

Neshaminy UPDATE

December 2015



Neshaminy School District
Langhorne, PA

www.neshaminy.org

NSD sixth-grade Amplifies science



At the beginning of this school year, Neshaminy's 6th grade students became part of the Amplify Science pilot program developed by the Learning Design Group at the University of California in Berkeley. Amplify is a web-based program that integrates life, physical and earth sciences with a high dose of the "nature of science" skills (science and engineering practices along with cross-disciplinary concepts). The 6th grade curriculum maps have been updated to reflect the goals of this course, which is one

of the programs that takes Neshaminy beyond the Pennsylvania Common Core standards by adopting Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which were developed by leading scientists and researchers through the National Research Council of the National Academy of Science.

The Amplify platform includes simulation and modeling tools that provide students an opportunity to investigate abstract microscopic behaviors in real time. In a traditional text-based curriculum, such concepts were left open for interpretation by the individual student, often leading to a lack of understanding or even misconceptions about how things work on a microscopic level. Amplify's digital tools alleviate the need for interpretation and allow the students the opportunity to experience first-hand what truly takes place beyond the capabilities of the unaided eye.

In addition, this web-based program allows for immediate feedback to submitted assignments. Teachers are able to communicate individually with all of their students in real-time, thus allowing areas of concern that would otherwise go unnoticed to stand out and be addressed quickly. The online platform allows teachers to view students' work

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New Board members set to take office

The December 7 Neshaminy School Board meeting promises to be a busy one as four new members and one returning member will be sworn in while a number of other issues will be considered. Incumbent Stephen Pirritano of Feasterville was elected to a four-year term by residents of Region 1, centered on the Feasterville and Lower Southampton area. Mr. Pirritano has served on the Board since November, 2013 when he was appointed to replace Kim Koutsouradis who resigned for personal reasons.

Also in Region 1, Tina Hollenbach won a seat to replace outgoing Board member Susan Cummings, who chose to not run again after 12 years of service as a Board member.

In Region 2, covering Middletown and Levittown, Robert Sanna and Bob Feather won the two seats available for that area. They will be replacing Anthony Sposato and John Allen, who were knocked out of contention during the primary election in May.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday December 1

Board Facilities & Finance Committee, 6:30 pm

Monday December 7

Board Regular Action Meeting and Reorganization, 7 pm

Monday December 14

*Neshaminy Education Foundation, 4 pm
C&I conference room at Maple Point*

Wednesday January 6

*Oliver Heckman ES closure hearing, 7 pm
Harry Dengler Performing Arts Center @ MP*

Thursday January 7

*Lower Southampton ES closure hearing, 7 pm
Harry Dengler Performing Arts Center @ MP*

All meetings held at the Maple Point

District Board Room unless otherwise indicated.

BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

	Region
Scott Congdon	1
Tina Hollenbach	1
Stephen Pirritano	1
Bob Feather	2
Mike Morris	2
Robert Sanna	2
Irene Boyle	3
Ron Rudy	3
Marty Sullivan	3

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Gloria Hancock
Acting Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction

Mr. Anthony Devlin
Director of Pupil Services

Mr. Don Harm
Assistant to the Superintendent for Administration

Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger
Director of Human Resources

Mrs. Barbara Markowitz
Business Administrator

Mr. Paul Meehan
Director of Administration



Amplify Science

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and respond with scores and/or notations that can be used to correct and change progress before it is resubmitted for further evaluation. This keeps the students on pace and accountable with their part of the learning process.

Literacy strategies are embedded into the program as well. Students are asked to reflect and respond to prompts, simulations, discussions and lab activities on a daily basis. This provides an



opportunity for the instructors to select and address individual areas of concern with writing in the content area—connecting nicely with the science literacy standards.

This field trial allows Neshaminy to measure the effectiveness of the Amplify program to meet the expectations of the NGSS at specific grade levels. Pennsylvania has not yet adopted the NGSS, but our middle school science teachers are ready to move forward in designing a curriculum for the 21st Century.

