

Community *Connection*

Special Edition
2021



Let's stay connected!
#WeareFHSD

From the Desk of the Superintendent



Forest Hills School District has always held the educational success of all of the district's students as a top priority. Since March of 2020, we have been faced with the unprecedented challenge of remaining at the forefront of academic excellence while navigating the many challenges of a pandemic. Without a doubt, FHSD students, families, faculty, staff and administrators have enthusiastically risen to those challenges without yielding to the current health crisis.

I continue to be encouraged by the exceptional accomplishments of our students, faculty, staff and administrators. Garnering the volume of national and state accolades that our FHSD family has been able to achieve is no simple task under traditional circumstances, let alone

having to overcome the immense obstacles and ever changing landscape of the COVID-19 health crisis. It takes a team effort to provide high-level education during these difficult times. From our custodial team which work with diligence to thoroughly sanitize our facilities, to our food services and transportation crews which continue providing essentials for students' well-being, and of course, the amazing FHSD teachers, faculty and staff, we were able to complete First Semester with roughly 89% of our 7,400 students participating in face-to-face instruction. 11% chose to enroll in the district's Virtual Academy (VA) and were just as successful using technology and receiving exceptional instruction from hard-working VA teachers.

Despite significant obstacles this year, both Anderson and Turpin High Schools continue to be ranked in the top 50 best high schools in Ohio, according to U.S. News & World Report. 95% of FHSD students graduate from our high schools. Moreover, Forest Hills is ranked an "A+" school district based on academics, administration and college preparation as reported in the 2021 Niche report.

I invite you to read through the next few pages to learn more about the efforts our FHSD team members provide to ensure that our students continue to be provided with the necessary tools and support they need to ensure success.

It is my sincere hope that in the near future, we will return to some semblance of "normalcy", and that we will be able to gather "in-person", once again to celebrate our students' accomplishments.

In the meantime, I want to thank you all for your part in making our 2020-2021 school year a success and wish you and your family health and continued happiness in the new year!



Scot

Scot T. Prebles
Superintendent

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A Message from the Treasurer's Office

In the Treasurer's Office at Forest Hills School District, we recognize the commitment our community has made to our schools and respect that investment with strong and transparent management of each dollar. This past year has brought many unknowns into our district finances, but we were able to weather those uncertainties and do what was necessary to keep our schools open and our students learning as much as possible.



In Spring of 2020, our district - like most schools in Ohio - received some difficult news that we would see a significant cut in our state funding. The one-time emergency federal dollars we received helped to mitigate new costs of educating and keeping our schools safely open in the midst of the pandemic, but did not make up for the loss we received from the state. As we look forward to the next school year and beyond, we are anxiously waiting for news on our upcoming state funding. In the next couple months, our legislators will head to Columbus to pass the next biennial state budget which will set school funding for the next two years. While we do not yet know what the outcome will be, we - like most schools in Ohio - must be prepared for the possibility of additional reductions.

In Forest Hills, this is not new. In fact, 70% of the district's revenue is generated from local taxpayers, and our state funding accounts for only 27% of the district's budget. The remaining 3% is mainly composed of student tuition and fees. We understand that our community values excellent schools at an excellent value. We are proud to be in the top 10% of performing schools in Ohio and have our high schools in the top 50 in the state while maintaining a below-average tax rate in Hamilton County. Earlier this year, homes in Hamilton County also received a new tax valuation. This is part of the triennial (three-year) review of properties by the Hamilton County Auditor and is used to establish market value on properties for tax purposes. On average, homes in our district increased in value by 13.3%, according to the triennial update.

While this is good news for a homeowner, it is important to note that schools do not receive the corresponding increase in financial contributions from homeowners. Instead, the auditor makes adjustments, making sure that schools do not receive inflationary increases on voted millage. Ohio law prohibits inflationary increases on voted millage. Only a modest amount can increase - called inside millage - but it certainly does not help make up for costs incurred as a result of the pandemic or financial cuts made by the state. Currently, 85% of the district's revenue is spent on staff salaries and benefits. Our teachers and staff are what make our district excellent and they deliver the high-quality education and experiences our community expects from Forest Hills Schools. Even with this large portion of our budget, we are saving money where we can with staff attrition and reassigning staff where possible; making sure we stretch every dollar without altering the student experience.

