

# Boulevard

## BANTER

A Publication of Reaching Heights

## Art Abounds in Boulevard's Hallways

by Cynthia Larsen, Boulevard parent

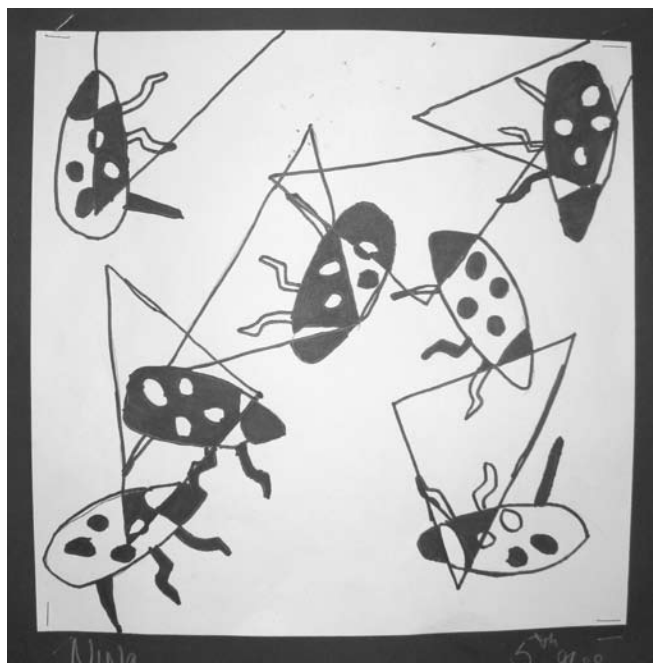
Boulevard's halls have become an art museum. It's curated by art teacher Kelly Wachhaus; her students are museum docents. Fifth graders Juriah Spencer and Amelia O'Donnell explain the use of positive and negative space in their meticulous yet playful insect drawings. "First you draw the bug on a square of paper," Amelia says. "Then," Juriah adds, "you trace the outline and the shapes on the big paper. When the bug overlaps the shape you have to color it the opposite of its background so it looks good."

Ms. Wachhaus's goal is to expose her students to diverse media and techniques. "I avoid using markers and crayons because they know those," she says. She integrates art lessons with science (insect physiology), social studies (historical and multicultural art), and math (geometry skills for patterned projects).

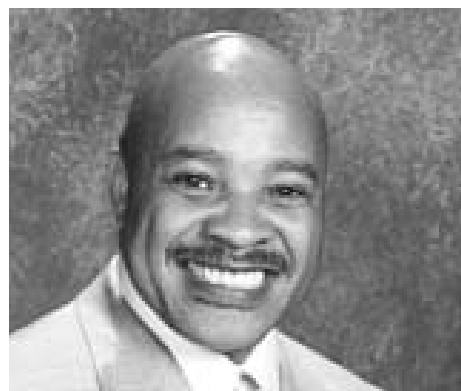
She inspires students to enter art contests that provide meaningful learning and useful prizes. Several of Ms. Wachhaus's students have won scholarships or computers. She recently received a National Endowment for the Arts Picturing America Award. The prize includes American folk art prints and a curriculum integrating art with American studies.

Boulevard's kindergartners can tell you about Kandinsky and how painting to music makes them feel. Students with multiple handicaps can show you their still life fruit collages. First graders will teach you about Monet. Second graders can proudly describe the techniques used to make Goytaku fish prints. Third graders can share their accordion style marbled paper books, complementary color studies, and self-portraits with beads, paper and an article of clothing woven from yarn. Fourth graders can teach you about the Japanese lotus and pre-Columbian amate painting.

Most important, all of these students will share how they feel about art: how it allows them to explore and find value in creativity and in themselves. ■



Bug art by fifth grade student Nina Cooper.



Boulevard Principal Lawrence A. Swoope

## Leading a Learning Community

by Florence D'Emilia, Reaching Heights

"In the old days, principals managed buildings," says Boulevard principal Lawrence Swoope. "Now, principals are front-line instructional leaders who use pedagogy and research to focus learning."

