



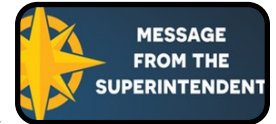
January 10, 2021—Issue13



The Grizzlies Gazette



Office of the Superintendent Something Profound



As many of you know, I'm inspired each month for this newsletter by George Couros. This one is closely aligned to his January edition as well. He and I both have been thinking about one word at the beginning of this year, it is "purpose. There is so much in our world that we strive for (joy, happiness, success, etc.) that really could be connected to that single word.

This quote from Chadwick Boseman, who sadly passed away in 2020, is a beautiful encapsulation of this idea:

“When you are deciding on next steps, next jobs, next careers, further education, you should rather find purpose than a job or a career. Purpose crosses disciplines. Purpose is an essential element of you. It is the reason you are on the planet at this particular time in history.”

-Chadwick Boseman

In one of my upcoming speaking engagements, I will share with the audience the importance of knowing your purpose. **Purpose** goes beyond professional and educational pursuits. It is said that, “you can stop a man on a job, but you can't stop a man on a mission”. George and I both love the part of that quote that states, "is an essential element of you." It is my hope that you have a purpose-filled new year, whatever that looks like to you.

Something Professional

Speaking of purpose, I feel that one of the things that I really strive to do is find a way to elevate the voices of others. I am really passionate about this, and I feel that every person should know and feel free to express their unique identity.

One of the ways that I will try to facilitate this at YCS is by offering office hours for individual dialogue as well as coaching sessions. I will also provide group facilitated sessions using a variety of the Adaptive Schools strategies beginning in February. Check out the flyer that will be shared to register next week.

Lastly, I recognize that so many of us are at many points of the spectrum in regards to returning to in-person learning. And though it may not always appear so, I do hear you, understand the concerns and am empathetic to your needs. I wish that I could meet everyone's needs and make everyone happy, yet it is not possible in this situation. I do hope that you know that I am working with everyone that I can to make the best decisions possible for both you and our students.

Something Personal

I began this year continuing with a more healthy lifestyle. I started the 75 Hard Challenge. It is exciting to not only work on improving my physical health, the purpose of the 75 Hard Challenge for mental health improvement more so than for weight loss. I wish you the ability to improve your physical, mental, and spiritual health this year and beyond!

Alena Zachery-Ross — Superintendent

Take care of yourself better, by scheduling in time alone, for exercise, and for fun.

Office of the Assistant Superintendent



Happy New Year and Welcome Back!

YCS teachers, here are 4 *guiding questions* to explore deeper as you venture in exploring and implementing formative assessments for the next five months.

- What do we want all students to know and be able to do?
- How will we know if they learned it?
- How will we respond when students do not learn?
- How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

In a Nutshell - How do we *know* students "get it"? As a District, we must be ready to pivot and redirect our efforts to emphasize the use of Formative Assessment - focusing on Checking for Understanding.

Starting in January through June 2021, we will focus on *Checking for Understanding* by eliciting evidence of student understanding. The purpose of gathering student evidence within the formative assessment process is that it allows:

- A teacher to **know where students are** in relation to the learning target,
- Students **see what they know and need** to work on, and
- The teacher and students **use the information to make decisions** about where to go next with the learning

Gathering Evidence of Student Understanding Related to the Formative Assessment Process allows:

- **The teacher uses a variety of integrated strategies and tools** (observations, student conferences, questioning strategies, or written work) tightly aligned to the learning targets to elicit evidence of thinking or **understanding from all students**. The teacher appears to analyze students' thinking and other evidence and clearly indicates how the information will be used to inform feedback and instructional next-steps.
- When used regularly, the use of formative assessments (such as **checking for understanding**) enables every teacher to determine what students know, what they need to know, and what type of instructional interventions are effective.
- **Checking for Understanding** also helps the teacher to refocus their teaching and enables all students to get the most out of their classroom experience.

Why use Formative Assessments - *Checking for Understanding* strategies?

It...

