

Neshaminy UPDATE

March, 2015



Neshaminy School District
Langhorne, PA

Robert L. Copeland, Superintendent

www.neshaminy.org

Hoover named Title 1 Distinguished School, wins grant

Rewarding Innovation

March started out with a roar for Herbert Hoover Elementary School, which was awarded a Federal Title 1 Innovation Grant in the amount of \$48,915 by the Pennsylvania Department of Education Division of Federal Programs. The opportunity to apply for this competitive grant is only offered to schools that have been designated as Reward Schools. Hoover was recently named a Title 1 Distinguished School, earning a “Reward High Achievement” designation as one of the top 5% of Title 1 schools in the state based on aggregate math and reading PSSA scores, and met a series of objectives including test participation, attendance rates, and closing the achievement gap for historically under-performing students. 87 Pennsylvania schools received the “Reward High Achievement” designation, and of those only 30 were awarded the Innovation Grants.



“Winning this competitive grant is another testament to the dedication and work being done by the Herbert Hoover staff,” said Principal Michael Rodriguez. “We are grateful to have hard working students and the support of Hoover families in achieving this milestone. This grant will infuse our school with additional supports such as interventions, profes-
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Middle schools

New program bridges a reading gap

Teaching reading skills is a primary goal in elementary education. Keeping up the momentum and expanding reading comprehension in the middle school years can be a challenge, but Neshaminy has doubled its efforts this year by introducing new teaching methods and expanding the middle school reading program.



According to Dr. Gloria Hancock, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment, reading teachers joined the staff at all three middle schools, doubling the time devoted to Reading and Language Arts in grades 6-8. Those teachers are supported by Schoolwide’s Reading Fundamentals materials, which are aligned with PA Core Stan-
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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday March 3

School Board work session, 7 pm
(cancelled due to weather)

Saturday March 7

Breakfast with the Superintendent, 9 am

Tuesday March 17

Public Board Meeting, 7 pm
Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center
at Maple Point MS

Thursday March 19

PTO Forum, 9:30 am

Tuesday April 7

School Board Work Session, 7 pm

All meetings held at the Maple Point District Board Room unless otherwise indicated.

BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

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Ms. Irene Boyle, <i>Vice-President</i>	3
Mr. John Allen	2
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ADMINISTRATION

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Superintendent

Mr. Anthony Devlin
Director of Pupil Services

Dr. Gloria Hancock
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment and Federal Programs Coordinator

Mr. Don Harm
Assistant to the Superintendent for Administration

Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger
Director of Human Resources

Mrs. Barbara Markowitz
Business Administrator

Innovation

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sional development, and technology to ensure our students continue to achieve at high levels.”

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Innovation Grant is designed to promote the implementation of new learning structures and processes designed to meet individual student needs. The Reward school must identify their best practices that enable the students to continue to achieve at high levels. The staff at Hoover presented a list of specific items to be purchased under this grant to meet those needs, including instructional materials for literacy intervention, science lab kits, portable Smart Boards, professional development from a writing consultant to instruct and coach teachers, and funds to conduct parent workshops on literacy initiatives. The grant money is available immediately and must be spent by September, 2015.



The grant application cites increased time for professional development, collaboration and data analysis among teachers for their success. These factors allowed them to better identify areas of need in the entire student body and meet those needs with well-defined plans including remediation and enrichment in all subject areas. Hoover saw a significant growth in the School Performance Profile this school year, earning a score of 89.5 in 2014, an increase of 15.1 points from 2013. The grant will help the school to further these efforts and maintain that progress.

Important Keystone / PSSA information online

PSSA Tests (for elementary and middle school students) and Keystone Exams (for middle and high school students) are scheduled for April and May. Important information



about the tests have been sent to all parents; this information is also available on the Neshaminy web site.

Please see the web site for you child's school to read the letter for parents and general information that will help you prepare your children for this important state-mandated assessment.

Reading

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dards.

The program has several goals, including:

- Developing a community of readers
- Balancing reading skills in literature and non-fiction
- Infusing vocabulary instruction throughout the curriculum.
- Encouraging readers to apply a wide variety of reading strategies to comprehend, interpret and appreciate texts.
- Increasing the complexity of reading materials to promote reading independence.

Cheryl Riddell, a Reading Specialist at Poquessing Middle School, says the program gives students the chance to do more enjoyment reading during the school day, along with the chance to write responses to their reading. Students are allowed to choose their own books based on their reading levels.