To build an effective learning community, all stakeholders must participate, he says. "It's a team effort that involves staff, parents, and the district."

Mr. Swoope engages with teachers, instructional coaches, parents and students each day. At weekly grade-level meetings, teachers and instructional coaches mine student data to help make teaching and learning more effective. Long before students arrive, he meets with teachers to discuss pressing concerns and to arrange student interventions.

When school starts, Mr. Swoope heads outdoors, greeting students and parents. Once school starts, he begins his morning walk-throughs. He tries to get into every classroom every morning and afternoon, to observe learning in progress.

(Leading continued on next page)

# REACHING HEIGHTS

CH-UH Public Schools Foundation

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Reaching Heights, a citizen organization that mobilizes community resources to support the Cleveland Heights-University Heights public schools.

Newsletters featuring news about each elementary school are written and distributed by Reaching Heights and a team of parent and community volunteers, under the direction of Reaching Heights Assistant Director Joy Henderson. Florence D'Emilia was the lead writer.

We welcome your ideas and help. Contact us at 216-932-5110 or [joy@reachingheights.org](mailto:joy@reachingheights.org). Learn all about Reaching Heights and see how you'd like to become involved, by visiting us online at [www.reachingheights.org](http://www.reachingheights.org).

Boulevard School is located at 1749 Lee Road. To contact the school, call 216-371-7140.

*(Leading continued from front page)*

During lunch, recess and dismissal, he's visible, talking to students and parents. His focus all day is creating an atmosphere where learning takes place. ■

## High Quality Instruction and Results

*by Susie Kaeser, Reaching Heights volunteer*

Colleagues tease Boulevard 1st grade teacher Christine Snowden. "Stardom has gone to her head," jokes Shirley Gallagher, the school's administrative assistant. With other Boulevard teachers, Miss Snowden "stars" in a seven-minute video demonstrating high quality instruction and revealing how teaching practice has changed.

"When teachers saw the video they got it," says Beth Rae, Boulevard's literacy coach.

With math coach Candice Summers, she leads the school's professional development that is changing the school's culture and teaching. National standards indicate that the best professional development is grounded in practice and is teacher-driven.

To prepare a high quality lesson, teachers need to break down a state standard or other significant learning goal into single-lesson "learning intentions" with goals stated in language kids can understand. Mrs. Rae puts learning intentions into "I can" statements, making intentions clear to teacher and students. The teacher designs a simple "formative assessment" that shows which students are learning what is being taught, and saves time for re-teaching.

In the video, Miss Snowden states the learning intention for a math lesson. She invites her children to say the intention with her and write it, and then demonstrates the idea as the class works with her on several problems. Students complete a problem on their own, put the answer on sticky notes and hand them to her. She separates those with the correct answer from those with the wrong answer.

"Let's see how Miss Snowden did at teaching," she says, taking responsibility for the results. Students who got the right answer practice on their own. To the others, she explained, "I need to do a better job of teaching. So let's work together some more." The formative assessment told her where she needed to redirect her teaching to make sure everyone had a chance to succeed. In a district committed to universal success, teachers focus attention on devising processes and classroom experiences that produce results.

As for Miss Snowden's stardom, she deserves it! The video exposed her teaching for all to see. She takes responsibility for student achievement and accepts that the quality of her teaching should be measured by its results. ■



*First Grade teacher Christine Snowden with students Samantha Cohen, Emma Unangst, Tre'naye Claybrooks, and Aaliyah Tisder*

## Study Island Where Learning is Fun

*by Susan Quill, Boulevard parent*

Ever wish you could escape to your own magnificent island, where you could stimulate your brain without interruptions and fill your breaks with fabulous fun? The students of Boulevard School have packed their bags, and they visit such an island as many times as their teachers can reserve the tech lab! Where do they go? To Study Island.

Boulevard students visit Study Island for reading, math and social studies. And when it's time to leave the lab, there are always moans and groans – from the students and their teachers.

