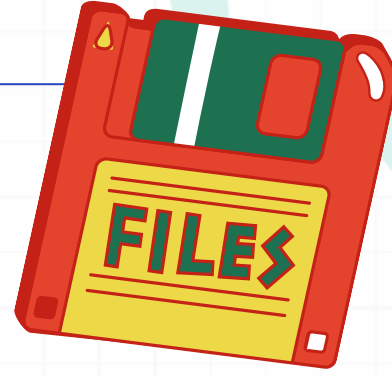


DIGITAL WELLNESS STARK COUNTY NEWSLETTER



Hello Stark County!

Welcome to the second edition of our Digital Wellness Newsletter, where we continue working together to build healthier, safer, and more balanced digital habits across our community. Each issue brings new ideas, local stories, and practical tools to help individuals and families stay mindful in an always-connected world.

This month, we're excited to spotlight the BRIK program at Canton Local Schools, a powerful effort helping students build resilience, digital awareness, and strong decision-making skills. Their work is an inspiring example of how Stark County Schools are preparing young people to navigate technology with confidence and responsibility.

We're also showcasing how our local youth used their creativity to participate in the Digital Wellness School Contest!

Students could design their own positive digital wellness messages - anything from posters to short videos - to help inspire peers and the community to use technology in healthier ways or bring awareness to the topic. It's a chance to amplify youth voices and celebrate the ways they're shaping a more mindful digital future.

We will also take a look at some after-school and mentoring activity resources on StarkHelpCentral.com to help students stay engaged and involved out of the classroom.

Thank you for joining us as we strengthen digital wellness across Stark County - one thoughtful habit, one empowered student, and one community initiative at a time.

-Patti Fetzer and Kay Conley
Committee Co-Chairs

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IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE PART OF THIS INITIATIVE, PLEASE EMAIL
DIGITALWELLNESS@STARKHEALTH.ORG OR CONTACT KAY CONLEY AT
330-451-1446.



Building Resilience in Students Through Canton Local Schools' BRIK Initiative



By Karen Vrabec, Canton Local Schools

Canton Local Schools is committed to preparing students not only for academic achievement but also for the challenges of everyday life. Through its Building Resiliency in Kids (BRIK) initiative, the district is intentionally strengthening the emotional, social, and behavioral skills that help young people adapt, persevere, and thrive in the face of adversity. This focus on resilience reflects a growing understanding that long-term success depends on more than grades alone. Students need the ability to manage stress, build healthy relationships, and respond constructively to setbacks.

Resilience is the capacity to recover from difficulties and continue moving forward with confidence and purpose. For children and adolescents, challenges may include academic pressure, social struggles, family changes, or uncertainty about the future. Canton Local Schools recognizes that resilience is not simply a personality trait. It is a collection of skills and protective factors that can be developed when students are supported by caring adults and given opportunities to practice coping and problem-solving.

The BRIK initiative is informed by current research on youth mental health and development. Its approach draws in part from the findings presented in Jonathan Haidt's book *The Anxious Generation*, which examines the relationship between childhood independence, technology use, and rising rates of anxiety and depression among young people. BRIK also reflects principles promoted by the Let Grow movement, which encourages healthy risk-taking and independent experiences for children, and the Wait Until 8th campaign, which supports families in delaying smartphone access until later adolescence. Together, these perspectives emphasize restoring childhood experiences that foster confidence, problem-solving, and real-world social skills.

In classrooms, teachers reinforce skills such as emotional regulation, goal setting, decision-making, and perseverance. Students learn to reflect on obstacles, understand their emotions, and identify constructive ways to respond. Rather than avoiding difficulty, students are encouraged to view challenges as opportunities for growth, helping them build confidence in their ability to overcome future obstacles.

Strong relationships are a cornerstone of resilience. Canton Local Schools emphasizes creating supportive connections between students and adults in every building. Staff members work intentionally to ensure that students feel seen, heard, and valued. When young people know they have trusted adults who will listen and guide them, they are more likely to seek help during difficult times and less likely to feel isolated.



Family Fun Night encouraged students and families to put phones aside and focus on what matters most: time together. These simple moments of togetherness help build a sense of belonging and emotional security that supports resilience in children.

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Beyond the classroom, BRIK promotes participation in activities that foster a sense of belonging and competence. Athletics, arts programs, clubs, leadership opportunities, and service projects allow students to develop teamwork, responsibility, and self-confidence. These experiences teach valuable life lessons about cooperation, discipline, and healthy ways to handle both success and disappointment.

Family engagement is also essential. Canton Local Schools provides parents and caregivers with practical resources to support resilience at home, including strategies for building routines, encouraging independence, maintaining open communication, and modeling healthy coping behaviors. Consistency between school and home environments strengthens the impact of these efforts and helps children feel secure.

Partnerships with community organizations further expand the network of support surrounding students. By working with local health agencies, youth programs, and service providers, the district helps ensure that families have access to resources that promote well-being. This collaborative approach recognizes that resilience develops across all areas of a child's life, not just within school walls.