This process will evolve slowly and expand - 6th grade for this year, 7th grade for 2016-17 and 8th grade for 2017-18. The teaching staff is excited about this transformation to a more spiraled and integrated approach to science education and are grateful for the opportunity to participate in a field trial to provide a cutting edge NGSS program.

Media Specialists share their expertise

We know that our Library Media Specialists are experts in their use of all kinds of technology including web-based research tools, mobile devices and apps, 3-D printers and more. But it is really special when educators from outside of our district value their work as well.

On November 18th, three NSD Library Media Specialists: Adam Lorence from Poquessing, Sharon Diggans from NHS, and Caitlyn Koczynski from Sandburg were requested to share their technology talents at the 2015 ‘Challenging the Gifted’ conference sponsored by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit in Doylestown. The trio took their show on the road to teach fellow educators from throughout the region how to work within virtual learning environments, how to empower students and teachers to collaborate both in and out of the classrooms using tools such as digital note-taking, and how to use learning management systems.

School Board

(continued from page 1)

In Region 3, which covers Middletown, Penndel and Langhorne, Middletown resident Marty Sullivan won a seat to replace Mark Shubin, who was also eliminated during the May primary. Mr.

Sullivan will be taking the only seat open in Region 3 for this election cycle.

The new board will have a number of issues to tackle in the upcoming months, including a search for a permanent superintendent, the school consolidation plan, which includes the proposed closure of two elementary schools (see below), the opening of a new elementary school building in August 2016, and completion of Phase II of the energy-saving renovations to current school buildings, scheduled for summer 2016.

Contract negotiations with the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers are scheduled to begin in January, as the current one-year contract expires June 30.

In addition, Neshaminy (along with many other districts) may face budget issues should the current state budget impasse continue through the winter into spring.

School Closure Hearings

As part of the school consolidation plan, the Neshaminy School Board will be holding two Act 34 hearings on the proposed closure of Oliver Heckman Elementary School and Lower Southampton Elementary School. Members of the public will have the opportunity to speak on the record, and will also have an opportunity to submit written testimony on the closures to be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

A Board vote on the closures can only be taken after a state-mandated 90-day waiting period following the hearings. The community is invited to speak on the closures at any Board meeting during that time, but only the comments heard at the Act 34 hearings and submitted written testimony will be delivered to the PDE as part of the official record.

Oliver Heckman ES

Act 34 hearing
Wednesday January 6, 2016
7 pm
Maple Point Middle School
Harry M. Dengler Jr. Performing Arts Center

Lower Southampton ES

Act 34 hearing
Thursday, January 7, 2016
7 pm
Maple Point Middle School
Harry M. Dengler Jr. Performing Arts Center



DISTRICT NEWS

Neshaminy HS tops school profile scores

The Pennsylvania Department of Education released its annual School Performance Profiles (SPP) in early November, and Neshaminy High School ranked as one of the top two high schools in Bucks County with an overall score of 89.9. Students showed significant gains in several areas over 2013-2014 scores, including science and biology.

The majority of the SPP score is based on student performance in the Keystone Exams, administered for Algebra I, Biology and English Language Arts. Other factors include student graduations rates, attendance rates, and an increased number of Advanced Placement courses.

This year, only schools with an 11th grade were issued a SPP score due to changes in the PSSA tests administered to 3rd through 8th grade students that made comparison with previous years difficult. 2015 scores for those students will be used as a benchmark to evaluate performance in future years.

The complete report on the Neshaminy HS SPP can be found on the web at www.paschoolperformance.org/Profile/6295.

World languages flourish in middle schools

The 5-8 initiative brought about three exciting additions to the middle school curricula: Symtalk for 5th grade and the return of a full Spanish and French program to the 8th grade.

The text for the 5th grade is appropriately titled *Descubramos!*, which means 'discover' in Spanish. Students in 5th grade classes are exploring the Spanish language through Descubramos! to learn word meanings through pictures and game-like instruction. Many are beginning to string together simple sentences.

The children participating in these classes are taking on this challenge enthusiastically, along with their teachers.