Why? Teachers support Study Island because it is research-based and easy to use. They have access to immediate progress reports, allowing them to offer targeted instruction in their classrooms. Teachers can also access customized printable practice sheets when paper and pencil is more ap-

propriate. Students answer customized sets of clear and colorful questions that correspond to Ohio's standards. When students answer a question incorrectly, Study Island provides instant feedback and creates individualized learning paths for each student. Students learn at their own pace, practicing and building skills until they reach mastery level.

Learn more about Study Island at [www.studyisland.com/demoAsk.cfm?myState=OH](http://www.studyisland.com/demoAsk.cfm?myState=OH). ■

# The Boulevard Experience

*A story of seeing students show responsible and respectful behavior.*

## Friday Math Mentoring

*by Krysta Wyatt, Boulevard parent*

### Boulevard Kids Care

*by Rosemary Rackl-Pierce, Boulevard parent*

One morning, my kindergarten son Trey dropped his Bakugan, a golf ball-sized expandable toy. It became lodged in a hole on the Boulevard school sidewalk on the way to school. That day, several kindergarteners demonstrated important character values.

They acted in a responsible, trustworthy, respectful, fair and caring way. The definition of character education is the deliberate effort by schools, family and the community to act upon core ethical values. That day, I saw children choosing to live those values.

When the beloved toy became trapped, I made a feeble attempt to rescue it but proclaimed that we would have to come back after school with a tool. The bell was about to ring and the kids needed to go class, so Trey enlisted the help of his older and wiser 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade sister, Brynne.

When Brynne was coming in from recess, a kindergarteners class was heading out. She asked them to try to rescue the



*Rosemary Pierce with daughter Brynne*

toy. Later that day, Trey was informed that playground supervisor, Ms. Wilson, had the Bakugan. When Trey saw Ms. Wilson later in the day, she returned the rescued toy.

I heard different versions of how the toy was rescued, and I am not exactly sure which one is what actually happened at recess that day, but each version of the story holds the same underlying plot: children working together to help each other. These students clearly demonstrated responsible, trustworthy, respectful, fair and caring behavior. 📌

At 3:05 on Friday afternoons, Boulevard School doesn't empty out completely. Some 4th and 5th grade students head for the Math Club, which is organized by enrichment specialist Margie Dunlevy. For this innovative program, Mrs. Dunlevy recruited actuaries from Progressive Insurance to volunteer as mentors, to bring home the relevance of math in students' daily lives and make them aware of the job opportunities a solid foundation in mathematics can provide.

In the 5th grade group, 17 students, divided into two teams, were hunched over white boards, desperately trying to crack a numerical code that actuary and mentor Gary Traicoff had posted on the Smart Board, a 5'x7' interactive touch-screen/white board with internet capability.

Mrs. Dunlevy bought the Smart Board with a grant from the Actuarial Foundation three years ago, which is when Mr. Traicoff began working with Boulevard students. Several other actuaries have since joined him as volunteers.

Mr. Traicoff has clearly won over the students. "Gary's awesome – he's really smart! And he knows we're smart, so he gives us hard problems," says Taylor Jones. "If you mess up, he helps you," reports Naomi Marsh. Isabel McGaugh likes the mentoring program because it "encourages me to think mathematically." Taylor summed it up: "We all think differently, but we come together to solve problems."

Mrs. Dunlevy is thrilled with the mentoring program. "I've never seen kids so excited about problem solving!" she says. "You never know who's going to come up with the answers."

She is adamant about making this enrichment opportunity available to students school-wide, not just to those with the high test scores required to enter the gifted math program. All it takes to join the Math Club is a "B" average in math and a taste for brainwork and teamwork. 📌

## Many Villages Program Improves Boulevard Reading

*by Florence D'Emilia, Reaching Heights*

Armed with training from reading coach Beth Rae and a desire to help kids become better readers, more than two dozen parent and community volunteers come to Boulevard School each week. They're part of the Many Villages academic tutoring program of Reaching Heights.

Mrs. Rae trained the volunteers to use 15-minute concentrated lessons that teach children to sound out words. Each lesson includes reviewing letter sounds and blends, using hand signals for vowels and creating words with the cards to be "pounded out" by the students with their fists. "The children were just super-cute and really engaged," says volunteer Chanelle Truitt.