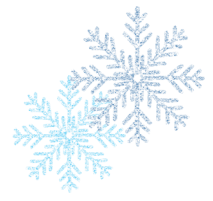
- Fosters Good Teaching
- Fosters Metacognition
- Encourages Looking for Multiple Representations of Knowledge
- Deepens Assessment
- Is Aligned with Best Practices
- Help in Checking Your Own Understanding

Here are examples of creative ways that you can *Check for Understanding*. These practical strategies are designed to help you check student understanding of the content being taught. Know that checking for understanding does not need to be complicated. As you can see by the strategies shared below...we need to be intentional in simplifying the way that we check for understanding.

- [Formative Assessments from A to Z](#)
- [Checking for Understanding in Virtual Learning](#)
- [Checking for Understanding - Expeditionary Learning](#)
- [Brookhart Tools for Formative Assessment Technique for Checking for Understanding](#)
- [Formative Assessment Techniques for Checking for Understanding](#)

Beverly Whatley and Paula Sizemore will be rolling out a 6 Module PD on how to lead using Formative Assessments in the near future. Please reach out to me if you have any questions.

Carlos Lopez — Assistant Superintendent





Human Resources



Happy New Year and Welcome Back! Human Resources is so excited to begin the 2021 year, here are a few important updates for your information:

Self Care - During these times that have been unprecedented for many of us, we forget to give ourselves a much deserved mental break. I wanted to share a potential stress relief strategy from an article in the MESSA sponsored Livongo program called Bedtime Journaling Prompts: 1) Make a **gratitude list** (what are you grateful for today i.e., your family, your job, your health); 2) **Worry list** (write down worries to get them off your chest and onto paper); 3) **Peaceful moments** (Imagine a peaceful moment -where are you- who is with you - allow yourself to pause 1-2 minutes); 4) **Five feelings** (although not easy try to write down 5 feelings you felt today - this gives us a chance to reflect or have insight on how situations make your feel); 5) **To-do list;** (write a list of things you need to do tomorrow both professionally and personally so you can release the "mind spinning" process of trying to remember everything - all of the time. Please take time to care for yourself.

Paid COVID-19 Leaves options under the Families First Coronavirus Act **expired** as of December 31, 2020. This includes both the Emergency Family Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA) and Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA).

Return to Learn Reporting- The Board of Education, administration along with recommendations from Governor Whitmer's office, CDC, Washtenaw County Health Department, Michigan Department of Education, Washtenaw Intermediate School District, Ypsilanti Education Association, Ypsilanti Community Schools Educational Support Professional Association have developed a return to work timeline. If you have a conflict with the return to work timeline please contact your building administrator or department director. The building administrators and directors will contact Human Resources.

REPORTING ABSENCES IN AESOP CONTINUES TO BE PROBLEMATIC. All absences including personal time off must be reported in AESOP.

Absences not reported in AESOP may result in a loss of wages. 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. **If you need help with access to AESOP contact Lois Nowling at Lnowling5@ycschools.us.**

Medical Leaves short or long term require a doctor's slip to go off from and return to work. If you need a leave of absence for any reason you must follow this process: 1) Get a doctor's slip to Human Resources. The slip must include your expected leave dates. It is **not** required to have a diagnosis on the slip at any time; 2) Complete Family Medical Leave Act paperwork; 3) If you believe you will be out for an extended time and you have district insurance - you may need to complete the long term disability paperwork for MESSA.

Once you are able to return to work you must follow this process: 1) Prior to reporting to work you must submit a doctor's release that includes your doctor approved return to work date; 2) Notify your immediate supervisor of your return. It is crucial that you do not report to work prior to providing a release from your doctor. This process is a case-by-case issue as each medical leave is unique to each employee. **Contact Human Resources for additional information prior to taking a leave or returning to work.**

Mandatory Meaningful work assignments have been going fantastic! I want to thank each of you for your flexibility and dedication. It takes the entire team to be successful! So many great projects have been completed: the set-up of the resiliency center, the organization of records at the Chapelle location, reorganization of the supply room at YIES and so many more areas. These assignments are so beneficial to each location and will continue as we move forward from January to June.