Canton Local Schools believes that building resilience is one of the most important investments in students' future health and success. Academic knowledge prepares students for opportunities, but resilience equips them to navigate challenges, adapt to change, and maintain hope. Through the BRIK initiative, the district is helping students develop the strength, skills, and support systems needed to thrive now and in the years ahead.

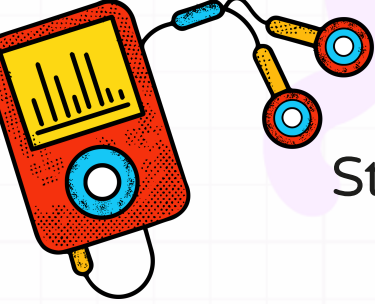


Wildcat students from WCA and NHS partnered to serve meals at Peace Lutheran Church, demonstrating compassion, teamwork, and a commitment to others. Through acts of kindness that support the broader community, students learn that they can make a positive difference while growing stronger together.



As part of the BRIK (Building Resiliency in Kids) initiative, Canton South High School counselors created an interactive cafeteria activity to spark meaningful conversations about healthy social media use. Students spun a prize wheel, answered reflective questions, and discussed how technology influences their mood, relationships, sleep, and overall well-being. By encouraging students to think critically about their digital habits in a fun and supportive setting, the activity helped build awareness, self-regulation skills, and resilience in navigating today's online world.





Stark County Students Challenged to Promote Healthy Digital Habits

The statistics about digital media use among young people are alarming.

Did you know 46% of American teens say social media makes them feel a little or a lot worse about their body (according to the Boston Children's Hospital Digital Wellness Lab)? Did you know teens also spend eight hours daily on screen-based entertainment?

To help promote healthier digital habits, the Stark County Health Improvement Plan Committee, with a focus on digital wellness, recently held a contest.

Students were challenged to share messages regarding screen time, online safety, social media, digital balance, and mental health in the digital world.

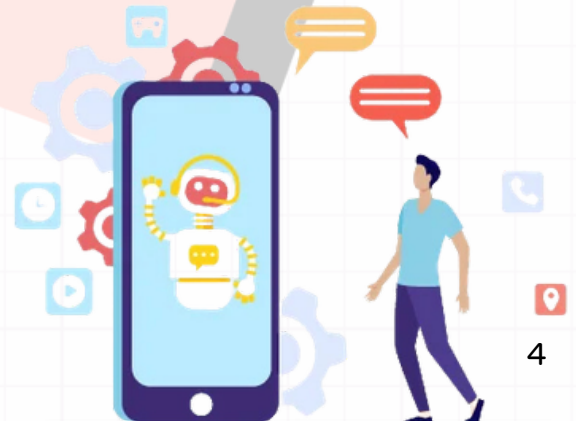
They had the option to share a message via a short video, commercial, infographic, letter, essay, poem, presentation, or slideshow. Guiding materials and messages were provided, but students were also welcome to conduct their own research regarding building healthier digital habits.

Congratulations to Brandon Hollinger, from GlenOak High School! His video, starring Cael Baringer, Trevor McNickle, Landon Phillips and Leon Curry, was the winner of a \$500 prize.

The Stark County Health Improvement Plan Committee thanks all other schools and students who participated.

- Christian Mateer from GlenOak High School
- Kenley Mossor from Tuslaw Middle School
- Harlow Knox from Choices High School
- Cael Benson, Gage Martin, Skyler Ninham, Callie McKimmie from Louisville High School
- Kloey Keller from Choices Alternative School
- Mars Wilfong from GlenOak High School

Digital
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StarkHelpCentral.com Resource Highlight After School and Mentoring Activities

Not sure what to do with your kids when they're not in school? Extra-curricular activities help keep students engaged and out of trouble. Find out about some of the positive ways young people can get involved outside of the classroom at StarkHelpCentral.com. There are countless community resources, programs, and organizations where children and teens can spend their time, volunteer, and have some fun. Learn about some of the top after-school activities and organizations that offer mentors and mentoring available in Stark County. Students don't necessarily need to live in these cities to participate in the programs listed.

Countywide Programs:

Bridges – Bridges is a voluntary program for young adults in the foster care system who are ages 18, 19, or 20. It provides guidance and support during the transition to adulthood for individuals who are in school, working, or have a qualifying medical condition.

Girl Scouts of Northeast Ohio – Girl Scouts promotes financial literacy, teen pregnancy prevention, healthy lifestyle behaviors, and community service for girls ages 11 to 15.

The Legacy Project of Stark – The Legacy Project of Stark County provides mentoring programs inside partner school districts during lunch and on weekends/after school in Massillon and Canton for K-12th grade students. In every program offered, a small group of students are paired with two adult mentors from their community. Students are given a consistent, supportive space where they feel seen, heard, and valued. These relationships help students develop self-worth and build the emotional strength to navigate challenges both in and out of the classroom. The Legacy Project of Stark's programs are always free to the students and families we serve.

MentorStark – MentorStark is a central hub to help people find youth and young adult development programs and activities in Stark County. Whether you want to volunteer for a program or find an opportunity for yourself or your child, MentorStark is here to help!

For more information about these programs and more after-school programs in Stark County, visit <https://www.starkhelpcentral.com/after-school!>