Like other volunteers, Truitt wanted to help students but had no idea how effective the

tutoring would be. "I am truly impressed," she says, "by the fact that four 15-minute sessions a week could have such a noticeable impact on their ability to read."

This year, Boulevard has used the volunteers to target kindergarten, 2nd and 4th grade students. The fifteen 2nd graders who worked with the tutors improved their sound recognition skills from 63 percent in September to 95 percent in December, and their ability to read words improved from 48 percent to 81 percent in that same time. The six 4th grade students who were tutored improved their ability to read two-syllable words 48 percent in an eight-week period, with two students improving 66 and 74 percent.

Mrs. Rae is thrilled with the results and loves seeing the success of her students. "Learning to read," she says, "levels the playing field for all kids." 📌

# Common Language, Clear Expectations

by Susie Kaeser, Reaching Heights volunteer

*“Walk silently and help other classes concentrate and learn,”* reads a sign highlighting expectations for hallway behavior at Boulevard Elementary School.

*“Be friendly and ask others to play,”* defines respectful behavior on the playground.

These kid-friendly statements define behavior that supports learning. They are the result of careful work by the Boulevard staff to establish common and easy to follow behavior expectations that help students fulfill the C.U.B.S. goals. (see box on right)

“What constitutes respectful behavior is relative to the household where you are raised,” explains Boulevard principal, Lawrence Swoope. “Since people show respect in different ways, it was important to establish clear expectations for what respectful behavior looks like at school.”

Every member of the Boulevard community knows the expectations and shares a common language that describes that behavior. At the start of the school year students visited the lunchroom, playground, halls and bathroom to learn the expectations for each area. Parents signed The Parent Pact, agreeing to support the expectations and all students who enter mid-year learn the language.

The expectations use respectful language which makes them even more powerful. Mr. Swoope gives this example. “We teach kids three different voice levels. Voice level two is a conversational voice. It’s much more respectful to remind kids to ‘use level two voices please’ than to yell ‘quiet’ or ‘shut up,’” explains Swoope.

Consistency is critical to this supportive approach to positive behavior. When all adults in the school have the same expectations and language it’s easier for kids to do the right thing. School-wide expectations contribute to a positive climate for learning.

“With more than 500 students and adults working together six or seven hours a day on student success, we have to be clear about the behavior that lets us focus on learning,” says Mr. Swoope. 📖

## C.U.B.S. EXPECTATIONS

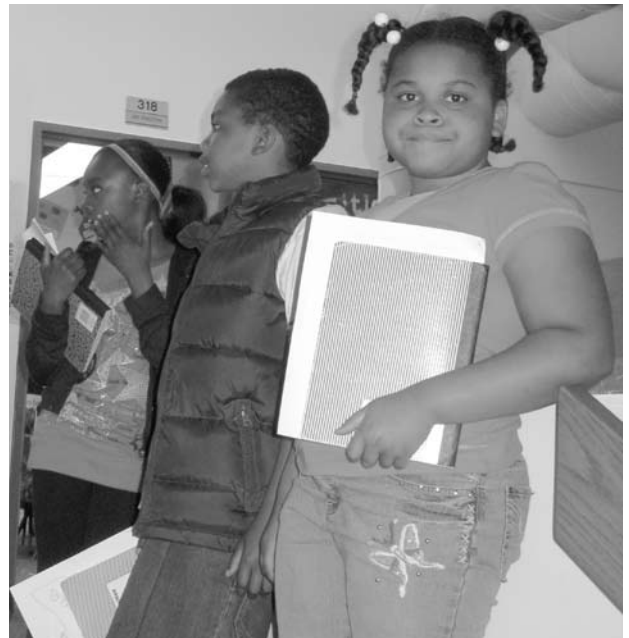


Consider Others First

Understand Consequences

Behave Respectfully

Succeed Academically



*Fourth graders in Sandy Axner’s class, Camryn Stevens, Amahd Mangault and Marshaey Jackson wait for the rest of their class before leading the way to the library.*

## Mr. Swoope’s Walk-throughs

by Cynthia Larsen, Boulevard parent

Everyone wants a visible principal like Mr. Swoope. Last year, the CH-UH principals agreed on a goal to improve the practice of walk-throughs. More than a mere stroll around the school peeking into classrooms, a walk-through is a research-based practice that places the principal at the center of the learning community as an instructional leader.