The World Language program has also returned to the 8th grade at all three middle schools. These students are just as enthusiastic as their 5th grade peers as they begin their journey to learn reading, writing and comprehension of French or Spanish.

On October 26th, 5th grade teachers were provided with a follow-up professional development session to help them facilitate their students' exploration of Spanish. This session went well, we will be looking into providing further professional development as necessary. The World Language teachers in 8th grade have also been receiving professional development and we will continue to support these initiatives as we move forward. We want to acknowledge the hard work of the 5th and 8th grade teachers who are providing this instruction.

Recent scientific research on the brain suggests that learning world languages increase students' intelligence. Among the many benefits, it increases students' mental focus, reading and writing abilities, and even improves mathematical skills. Participating in world languages also opens people's minds to new cultures and

new ways of thinking. These additions to our middle schools' curricula will increase our students' understanding of the multi-faceted world we live in.

New curriculum administrators appointed

Mary Beth Tecce has been named the Supervisor of Federal Programs & District-wide Initiatives, K-12 for the district. Previously, she worked as a Elementary Staff Developer / Data Specialist. In her new role, she will be presiding over all Title 1, Title 2, and Title 3 programs as well as K-4, 5-8 initiatives, and the Academic Enrichment Services.

Data specialist Steve McAloon is also taking on a new temporary role serving as the Special Assistant for Student Achievement. Neshaminy also welcomes Katie Burke as the new Academic Coach for K-5 Math.

Rotary Clubs distribute dictionaries



Members of the Langhorne and Feasterville Rotary Clubs visited third-grade classes in every district school November 16 to give each student a dictionary, which is theirs to keep. The program is part of a nation-wide effort to increase vocabulary and literacy skills, as well as to introduce students to the Rotary ideal of community service. Each book included a sticker stating the four guiding principles of Rotary:

- Is it the TRUTH?
- Is it FAIR to all concerned?
- Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
- Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

The Rotary Clubs are a consistent supporter of education at Neshaminy, providing scholarships, student awards, as well as sponsoring the Interact service-learning club at Neshaminy High School.



NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

Pearl S. Buck Elementary

PTO coordinates holiday food drive

The PTO volunteers at Buck collected donated food items in several shopping carts and assembled them to provide complete holiday meals for nine families.

Author visits Buck

Pearl S. Buck Elementary School welcomed author David Adler for a series of presentations for all grades today. David is a prolific writer of both non-fiction and fiction for children, and is best known for the Cam Jansen detective series, a number of books on the Holocaust, and many biographies.



First-grade enjoys a Thanksgiving feast

Dressed as Pilgrims and Native Americans, first grade students at Buck re-enacted the first Thanksgiving by sharing a meal in class.



Joseph Ferderbar Elementary

Elf Fund dinner feeds Ferderbar, raises holiday help

The Elf Fund dinner on November 12 brought the Ferderbar community together for spaghetti and meatballs prepared and served with help from students, parents and staff. The event raised approximately \$1400 from the proceeds of the meals, which will be



used to help families who need some extra help over the holidays.

According to teacher Diane Geiger, one of the organizers of the annual event, 260 meals were served with help from 25-30 helpers. Fourth-grade students were the 'elves' helping to serve the 49 pounds of pasta and about 930 meatballs for the hungry crowd. They also raised some extra money in a tip jar - including a \$100 bill from one very generous diner.

Ferderbar will be using some of the money for another tradition, 'Shop with a Cop.' Police officers from Lower Southampton Township will accompany students on a holiday shopping spree to purchase items for families in need.



Other community service projects include a post-Halloween candy drive, which provided excess Halloween candy to a local veterans home. The school is also holding a winter coat drive in partnership with the Feasterville Rotary Club.

Oliver Heckman Elementary

Ned Show encourages positive behavior

Students at Oliver Heckman Elementary School were treated to a performance of The Ned Show as part of their PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) program Thursday morning. The live show, which is performed throughout the country and in Europe, encourages kids to "Never give up, Encourage others, and Do your best."



