, our team is responsible for the placement of individual desks for all of our students in all classrooms. These desks will be socially distanced from one another and all facing in the same direction. These measures are in alignment with the MiSafe Schools Roadmap as well as the: [YCS COVID Response and Preparedness Plan](#).

Below are images of some of the signage that will be installed in all face to face facilities district wide.



**Aaron Rose — Director of District Operations**

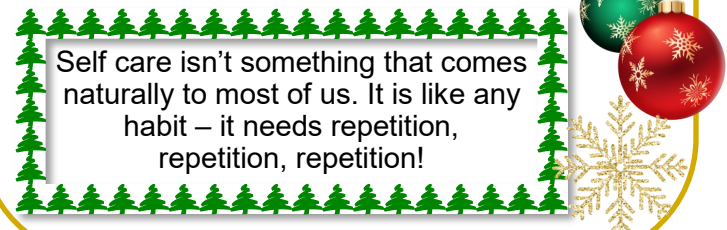
## Student Support Services



We hope everyone had a SAFE and enjoyable Thanksgiving; although it had to be celebrated a little differently.

The Student Support Services welcomed Ms. Zalimoon Mustapha to our SSS team. Ms. Mustapha will be joining us as the self-contained classroom for students with autism at the middle school. We're very glad she's here!

**E. Ruth Jordan — Student Support Services Director**





it's **HOLIDAY** time

## Grants

GRANTS AVAILABLE THROUGH GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Equity Grant:** The YCS Equity Grant was approved by MDE and will bring the following supports: Seesaw on-line platform for 3 years, Panorama on-line platform for 5 years, funds for Oasis rooms at each school, Hot spots internet access for students, chromebooks for students, and the formation of a walk/run club to promote physical and mental health.

**GEER Grant:** YCS will be submitting the GEER grant in a few weeks. This grant will bring 100 laptop computers for staff, headphones for students, funding for our Learning Labs, Resiliency Center, some science equipment for ACCE, software programs for staff and students, and summer school.

**Hazard Pay Grant:** The Hazard Pay grant saw about 520 applications submitted by December 4th. YCS will submit the list of eligible applicants to the Department of Treasury by December 16. Staff should receive checks around the end of February. Checks will come from the Department of Treasury.

**Mark Coscarella — Director of State and Federal Grant Programs**

## Business Office

Systems Information

We hope everyone had a safe, winter break.

The business office is getting ready for that time of the year. Calendar year end is just around the corner. Let us know how we can support you. Please make sure your address is accurate. W-2 will also be available online for everyone to access. We will send out a memo when it is ready for you to access it online if you choose to.

Business office has been working on the budget amendment and it was presented during the December 14 board meeting.

*"Challenges are what make life interesting and overcoming them is what makes life meaningful." — Joshua J. Marine*

**Priya Nayak — Director of Business and Finance**

## Statewide Field Team (SWFT): Blueprint Installation

A new session of instructor led, online courses begins on January 13 and runs through March 10, 2021. These courses are FREE to Ypsilanti Community Schools staff. A bonus . . . you can earn SCECHs for full course completion. The following courses are recommended: **Changing Minds to Address Poverty in the Classroom: 12 SCECHs**

Based on the work of Eric Jensen, this course provides background on the effect living in poverty has on students' brains and their learning in the classroom. The course moves beyond the theory and provides practical classroom strategies that enrich the learning environment and increase the likelihood of success for students living in poverty. Participants will explore seven essential mindsets shown to positively impact student learning. This course provides strategies and tools to make changes in your classroom so students living in poverty have a greater chance of learning what they need to succeed in your classroom and in life.

### **Collaborative Learning Cycle: 5 SCECHs**

Powerful data conversations can lead to powerful changes in instruction and dramatic improvement in student achievement. This online course focuses on what an effective data conversation looks like using Wellman and Lipton's Collaborative Learning Cycle as well as how to facilitate these important conversations.

### **Teacher Collaborative Routines: 7 SCECHs**

This course consists of several modules designed to develop a theoretical understanding of each practice of teacher collaborative routines as defined in the *Blueprint systems framework Evidence of Practice*. This course will provide not only the research supporting collaborative best practices, but it will also provide practical support and examples that will enable teachers to move from theory to impactful and sustainable collaborative routines.

### **Educational Improvement Through Systems: 5 SCECHs**

\*New course\* This course will address a variety of ideas around how systems in classrooms, schools, and districts support continuous improvement. This course is designed to help you learn about systems by examining a case study, and looking at examples of systems from your daily life and your experiences in schools.

You may register for all of these courses on our website under SWFT Online Learning ([blueprinttool-sandresources.com](http://blueprinttool-sandresources.com)). Please reach out if you have questions or would like registration assistance.

**Sarah Scott, SWFT Coordinator of Professional Learning (Ypsilanti Community Schools)**  
[sscott6@ycschools.us](mailto:sscott6@ycschools.us)