This past year, our district earned the State Auditor Award of Distinction for our sound, responsible and transparent management of our finances. We are proud of this achievement and will continue to manage every dollar in our budget with the same care and consideration. We are committed to spend our dollars wisely and where they matter most: the classroom. I am grateful for our community's continued investment in our schools and grateful to be serving a community that places such a high value on its schools. More information about our district finances and the full five-year financial forecast are available on our website.

Preparing for Each Day Facing COVID-19

FHSD Operations Department manages one of the largest transportation systems in the area. Each day, workers sanitize a fleet of 75 buses to ensure that students have safe access to their school buildings and extracurricular activities. Due to the pandemic, buses are running at reduced capacity, but they continue to transport nearly 3,000 students more than 4,300 miles each day in a smooth and timely manner.

Transportation is provided to 34 public and private schools with more than 330 runs each day. We are grateful to the FHSD families, who continue to partner with us helping students to our bus stops, and members of the community who abide by traffic laws during pick-up and drop-off times. We encourage parents whose students are in face-to-face learning to use district transportation. Using district transportation reduces the number of parent vehicles at the buildings which allows the buses greater access to the campuses.



FHSD has always kept the nutritional needs of our students as a priority. Though the pandemic brings challenges with food services, our commitment to provide high-quality, fresh meals has not changed.

A team of 44 staff members works diligently throughout the school year to help prepare and deliver meals. Since the 2020-2021 school year began, more than 200,000 meals have been served to FHSD students. During Winter break, staff and volunteers provided pick-up meal service at Anderson High School. The district's Virtual Academy students receive meals

via pick-up service five days a week. Since the start of second semester, on "remote Wednesdays", students have received meals through pick-up service. Additionally, transportation workers deliver food to families unable to access this service on their own. "There has been teamwork and cohesiveness between Forest Hills departments. "We all work together as a team to facilitate and provide the meals," said Tia Straus, Food Service Supervisor.

Forest Hills Food Service Department is self-supporting. It does not rely on support from the district's general fund, making the department not only beneficial to the physical health of our children, but also cost-efficient.

After carefully considering the overwhelming consensus of our FHSD family, the district has been able to maintain face-to-face instruction. Such an accomplishment would not be possible without the tireless work of our Facilities and Maintenance Team. Our team cleans and sanitizes 12 buildings, often working overtime since the onset of the pandemic. During second semester on "remote Wednesdays", deep cleaning takes place, including extra care of common area surfaces such as handrails, door knobs, and bottle-fill water fountains.

"My team and I rise to the COVID-19 challenges each and every day to make sure Forest Hills schools are safe, clean, and are as sanitary as

the buildings can possibly be to run as smoothly as they can," said Larry Corley, Supervisor of Facilities and Maintenance Services. Moreover, the team performs special maintenance on each building. Air quality filters are changed more frequently than in past years. Additionally, maintenance teams monitor each buildings' boiler and HVAC systems 24/7 to adjust airflow and ensure other safety measures are operational.

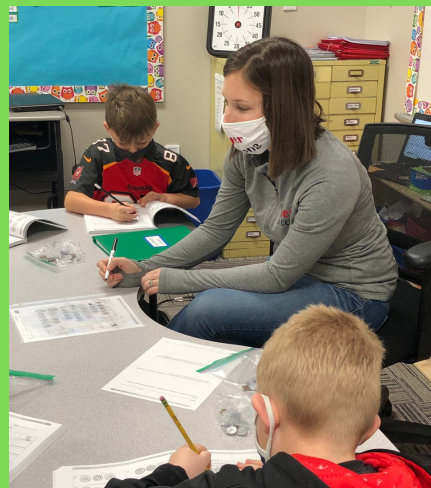


Forest Hills Face-to-Face

FHSD has successfully continued with face-to-face instruction during the pandemic. Health and safety protocols such as handwashing, face masks, and keeping safe distance has helped decrease the spread of COVID-19 at school facilities and on buses.

Hamilton County COVID-19 data comparisons indicate that schools remain the “safest” places for school aged children and it has been the mission of FHSD to keep buildings open for our students. District administrators monitor active COVID-19 health data and adjust daily programming accordingly, including the implementation of remote learning.

With the hard work and dedication of our teachers and the support of parents and guardians, students have continued to excel and thrive in and outside of the classroom.