Third-grade builds bears for Haitian children

The Build-a-Bear Workshop at Oxford Valley Mall was alive with the sounds of Oliver Heckman ES third-graders November 2 as they spent a morning creating teddy bears not for themselves, but



for children in Haiti who were orphaned by a 2010 hurricane which devastated the island nation. Students from all three classes raised the money to purchase the bears, and held a mini walkathon at the mall while they waited to build their bears.

The project will donate the bears to a group called Hope Alive, which is based in Haiti and provides essential services for those



still affected by the aftermath of that storm. Representatives from the group visited the school earlier in the fall to talk about their mission and the conditions in Haiti.



Herbert Hoover Elementary

Hoover celebrates literacy with author visit

On November 6 the Hoover community welcomed author Allison Gutknecht for a day of celebrating literacy. Ms. Gutknecht is the author of four books in the popular Mandy Berr series, including *Don't Wear Polka Dot Underwear with White Pants*, *A Cast is the Perfect Accessory*, *Never Wear Red Lipstick on Picture Day* and *Pizza is the Best Breakfast*. During her visit, students in all grades had the opportunity to hear the write speak at an assembly, and selected students participated in a writer's workshop and luncheon with the author.



Lower Southampton Elementary

Creative donations net 24 holiday baskets

Lower South staff recently held a "Jeans for Turkeys" day where staff paid \$5.00 to wear jeans. Proceeds were used to purchase items for Thanksgiving food baskets to be distributed to needy families in the Lower South community. There was also a food drive held the 2nd week of November for students to donate items from cranberry sauce to boxed stuffing! Neshaminy Kids Club also contributed a few turkeys to help with this endeavor and we also received donations from an organization "Honey's Angels". In all, 24 families received Thanksgiving Baskets.

Giving Tree helps families in need

Lower South currently has a "Giving Tree" in their front lobby. The tree is adorned with ornaments listing the needs and wishes of local children for the upcoming holiday season. Parents can take an ornament off the tree, go shopping, and return the ornament attached to their purchase. This has been an annual event and is

a great way to ensure those less fortunate have a happy holiday!

Walter Miller Elementary



Author visits

Walter Miller Elementary School welcomed author Dan Gutman November 9. Gutman has written scores of historical fiction and humor books for children, and is most famous for his Baseball Card Adventures series that features a baseball legend in each book. He talked about his books and his writing career with students in each grade and even sat down for lunch with some lucky students.

Globetrotter dazzles at assembly

Harlem Globetrotter Cheese Chisolm visited Walter Miller Elementary School November 13 to show off some of his signature moves as well as delivering a message about the ABC's of bullying prevention - Action, Bravery and Compassion.



Albert Schweitzer Elementary

Helping Hands helps Schweitzer families

Schweitzer Helping hands has provided Thanksgiving Dinners to 8 families in need in the Schweitzer Community. This is a joint venture of the staff, the PTO and student donations.

Maple Point Middle School

Veterans honored during annual ceremony

The 8th-grade students of Maple Point Middle School once again honored area veterans during the annual Veterans Day Celebration Friday November 6. Over 100 veterans attended the event, held in the Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center. The ceremony featured speeches by students, faculty and three members of the Fonde' family, all veterans who have attended the Maple Point celebration for several years. An Honor Guard from the Delaware Valley



Veterans Home opened the ceremony, and a number of veterans from the Warrior Watch Riders of Southeastern Pennsylvania attended the event carrying large American flags, lining up along the walls of the auditorium.

Veterans gathered outside the auditorium prior to the ceremony, enjoying food, memorabilia and patriotic decorations courtesy of the Maple Point staff and PTO volunteers. During the ceremony a roll call honored each veteran in attendance. The veterans were presented with letters written for them by first-grade students at Pearl S. Buck Elementary School, as well as poppies provided by the Jesse W. Soby American Legion Post #148 in Langhorne.

The celebration concluded with a large group photo of the eighth-grade students and many of the veterans gathered around an American flag painted on the grassy hill next to the baseball field in front of the school. A ladder truck from the Middletown - Langhorne Fire Company was parked in front of the school



holding a large American flag high above the entrance as guests entered and exited the celebration.