“They enjoy that a lot more when they get to pick a book they are interested in; it's all about choice.”

“We did a non-fiction unit recently, and the books ranged from biographies of athletes to books on horse racing and snakes. The level of readers in every class is so different, but all the books are rated on a lexile level, so they know books are good within their range. Nobody is overly frustrated and nobody has a book that is way too easy for them.”

Students are tested at the beginning and year and again in January to determine their reading level. Riddell said she was pleased to see growth in the levels during that time.

“In sixth and seventh grade, some of the reading skills are still not in place yet; they need to be reinforced as the kids move up through middle school.”

Riddell has been the building Reading Specialist at Poquessing for 12 years, and said in the past she did intervention help for the students most in need, but didn't have time to get to them all. Now, with the expanded program, she has the time to work with all of the students on many levels.





CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

5-8 Transition Update

The 5-8 grade configuration Work Study Group, made up of administrators, teachers and parents, heard a presentation about the Symtalk language program on February 18. While the district is planning to introduce full foreign language instruction for the eighth grade next year, the Symtalk program is under consideration for younger students, starting next year with the fifth grade.



The goal of Symtalk is to expose students to elements of foreign languages by integrating instruction into other subjects. Using audio and visual cues, including picture cards, students learn words and phrases by constructing sentences using the cards. According to the two Symtalk representatives who presented at the meeting, the goal of the program is to expose students to languages and culture which can help them form a foundation for success in a traditional foreign language program in later grades. Since it is not a mastery program, it can be taught by non-foreign language teachers who don't even need to speak a foreign language. Though Symtalk would only be implemented in the fifth-grade next year, it could be expanded to other grades in the future. The program offers materials appropriate for levels ranging from pre-kindergarten to ninth-grade.

After the demonstration and follow-up discussion, the group is recommending implementation of the program next year for fifth-graders. They also recommended consideration of conducting the program during morning meetings, during the English Language Arts Literacy Block or during the WIN (What I Need) period at the end of the school day instead of during Social Studies lessons.

Some other updates from the 5-8 Work Study Group:

- Bids for **new lockers** to accommodate the incoming fifth-graders have been posted
- The 5-8 Work Study Group recommended implementation of the **1:1 Technology Initiative** for grade 5 next year, with a roll-up expansion to grades 6-8 by one grade for each year following. The group has been looking at both iPads and ChromeBooks for this initiative, and will select one after their study is complete. Current plans call for students to leave the device at school each night, but use it throughout their school day.
- The group is also recommending a **recess break** for fifth-graders at the middle schools. The exact timing and nature of this recess is still under discussion.
- An offer from the Bucks County Intermediate Unit to conduct an **evaluation of the 5-8 grade configuration** implementation during the 2015-2016 school year was recommended by the Work Study Group. This study would be conducted at no cost to the district.
- Middle school students will be grouped on **school buses** by age. A training session for bus drivers for this plan was held February 23 at Neshaminy High School.
- A school climate survey for both students and teachers will be administered in the spring of this year and the fall of 2015-16 by Panorama Education.

New Director Appointed

The chairperson of the English Department at Neshaminy High School, Robert Boffa, was named as Director of Arts and Humanities – Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment for the district in February.

Mr. Boffa, a district employee for 9 years, has served as chairperson since 2012, and also served as District Lead Teacher of English for grades 6-12 from 2011 to 2014. He is also a doctoral student at Temple University, and begins his new position on March 9, 2015.

Kindergarten Registration

New students that will be five years old on or before September 1, 2015 can enter kindergarten. Registration will be held Friday March 6, and parents are encouraged to go to the district web site for more information, including what documents will be needed, and online registration forms which can speed up the process.

Parents who cannot attend on March 6 should contact the school where their child will attend to make alternate arrangements to register.



NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

Pearl S. Buck Elementary

Students shine for the March of Dimes

Maya Malone, a kindergarten student, received the March of Dimes Shining Star Award for raising the most money to support the work of the March of Dimes in their recent Reading Champions program. Pearl Buck Elementary School raised \$3,500 toward that cause with two classrooms, Mrs. Kuriger's and Mrs. Deitrick's, earning a pizza party for reading and raising the most money. Over the past 6 years, Pearl Buck has raised close to \$25,000 for the March of Dimes.



