

Focus Eagles News

Let's celebrate teachers!

A message from Superintendent Kathy Williams

May 4-8, communities across our great nation celebrated **Teacher Appreciation Week** – an annual recognition event to honor countless teachers who change the lives of millions of students each and every day.

Focus is fortunate to have such a dedicated team of teachers at each of its three schools. They've really stepped up their game since Ohio's school building closings in March, continuing to support student learning despite the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

When we hire teachers at Focus, we're looking for individuals who entered the profession because of the opportunities to change the lives of their students. It's not the pay, the benefits or a few weeks off in the summer that attract the best teachers to Focus; rather, it's a true commitment to helping students to overcome personal challenges which allows them to master course content, pass mandatory state tests, earn required credits and learn new skills. But more importantly, it's a sincere desire to help students build self-confidence, expand their life experiences and face head on the need to unlearn negative behaviors that hold them back. It's about teaching students the importance of respecting others as they learn to respect themselves and in that learning, they can become the productive community members our country so needs. It's about educating students on their options in following a successful path to college or career. And, **most important, it's a strong desire to make a meaningful difference in students' lives, positioning them for life-long success.**

A lot has changed about school and life since COVID-19 invaded Ohio and the U.S., but one thing has remained constant: the personal commitment of each of our talented teachers to the more than 700 Focus students.

Please join me in thanking them for their commitment to student success!



OUR PURPOSE

Focus Schools provide safe, caring learning environments with self-paced, flexible, four-day weekly class schedules. These unique schools provide opportunities for students from all walks of life to earn their high school diplomas and industry recognized credentials, opening the door to fulfilling careers, college and post-secondary education opportunities.

OUR MOTTO

"Your choice ..."

FOCUS LEARNING ACADEMY SOUTHEAST

4480 Refugee Rd.
Columbus, Ohio 43232
614-269-0150

FOCUS NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

4807 Evanswood Dr.
Columbus, Ohio 43229
614-310-0430

FOCUS LEARNING ACADEMY SOUTHWEST

190 Southwood Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43207
614-545-2000

Stress = tension = abuse or neglect?

Pandemic is unchartered waters

In stressful situations like we all face today, family members should ask themselves a few very basic questions to assess the dynamics of their living situation:

- ◆ Do I ever wake up in the morning, wishing the day was already over?
- ◆ Does this whole “stay home” thing seem like it’s just too much to handle?
- ◆ Is it hard to stop yelling at others because you just can’t get a handle on this “new normal?”
- ◆ Do you sometimes just not care when someone in your house is hungry or needs help?
- ◆ Do you just wish someone else would handle all of this mess?
- ◆ Do you find yourself getting physical when you don’t mean to do so?
- ◆ Are you letting someone else in your home get physical when you know it’s not right but don’t have a way to stop it?



Students, parents, family members, neighbors ... we're all experiencing trauma right now, and that can lead to incidents of domestic and child abuse, and child neglect. “Stay home” orders compound the problem, and even as Ohioans begin to return to work, many will choose to

continue to stay home due to the ongoing risk of exposure to COVID-19.

So, let's talk about a significant problem impacting millions of children and young adults each year: abuse. What, exactly, is child abuse? According to Childhelp, **abuse is when a parent or caregiver, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm or risk of serious harm to a minor.** It comes in many forms, including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation and emotional abuse.

According to the Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody

- ◆ Approximately four million referrals for alleged maltreatment are made to child protective agencies each year.
- ◆ Researchers have estimated that between 3.3 and 10 million children are exposed to adult domestic violence each year.
- ◆ In an estimated 30 to 60 percent of families in which either child maltreatment or exposure to adult domestic violence is occurring, the other form of violence also is being perpetrated.
- ◆ Co-occurring child maltreatment and domestic violence often exist in the presence of other risk factors such as poverty, parental unemployment, substance abuse, mental illness, crime, financial or parenting stress, poor health and lower education.

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Abuse or neglect? — continued

We all have a pretty good understanding of what physical and sexual abuse is, but emotional abuse and neglect are less clear. **Emotional abuse and neglect may come in the form of a minor not receiving needed medical care, being left unattended at home for long periods of time, not having basic needs — like everyday meals — met, or being exposed to any form of violence.**

Since school buildings have been closed, reports of child abuse and neglect have declined by nearly 50 percent statewide. On the surface, that sounds like good news, but the reality is that incidents have likely increased — it's only reporting that is down.

Abuse affects all ages, races, genders and cultures. It often occurs when families or individuals are under stress and/or in the middle of a crisis. Stress can be triggered by overwhelming pressure and the inability to cope with personal, financial or relationship problems, as well drugs and alcohol.



For some families that face daily struggles, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress levels to the point of changing behaviors — crossing a line between simple anger and abuse. Let's compare that to **the fable of the boiling frog**. The premise is that if a frog is put suddenly into boiling water, it will jump out. But if the frog is put in tepid water which is then brought to a boil slowly, it will not perceive the danger and will remain in the pot until its death. The story is often used as a **metaphor for the inability or unwillingness of people to react to, or be aware of, sinister threats that arise gradually rather than suddenly**.

Help is available!

Report child abuse and/or neglect by calling:

Franklin Co. — Franklin County Children Services 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline: **614-229-7000**

In other Ohio counties — Ohio Department of Job and Family Services automated telephone directory (that links callers to local child welfare or law enforcement): **855-O-H-CHILD
(855-642-4453)**

Report domestic violence by calling: National Domestic Violence Hotline: **800-799-SAFE** (7233)

FOCUS CARES — We're here to help!

Focus staff truly care and are available to support you throughout this difficult time. Reach out to your classroom or “homeroom” teachers, your school’s Student and Family Advocate (SFA) or your school leader. Focus’ superintendent and psychologist can also help.

East: Call 614-269-0150 — messages are checked daily, or call Mr. Paulauskas directly at 330-614-1340;
SFA: lorraine.jordan@focuslearn.prg

West: Call 614-545-2000, X2301 — calls will be returned within 24 hours; **SFA:** caitlin.jones@focuslearn.org

North: Call or text 614-450-0893; **SFA:** kelsey.compton@focuslearn.org

Call Superintendent Kathy Williams at 614-394-3710

You can also call Dr. James Harris between the hours of 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at 614-288-7595

I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become. — C.G. Jung