Communication and EMAIL - In order for the district to communicate and provide current information to all staff we use the YCS email system. The district has worked hard to develop a system for communication using the Blueprint Protocol to make sure that you have a way to get and return communication. You must do your part as well- **check your email** at least **2** times per day. This is a district-wide, mandatory expectation for all staff. If you are experiencing difficulties with your email please contact your immediate supervisor or whenever possible contact technology using techsupport@ycschools.us so our team can support you.

Check Stubs: Employees receive an electronic check stub every payroll through e-suites. This pay stub also contains your personal time off balances. Attached is the link that will guide you through the setup to activate an account in New World. New World allows you to view your e-suite account.

"Just one small positive thought in the morning can change your whole day."

Dalai Lama

Sue McCarty — Human Resources Director



Communications Department



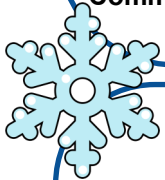
The time is always right to do what is right. ~Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by participating in a virtual event locally in Washtenaw County.

- [University of Michigan Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives MLK Day Activities](#)
- [Eastern Michigan University MLK Day Symposium](#)

Ypsilanti Community Schools will celebrate Black History Month with several speaker series open to students, families, staff and community. Save the Date!

- **February, 3, 2021 at 1 p.m.**
 - ◇ Just A Kid From Ypsi Panel speaking about being from 48197/48198 area codes who have amazing careers through hard work, education, dedication, and community!
 - ◇ Perfect forum for middle school, high school and college students
- **February 8, 2021 @ 12 p.m.**
 - ◇ The Divine 9 and Social Organizations in the Black Community.
 - ◇ Perfect for high school and college students who are interested in scholarship opportunities
 - ◇ Co-Sponsored with Rotary Club of Ypsilanti
 - ◇ NAAPID is always the second Monday in February
- **Black Lives Matter at School Week is February 1-5, 2021**

Taryn Willis — Marketing and Communications Coordinator



Food Service

Welcome Back

Our Grab-N-Go Bus service continues to operate. We are consistently delivered over 200 bags per week to our families. Each of our bags contains breakfast, lunch, supper, and snacks. Thank you to Kim Searcy and her transportation team for distributing our meals. We have now included Household Surveys in our meal distribution bags. We have enclosed a letter to explain the importance of completing the document and submitting it back to our school sites. The information collected is used to apply for grants and various programs that are beneficial to our students. We are hoping that we will see a drastic increase in survey completion, that is comparable to previous years.

The Food Service Dept is searching for some new wheels. The No Kid Hungry Grant has provided us with \$60,000 to purchase a refrigerated delivery truck. We are hoping that the quote will be under \$60,000 and we will be able to retro-fit the cargo van into a refrigerated unit. Keep a lookout for our new vehicle

Tiffany Houston — Food Services Director

Transportation



State Inspection completed by Michigan State Police. During the 2019-20 school year we had a passage rate of 85%. Twenty-eight buses passed, one (1) yellow tag and four (4) red tags = thirty-three (33) buses inspected in total.

Click on image to enlarge.



School Bus Inspection Report for School Year 2019/2020

1-SEP-2019 to 31-AUG-2020

DISTRICT NAME	PASS	YELLOW	RED	TOTAL
Ypsilanti Community Schools	28	1	4	33

Information available on the MSP site: https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mspnewsroom/School_Bus_YE2020_701752_7.pdf

Thank you for the partnerships and meaningful work collaborations. Transportation staff have partnered and worked to sort at Chapelle, light custodial, COVID Facilitators, Ford Donations, Food Service, Grab-N-Go, Resiliency Room, most recently sorting projects at YCMS, YIES, Erickson and working as Paras at the Parkridge Learning Lab.

