

FAIRVIEW PARK

New grant focus on 'true' accountability in city schools

By **BRIAN GEORGE**

Fairview Park schools Superintendent Keith Ahearn sees accountability as vital for success.

The district received a grant of \$13,750 from the Martha Holder Jennings Foundation for work with John Tanner's *bravEd* Benefits-Based Accountability Framework. Beginning in October and taking place over the next 18 months, Tanner is holding 10 sessions with Fairview Park schools building administrators and key teacher leaders, along with administrators from Maple Heights City Schools, Olmsted Falls City Schools and Westlake City Schools. The focus is based on "true accountability."

"Students are the consumers in our systems," Ahearn said. "Benefits-based accountability organizations are designed to provide a benefits system to these consumers. This grant and these sessions will help us to identify what benefits we want students to gain from Fairview Park City Schools."

Tanner is looking at how teams of teachers determine the benefits that they want to give students that are outside of just high-stakes testing and then create evidence, exhibits and real measurable things about how kids are progressing towards those standards.

"With the accountability model, we hope that it empowers people to take action toward their goals," Ahearn said. "Tanner will help to develop common vocabulary about benefits that are defined through his research and

what we have looked at internally."

While formerly a letter-grade system mirroring student marks, the recently updated Ohio Department of Education's Ohio School Report Card is a star-based rating system that Ahearn noted is based on high-stakes tests.

"The change of rating is a way to be more equitable and to represent the diverse nature of the school system," Ahearn said. "We have done pretty well with the new star-ratings, but it is not a means to empower our staff and teachers to be able to focus on continuous improvement. The reality is that districts have to work in order for students to be successful. We want to be able to develop life-long learners."

Ahearn said it can be a form of backward-looking when analyzing these report cards. An example he gave is that a sixth-grade teacher has these reports to determine the nature of students by looking at their fifth-grade results.

"It is not a proper tool to help inform the teacher on what sixth-grade science will be like for the student," Ahearn said. "We hope that our work with John Tanner will allow us to develop a vocabulary that allows us to develop the benefits-based accountability for our students that makes sense. We want to be able to present the benefits that we are providing for parents and for their children and to display the evidence that we have collected to measure our progress."

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