Ayer Elementary Second Grade Students in face-to-face instruction

Engage • Empower • Excel

Forest Hills is committed to ensuring that our students have a complete, well-rounded learning experience, that includes promoting student social-emotional-behavioral wellness.

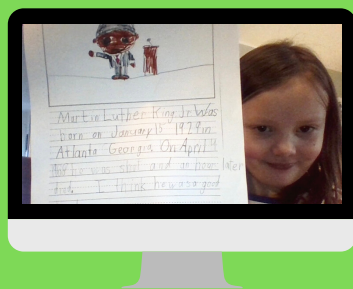
As part of that goal, the district integrates Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, or PBIS practices, into each of our nine schools. The framework that is designed to help students achieve social-emotional and academic success.

FHSD's nine buildings have developed building teams to support PBIS efforts. The teams applied for and received recognition for their practices in the implementation of PBIS. Recently, six FHSD buildings received PBIS recognition awards for implementing a social-emotional behavior wellness framework in their buildings!

During its December 14, 2020 meeting, the FHSD Board of Education provided special recognition for the accomplishments of PBIS teams at Ayer, Maddux, Mercer, Summit, Turpin, and Wilson.

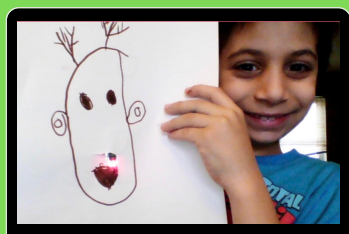
Four of the buildings received Bronze awards. Wilson Elementary and Turpin High School received Gold awards for meeting higher level expectations around their framework.

“What was very clear from our state support team was that all of our buildings are following the principles of a PBIS framework and while each individual building’s culture is different as well as how they implement it building-wide, they follow the overall components of the framework to make sure the system is solid,” said Betsy Ryan, Director of Teaching and Learning.



Forest Hills Virtual Academy

Although the majority of our students have attended face-to-face classes, roughly 11% of Forest Hills School District's 7,300 students are currently enrolled in our Virtual Academy. Each student uses an electronic device during the day. FHSD ensured that each child enrolled in its VA Academy has been provided the necessary support and electronic access to be just as successful as our face-to-face students. Our VA teachers adapted their teaching styles to be conducive to online learning. Our students had an amazing first semester and are off to another great start!



Through It All We've Stayed Positive!

Many of our teachers and staff have gone above and beyond. "Our 6th grade student leadership team is focused on working to build a more positive school culture. Their voices are leading our students to feel a sense of belonging. Our counselor is leading this group to focus on how to reach each other and connect during this difficult time," said Principal Jodi Davidson.

Like other district staff, teacher Kacie Hatmaker has made numerous trips to students' houses when they are in quarantine. She even drove to Reading, which is a one hour round trip, to make sure a student had exactly what they needed.



Mercer students

"He's made tremendous strides in learning about perseverance, and though things are hard, he is rocking it!"

- WILSON SECOND GRADE TEACHER

At Wilson, a second grade student has worked hard this year at managing his emotions when things seem difficult and uncertain. He has been fully quarantined twice. During his quarantine, he has maintained 100% attendance and has stayed on pace with his learning through the district's remote learning program facilitated by his teacher.

He also told his teacher earlier this year that he wanted to be a better friend, and asked if she could help him. Of course, she was more than willing to do so, as were some of his classmates and friends.

"In speaking with his parents, they just can't believe his transformation so far this year! He wanted to make sure he didn't miss anything at school while he was out, and that is just amazing and awesome," a Wilson second grade teacher said.

During the holiday season, Sherwood held an outside event for the community. During the event, parents drove through neighborhoods to view and vote on the best displayed holiday lights. After viewing the lights, they stopped by Sherwood and picked up some hot chocolate and cookies, drop off letters to Santa, and speak with staff and PTO members. "I know this was an outside school event, but we had many students and parents just celebrate how nice it was to do something as a family and community," said Assistant Principal Matt Patterson.

All social distancing procedures were in place. The activity was a way to show community appreciation. "We want to celebrate our staff for stepping up to the plate," Patterson said.



Sherwood's 50th Anniversary Celebration
January 22, 2021

Academic Excellence Remains Paramount



Stellar academic performance has always been a hallmark of FHSD students. This year, despite significant obstacles, 12 high school students were named Commended Scholars in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program and 12 additional students were honored as Semifinalists. More than 1.5 million juniors in roughly 21,000 high schools entered the 2020 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.