Mr. Swoope tries to spend five to 10 minutes in each of a few classrooms every day, and a qualitatively significant amount of time in each class monthly. He asks students and teachers probing questions and highlights something to encourage. Later, he may talk to the teacher or write a note.

Unlike evaluations, walk-throughs deepen the instructional conversation. They’re non-threatening and elicit frequent feedback. This helps Mr. Swoope encourage good instruction, observing how teachers differentiate the curriculum and help students take ownership of their education.

He was impressed with how one teacher pushed her class, using visual aids and Bloom’s taxonomy of higher order thinking before breaking into groups. “They all get the higher-level thinking as well as support at their own level,” he says. Sometimes he makes suggestions, such as how a teacher could add a new step to a lesson, providing a better transition.

Shifting from “building manager” to “instructional leader” means longer hours for Mr. Swoope, but he cherishes the experience. “In the classroom, you can understand how a specific child’s learning goes,” he says. “A child in 1<sup>st</sup> grade may start with a reading difficulty, but later I see progress as part of all the supports in place for him or her.”

Seeing children grow academically brings Mr. Swoope back to the children to experience their successes first-hand. Mrs. Farrow, a kindergarten teacher, welcomes Mr. Swoope’s classroom visits. “The kids love him,” she says, “so they like to see him. He gives a presence and builds a relationship. He asks them what they are doing today, and helps them feel responsible for their learning.” 📖

## Monticello Students Go Digital

by Joy Henderson

During the first week of October, Monticello students and their families attended a long-awaited evening meeting to receive their school-issued laptops. Superintendent Deborah Delisle encouraged families to embrace their new tool for learning. "Part of our goal is to close the digital divide," she said, "providing tools for all of our students so everyone can learn the skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century."

When the CH-UH information technology staff presented the laptop computers to students and their families, all were visibly excited. Students listened carefully to instructions about how to open, log onto and return the laptop to the carrying case. Parents watched over their students' shoulders and signed computer-use agreement forms that included instructions for parents.

The Apple Mac Books come in sturdy zipper bags with shoulder straps and are loaded with software to enable students to conduct research and connect to teachers, and other resources.

"This is not a technology initiative, it's a teaching and learning initiative," says Joe Micheller, CH-UH Director of Educational Services. "We are providing the resources in the context that

students know – a computer – not in the traditional form of a textbook." Some textbooks are available online or loaded onto the computers.

Monticello teachers received their laptops last spring and have been learning more about how to incorporate their use into instruction.

Many parents and grandparents remember watching NASA rocket launches on a classroom television. This generation's version of that is much more interactive. Students could e-mail the control engineers to ask questions before the event, watch a digital video of the astronauts doing scientific experiments, and learn about rocket thrust from the NASA website. The teacher might say "Open your science book to page 46," or "Open your laptops to the NASA webpage."

In the school, the wireless network will block social networking sites like My Space and other inappropriate sites for middle school students. If the computers are accidentally damaged, lost or stolen, the district's insurance policy will cover the cost. If the computers are intentionally damaged or stolen, the principal will investigate the incident.

Roxboro Middle School and Wiley Middle School students will receive laptops in early 2009, and by 2012 all students in grades 6 through 12 will

have laptops. Each summer, students will return their laptop to the district for updating and maintenance, much like they return text books. Each fall, students will get laptops again and when they graduate, they can purchase their computer for \$1 and take it to college with them. 📖



Technology Specialist Hannah Reid instructs Monticello students.

## Helping Students Avidly Aim for College

by Joy Henderson, Reaching Heights

Jill Pompei's class is unlike others at Roxboro Middle School: all students are girls (boys meet separately), 20 college pennants adorn the walls, and four college students lead study groups. The class, new this year, is part of the AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) program. The CH-UH District was the first in Ohio to introduce this in-school academic support program that prepares academically middle-performing students for college eligibility and success.