Competition builds a love of reading

Buck Elementary recently held their first Reading Tourney. Students in grades 3, 4, and 5 competed with their grade level classmates in a Reading Olympics style of competition. Students in each grade read 4 books, then had to answer questions about the books. The winning classrooms, Mrs. Maher, Mr. Knight, and Mrs. Mahoney, received a Reading Tourney trophy and an ice cream party.

Students will compete again at the conclusion of the third and fourth marking periods with 4 new books each time. The trophy will be housed in the classroom of the victorious teams.

Samuel Everitt Elementary

Pennies for Patients tops fundraising goal

Congratulations to all of the students of Samuel Everitt that participated in the Pennies for Patients program. The goal was to collect \$1,500.00, but as a school they exceeded that goal and collected \$1,857.38 to help the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society fight childhood blood cancers. The top fundraising class was Ms. Bowman's fourth grade class, who collected an incredible \$242.30. Mrs. Gainer's class was



second with \$194.15, and Ms. McMahon's class was third with a total of \$167.66. Thanks to all from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Joseph Ferderbar Elementary

Ferderbar Jumps Rope for Heart

Students kicked off their annual fund raiser sponsored by the American Heart Association and the American Alliance for Physical Education, Health, Recreation and Dance with a 'Jump Rope for Heart' event at the school on February 6. The 75-member Jump Rope Demonstration Team, made up



of students in grades 3-5, performed various individual and group jump rope feats for their classmates.

A representative of the Bucks County chapter of the AHA spoke to the students about the work of the foundation, as well as heart-healthy eating and exercise habits.

Last year the school raised almost \$3,000 during this event, a number they hope to top this year.

Oliver Heckman Elementary

Young scientists research on display



A group of students in third, fourth and fifth-grade built and displayed experiments for a science fair at Heckman in February. The fair was an extra-curricular activity for the budding scientists, but they shared and explained their displays with fellow students during school and also at night for visiting families.

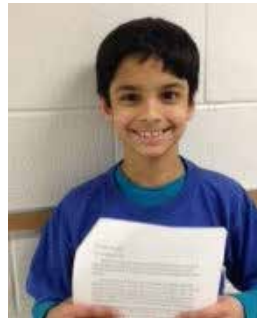
Among the displays was a working water-wheel generator, electrical circuits, chemistry experiments, medical information and much more.



Herbert Hoover Elementary

Essay writer wins award

Fifth-grader Aaron Lewis won an essay contest sponsored by the Washington Crossing Chapter of the Daughters of



the American Revolution.

2015 marks the 125th Anniversary of Ellis Island as an immigration station. The entire 5th grade at Hoover was challenged to write an essay to celebrate this historical moment.

The prompt was "A Child's Journey Through Ellis Island," and the students had to complete this essay independently and follow strict guidelines. In the spring, Aaron will present his essay at an award ceremony.

Jump Rope for Heart nets a big donation

The recent Jump Rope for Heart fund raiser at Hoover to benefit the American Heart Association netted a \$5381.31 donation to the group.

Lower Southampton Elementary

Science Fair planning a community effort

As part of an effort to increase STEM-related activities at Lower South, the school is planning to debut a Science Fair on May 12, open to all students in all grades K-5.

The planning of this fair will be part of the learning process for a group of 16 Junior Girl Scouts who are working with the staff at Lower South to organize, promote and run the event. The group is from Girl Scout Junior Troop 275 in Feasterville, who all are fifth-graders and attend Lower South.

The Scouts have formed four committees, and meet during lunch and after school to plan advertising, decorating, hospitality and clean-up for the fair.

Participation in the fair is optional, open to individuals or groups of up to three students working on a single project. The budding scientists will be helped by visitors from Mad Science, an educational program best known for their workshops and science-themed shows. Students will receive assistance with their hypothesis and project set-up.

Walter Miller Elementary

First-graders celebrate 100 days of school

Sporting canes, walkers and lots of not-so-cutting-edge

fashions, students in Mrs. Finley's class celebrated the 100th day of school in the 2014-2015 school year by dressing up like 100-year-olds. Mrs. Gruener's class held a fashion show with 100 item shirts, counted 100 snacks, and graphed using Smarties candy. The event is celebrated in the first grade as part of their math lessons, which include counting and learning about the number 100.