Thank you to YCS BOE and the Executive Cabinet for this opportunity to continue meaningful work during this unprecedented pandemic. Take care and stay safe,

Kim Searcy — Director of Transportation



Instructional Technology

During break, Jerilyn worked with Foxbright to update the website. The home page layout is organized and very easy to navigate. The home pages for the schools are similar and are the same way. We are pleased with the outcome of the update.

We are working on getting staff to use the Staff Portal of the website. Next week we will be adding a video tutorial as to how to access the Staff Portal. Once they access the Staff Portal, then we have an Instructional Technology page that has Google Classroom Tutorials for staff to do self-paced professional development on different application. We will be working each month to add more application tutorials that will help staff with remote teaching and also in-person teaching.

The media staff have put together their January Off The Shelf issue. The link to the issue is- [Off The Shelf - January 2021](#)—In case you did not receive it by email.

Our office hours to assist staff: Mondays 1:00-2:00 pm / Tuesdays 3:00-4:00 pm / Wednesdays 7:30-8:30 am

“Winter blues are cured every time with a potato gratin paired with a roast chicken.” – Alexandra Guarnaschelli



Student Support Services



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Student Support Services staff are all excited to be back after having a restful, relaxing, and enjoyable holiday with their families and friends.

We held our first department meeting on Friday, January 8 with an informative and helpful presentation by Ms. Cindi Lonick, who is our behavior coach/behavior analyst. Her presentation centered on students' behavior and how we as staff can help support them. She presented information on looking carefully for the A-B-C's of behavior: the antecedent, the behavior and the consequences. Ms. Lonick will be working with both general education staff, special education staff, and parents to help develop behavior intervention plans that will support students both behaviorally and academically.

Staff have also begun conversations on extended school year (ESY) in preparation for the summer and the need to provide compensatory services if necessary.

E. Ruth Jordan — Student Support Services Director

Facilities



In anticipation of the return to in person schooling, the YCS Facilities Department has been diligently preparing our ELC and Elementary buildings for the return of students and staff. Specifically, COVID-19 signage and other pertinent communications have been placed throughout these campuses. In coordination with building principals, learning spaces were identified, quarantine rooms determined, entrance and exit plans mapped out with hallway social distancing markers and directional arrows throughout. Below you will find some examples of the signage that has been placed on campuses to date. We look forward to the next steps for our district and community and our department is committed to supporting health and safety for all.



Aaron Rose — Director of District Operations

“We spend January 1 walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched.” — Ellen Goodman

Grants



Happy New Year! In late December the Michigan legislature added preschool teachers to the Hazard Pay Grant (TSSC-19) by passing [SB 748](#). It is a supplemental budget bill that includes hazard pay grants of up to \$500 for those who teach special education for individuals aged 18-26, adult education, Head Start and Great Start Readiness Programs. The Department of Treasury will administer the program in the same manner as it administered the other grant money. As soon as we have the details on the application process we will let you know.

Mark Coscarella — Director of State and Federal Grant Programs

Business Office



Happy New Year and Welcome Back! We hope everyone had a wonderful and relaxing break. Business office is very excited to start the new year.

Business office is working on the W-2's. We are anticipating that the W-2's will be ready in the week of January 20. They will also be available online in the eSuite.

If you have received any invoices please send them to apinvoices@ycschools.us. If you have any payroll related questions, please reach out to [Judith Wills](#) our Payroll Specialist. Any questions related to purchase order, invoices please reach out to Renee Carrico, Accounts payable and Barbara Boone, our Accounting Supervisor. Please reach out to any of us if you have any questions or concerns.

***"To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often."* - Winston Churchill**

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). 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



Happy New Year

Happy New Year to you!
May every great new day
Bring you sweet surprises--
A happiness buffet.

Happy New Year to you,
And when the new year's done,
May the next year be even better,
Full of pleasure, joy and fun.



Technology



Happy New Year YCS! As we move into this year, we have several technology improvement efforts and projects occurring.