Anderson High School students recognized as Commended Scholars: Owen Crable, Samantha Engel, Andrew Gasser, Leah Mizukawa, Sarah Pavlik, and Stanley Zhou.

Turpin High School students recognized as Commended Scholars: Hannah Aman, Hiram Basu, Eva Bowen, Adam Driscoll, Sarah Driscoll, and Claire Studenka.

Anderson High School Semifinalists: Elijah Lind, Anna MacLennan, Leah Moody, Samuel Tilford, and Rachel Weitz.

Turpin High School Semifinalists: Jack Behling, Daniel Creelman, Hannah Hazelwood, William Henkel, Andrew Kissel, Nicholas Langan, and Elizabeth Liu.

Turpin STEM Scholar



Turpin High School senior, Hiram Basu, was named a STEM Regeneration Science Talent Search Scholar! Out of 1,760 students only 300 were chosen. Hiram earned a \$2,000

scholarship and an additional \$2,000 for Turpin High School STEM programs. "I am beyond excited to be recognized as a top 300 scholar in the Regeneration Science Talent Search," Hiram said. The final competition is in March where the top award is \$250,000.

Anderson "Ruth Hartman Memorial Essay" Winner

Sophomore Jennifer Hazlett won \$1,000 in the Ruth Hartman Memorial Essay Contest. The contest honors veterans and contestants were between the ages of 13-18. Jennifer was one of 223 entrants from all over the Tri-State area.

Jennifer's essay honored her grandfather, Edward Hazlett's, service with the United States Marine Corps during the Vietnam War. Representatives from Honor Flight Tri-State presented her with a check.



Continued Support from the Forest Hills Foundation for Education

With support from our FHSD community, the Forest Hills Foundation for Education (FHFE) once again offered FHSD students the resources and programs, otherwise not available, that they need for continued success! The programs may have looked different as a result of COVID-19; however, the FHFE was able to provide students: career exploration, Destination Imagination, after-school tutoring, clubs, and busing at Nagel. "It was a challenging year, but because of the generosity of our donors we were able to continue all of our programs and support needs that were a direct result of the pandemic," said Dee Stone, FHFE executive director.

The foundation was also able to support teacher grants, E-sports and technology, peer-to-peer suicide prevention, Hope Squads at Anderson, Turpin and Nagel, and school-based therapists to help students with mental health issues. FHFE raised funds for all of these opportunities despite one of its largest events changing significantly due to COVID-19.

Unfortunately, we had to make our 2020 FH5K virtual for safety's sake. We will be doing the same in 2021. We are hoping we will get the same amazing community support that we usually do," said Stone. The next FH5K is May 8th, 2021.

With your continued efforts and support, FHFE hopes to do even more in 2021! You can learn more about the Forest Hills Foundation for Education at www.FHFE.org.



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It's time to register the Class of 2034!



Parents and guardians of children who will be five years old by August 1, 2021 can register their child for full-day or half-day Kindergarten now through February 21. Parents can complete the first step in the registration process by providing student information online at foresthills.edu/departments/registration.html.

Please use the 21-22 registration, NOT 20-21 or you will have to restart the process. This year, to accommodate families while ensuring safety practices during the pandemic, our six elementary schools have produced informational videos to share with families of new kindergarteners for the 21-22 school year. These videos are available at foresthills.edu/kindergarten.html. Any new family may call the school to request the links. Each building will also host virtual coffee with the principals. Call or email the schools for details.

Round-Up of paperwork will happen on February 11 and March 18 at your child's school of attendance. Please plan to attend one Round-Up event to provide required documents for registration: parent/ guardian driver's license, child's current immunization records, child's official birth certificate, custody papers (if applicable), and proof of residency (mortgage deed, rental/ lease agreement). A \$75 deposit (check only please) is also required for all-day kindergarten registration. This deposit will be applied toward the program tuition. Financial assistance is available to those who qualify.

It is preferred that Round-Up events are parent-only events to help expedite the registration process and ensure social distancing. Parents who cannot make the Round-Up events should complete the online registration and then call Debbie Conover, registrar, at 231-3600 to make an appointment to provide the required documentation. For more information on the district's kindergarten program and to fill-out an application for a financial scholarship, visit foresthills.edu/kindergarten.html.