Albert Schweitzer Elementary

Students pen essays and Valentines for shelter animals

The third grade students at Albert Schweitzer Elementary School have been very busy putting their writing skills to work in hopes of helping animals at a local community shelter. As part of their curriculum, the third graders have been



learning how to write persuasive pieces. They read some examples and discussed what they would like to persuade others to do. During the discussion, someone suggested writing about adopting a pet or getting an animal from a shelter.

It was during the brainstorming process that they decided to put our persuasive writing pieces towards adopting an animal from the Women's Humane Society, a local animal shelter. The third grade students have been working very hard to learn and write about the animals that are up for adoption at the WHS. They are hoping to persuade individuals and/or families to adopt a pet.

These students have spent many hours during their writing time, recess and even free time at home to make sure all the animals have a featured persuasive piece that is informative and interesting.

Maple Point Middle School

Students perform Shrek, The Musical Jr.



The stage at Maple Point was turned into a swamp and the hallway outside the auditorium into a castle wall for the



annual school musical in February.

Poquessing Middle School

Poquessing musical a patriotic tribute

The sights and sounds of a World War II canteen filled the auditorium at Poquessing as students presented “Just Say No to the USO” as their annual musical for four perfor-



mances in February

Carl Sandburg Middle School

Towers of Power fill the Sandburg gym

Budding engineers got a chance to demonstrate their problem-solving skills and teamwork during the annual Tower of Power event at Sandburg February 18.



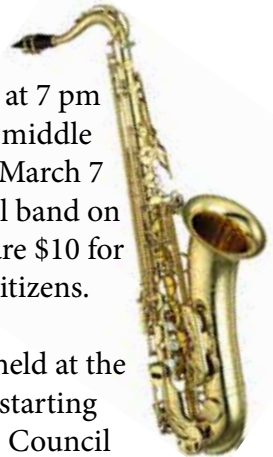
Teams of students were given an envelope of simple materials - like straws and paper clips. The goal is to construct a tower that can support a given weight - such as a plate holding a tennis ball. Prizes are awarded for the teams that build the largest towers, as well as theme prizes for team costumes. Sandburg also fielded their own teams for the event.

Neshaminy High School

Music festivals on tap

Neshaminy High School will be the host for this year’s Bucks County Music Festival on March 5-7. Musicians and vocalists from middle schools and high schools from throughout the county will be gathering to rehearse and perform at the event, which is sponsored by the Bucks County Music Educators Association.

The public is invited to attend the performances, held on Friday March 6 at 7 pm for middle and high school choirs; the middle school band will perform on Saturday March 7 at 1 pm; plus orchestra and high school band on Saturday March 7 at 2:30 pm. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students and senior citizens.



The 24th Annual Jazz Festival will be held at the high school on Friday March 20, 2015 starting at 6:30 pm. Jazz bands from Penncrest, Council Rock South, Philadelphia Creative & Performing Arts and of course Neshaminy High School will be performing. Tickets are available at the door for \$10.

Artists earn accolades for their work

Neshaminy High School Advanced Placement Studio Art students Molly McDonald and Emily Frizzelle recently won recognition in the annual Scholastic Art and Writing Awards.

Molly received the Silver Key award for her oil painting titled, “Mother”, and Honorable Mention for her portfolio.

Emily received the Silver



Key Award for her acrylic painting titled, "Aviator Girl" and Honorable Mention for two other pieces, "Aphrodite" done in charcoal and "Pastel Snapshot" done in soft pastels.

Four AP Studio Art students also have their work displayed in the juried Pennsylvania State Education Association 28th Annual Student Art Exhibition, 'Touch the Future.'

The students are:

- Shannon Kilpatrick, for her acrylic painting, "Fauvist Portrait,"
- Dana McCabe, for her charcoal piece, "Reflections in Charcoal,"
- Molly McDonald, for her oil painting, "Mother," and
- Riley Stricko, for his acrylic painting, "Prey for Wisdom."

The show runs until March 19, 2015 at the University Commons-Art Gallery Area, Arcadia University, 450 S. Easton Road in Glenside.

Made in Neshaminy: Gym Night a success

The 62nd annual Gym Night sold out all three shows on February 27 and 28. According to Principal Dr. Rob McGee, participation in this unique Neshaminy tradition was up

this year to over 1,000 students.

The theme for this year's edition was 'Made in America' and featured elaborate demonstrations centering around states including Alaska, Hawaii, Louisiana, New Jersey and of course Pennsylvania.

The Red Team made a comeback this year, winning 49-24 over the Blue Team.



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