First, we have several new laptops coming in for instructional staff in the next few months. Our department will be working out a safe distribution plan to get those to instructional staff in the coming months. More information will follow as the time draws closer to distribution, so thank you for your patience.

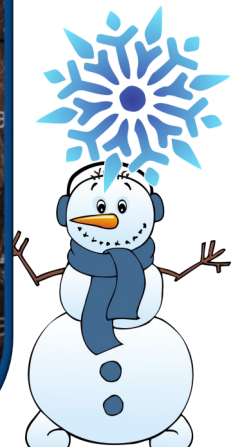
We are also planning on upgrading the wired network infrastructure this year leveraging E-Rate, this plan calls for replacing every single network switch in the district. The hope here is that it will increase the network speed and throughput for both wired and wireless connectivity. Given that we are a one for one device district now, we must prepare for the eventual return of all students to campus and need a robust and reliable network to support the large load of devices once this happens. Much of the infrastructure is quite antiquated and in desperate need of an upgrade; so we will focus on addressing that this year.

Another herculean task is replacing and modernizing our security camera infrastructure. The board has approved and awarded a contract to do just that. I will be working with our vendor over the course of the next months to develop a plan to implement this with the hopes of having this completed for all buildings by the end of summer.

And last, but certainly not least is classroom technology improvements, this year when we return to campus, we have rolled out a trial program for interactive displays in select classrooms (one per a building) to test and pilot this new device to enhance instruction. The concept is first to test this out and receive feedback, these devices are designed to replace both a smartboard and projector by integrating both functions into a single device. They can also do so much more (in which we will build a training program to teach instructional staff on their use inside the classroom). Once we're confident that this is the way ahead, we will seek board approval to deploy this all classrooms. An effort such as this takes time, so we don't anticipate seeing these in every classroom until next year. Once I have more information; I will share it out (e.g., such as which classrooms we are piloting these in - I should have this information readily available in the next newsletter, and would encourage each of you to check them out!).

Once again YCS, welcome back and please take care of yourself and your families, be safe and happy computing.

Nik Jackson — Technology Director



HAPPY NEW YEAR !

Office of the Data Coach



As second quarter needs its end this week please make sure to check that you are putting comments and final grades in the correct term. This is especially important to let your building administrators know that your grades are finalized and ready to be printed. Please make sure to do this for each section. This applies to **all grade levels**.

CATEGORY	ASSIGNMENTS	SCORED	DUE DATE	SCORE TYPE	EDIT
Proj	1.World Religions Project	1 / 1 ✓	12/2/2020	Points pts: 100	✎
Class	2.World Geography Worksheet 4	1 / 1 ✓	11/19/2020	Points pts: 10	✎
Exam	3.World Map Display	1 / 1 ✓	10/13/2020	Points pts: 15	✎

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On the NWEA front, it has become clear that the more we spend time with the data, the more clear that each student needs to be reviewed when examining their NWEA scores. It is highly recommended to start at the Class Level and then dig deeper by using the Student Profile report. In addition here are two NWEA external resources: a NWEA [goal setting webpage](#) for mapping out realistic growth expectations and [additional virtual seminars](#) (at \$19 a person) hosted by NWEA. For older students, don't forget there's also the [college planning tool](#) as well.

A quick platforms update: all systems seem to be green and running smoothly! Thank you everyone for your patience during our initial rocky start! Some of you may have noticed that in TeachPoint you had to do an "extra click" in order to see your My Activities, but that is now fixed and TeachPoint should load you directly to your My Activities tab now! **There have been many requests for staff to enter in external DPPD/PD hours into TeachPoint and that is being discussed for rollout. Currently most vendors will offer you the option of having your SCECHs uploaded directly to MOECS and we encourage everyone to take advantage of those options for now.** An update will definitely be sent out if/when the self reporting feature is available!

Finally, if you need any help with your students' data or the tools that we have available right now (such as Clever, Seesaw, etc) please feel free to [contact me](#) or schedule a meeting by [clicking here](#).

Solomon Zheng — Data Coach



Watch for our next issue!