The AVID model is based on research suggesting that all students can learn challenging material if proper support is provided; and that low-performing students do better when given accelerated learning opportunities rather than remedial material. The program places students in advanced classes and works to level the playing field for minority or low-income students and those in families without a college-going tradition.

Eighty 7th and 8th grade students attend one of four AVID classes. Mrs.

Pompei teaches two girls' classes and Darnell Robinson teaches both boys' sections. Twice a week, college tutors answer students' questions about academics, study habits and college.

Roxboro's AVID students will join the Heights High AVID program in 9th grade. "I see these students in the AP Statistics and Chemistry classes, as Merit Scholars and receiving many scholarships on Senior Awards Night," says Roxboro Assistant Principal Allison Byrd-English, a member of the District's AVID team. 📖

# Heights Seniors Earn National Merit and Achievement Scholarship Recognition



*Heights seniors who received National Merit and Achievement Scholarships: Front Row, left to right, Meike Ernst, Megan McCoy and Kimberly Wilkins. Back Row, left to right, Hari-Gaura Ziyad, Joseph Fox, James Wherley, Terance Ashford, Murray Davis, Maria Chan, Terrence Banks II, John Waltrip and John Kenniebrew. Not Pictured, Lee Deadwyler.*

Four Cleveland Heights High School seniors are semi-finalists in the first round of the National Merit Scholarship and National Achievement Scholarship programs.

National Merit Scholarship semifinalist: **Joseph Fox**

National Achievement Scholarship semifinalists:

**Terance Ashford, Terrence Banks II, and Hari-Gaura Ziyad**

National Merit Commended students:

**Terrence Banks II, Maria Chan, Murray Davis, Meike Ernst, Megan McCoy, John Waltrip and James Wherley**

National Achievement Outstanding Participants:

**Lee Deadwyler, John Kenniebrew and Kimberly Wilkins**

Semifinalists will compete to become National Merit and National Achievement finalists and scholarship winners. Merit Scholarship semifinalists can continue in the competition for 8,200 awards worth \$34 million; Achievement Scholarship semifinalists are eligible for 800 awards worth \$2.5 million. ■

## Workshops Help Parents Help Students On the Path to College

by Joy Henderson, Reaching Heights

“The college-going process starts in 6th grade,” says Heights High College Counselor Dr. Kristie Cooper. “That’s when families can encourage and support their children to take rigorous classes, preparing them for high school and college.”

Of course, not all students take honors-level courses in all subjects, but all students have strengths in and should take an honors-level course in at least one subject area, according to Dr. Cooper.

The Heights High guidance department offers this and many other tips during a seven-part workshop series for parents. “The world has changed so much in the last generation,” says Dr. Cooper. “Today’s students will need some kind of education after high school to make a decent living and expand their career options.”

The workshop content was outlined by Ms. Cooper with input by parents. A Parent Connection Council advisory work group, set up last summer, helped fine-tune the content and offered advice on how to promote the workshops.

Parent/guardian support in the college-going process is extremely important beginning with talking to toddlers to encourage vocabulary development, making time for regular trips to the library and talking about college as a family expectation. When students are in high school, making trips to local or distant colleges to spend time on a campus are important, whether Tri-C, Case, Cleveland State, John Carroll, or out-of-state schools.

Dr. Cooper values parents as important drivers of much of the college-going process. “Parents lead most of the process when students are younger and parents are still needed in a different way through

high school,” she says. Parents, guardians or other helpful adults are needed at every step: keeping track of deadlines, knowing about fee waivers for college entrance tests, or helping with college applications. The workshops at Heights High provide a great resource to help parents help their children get ready for, get into and graduate from college.

For more information call Dr. Cooper at 216-320-3067. ■

**Recordings of all workshops are available at The Cleveland Heights-University Heights Library.**

**Topics include:**

- **The Academic Record**
- **Standardized Tests**
- **Choosing a College**
- **The Application Process**
- **Financing College and College Realities.**