Student Council food drive provides holiday meals

The Student Council of Maple Point Middle School held their annual Thanksgiving food drive, and due the generosity of students, staff members, the PTO, Girl Scout Troop 2978, Giant Food Stores, Maple Point families and other community groups they gathered enough to provide 30 full holiday meals for families in need as well as an additional 2,500 pounds of food for the Bucks County Emergency Relief Association.

Poquessing Middle School

30 holiday meals make for a Happy Thanksgiving

Thanks to the generosity of Poquessing students and staff, Poquessing's Student Council was able to collect and distribute

30 Thanksgiving dinners to families this year. The entire school community got behind this year's effort. While the students brought in all of the trimmings, teachers and staff donated the turkeys. The dinners were topped off with fresh pies courtesy of a former Poquessing teacher.



The best part about the Poquessing Thanksgiving food drive is that the food baskets go directly to families in the school's community who might need a boost during the holiday season. Said Student Council Secretary Casey Erb, "It's a great feeling knowing we can make a difference in others' lives at this time of the year." Poquessing's Student Council is now turning its attention toward its Elf Fund collection where they collect and give out gift cards for families during the December holidays.

Carl Sandburg Middle School

Trick-or-Treat for Unicef raises \$744

The National Junior Honor Society at Carl Sandburg held a campaign to raise money for Unicef during October. According to the Unicef web site, Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF began in 1950 as a way to help kids who need more than candy. Since then, children all over America have gone door-to-door on Halloween with UNICEF collection boxes, calling out, "Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF!" They have raised more than \$175 million for the U.S. Fund for UNICEF since 1950.

Food drive helps 22 families



The Sandburg National Junior Honor Society also coordinated a Thanksgiving food collection drive during November. The drive provided complete Thanksgiving meals for 22 families in need. In addition, they had such an outpouring of generosity that they were also able to set up a 'gratitude grocery,' where families receiving prepared boxes were also able to peruse the surplus of food and shop for their family's individual needs.

To encourage participation, students were able to earn points for



Field Day in the spring by participating in the holiday food drive.

Neshaminy High School

Bucks Technical HS honors students

Four students from Neshaminy School District were chosen as Students of the Month for November. The students are Robert Bealer, Joseph Brookes, Matt Haines and Brittany Notz.

Senior wins Mini Max football award

Congratulations to Neshaminy HS student and varsity football player Hunter Kelly, who was selected as a 2015 Mini Max Award winner by the Maxwell Football Club. Hunter learned of the award from Coach Wilmot before homeroom on November 30. The Mini Max Award is a highly competitive selection honoring the top high school football players in Pennsylvania. The group



will be honored during a banquet in January.

Environmental team delivers presentation

Neshaminy HS Environmental Science students attended a board meeting of the Bucks County Conservation District (BCCD) in Doylestown November 18 to deliver a presentation about the Envirothon, which they won at the county level last year and placed tenth at the state level. The BCCD, which was formed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1961 to deal with issues of land management, soil conservation and agriculture, sponsors



the county Envirothon for Bucks County. The team is looking forward to competing once again this year.

Marching Band completes a winning season

The Neshaminy HS Marching Band finished their 2015 season with performances at Conestoga High School and the Cavalcade of Bands championship at Hersheypark Arena Saturday, November

14.

At the Conestoga Cavalcade they placed first in the Patriot division, and received the overall high score for music and visual. At Hershey, they placed third in the Patriot 'A' Division championship and received the high score for effect.

Interact Club crafts blankets for the homeless

Members of the NHS Interact Club spent one of their meetings cutting, tying, sewing and folding dozens of fleece blankets which will be donated to shelters to be used by homeless teenagers. The project was started by Interact member Kieran Ricciardi, who



volunteers with her family at a homeless shelter in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. She was looking for a unique project for the club, which takes on various service projects throughout the year. The blankets will be donated to the Covenant House



in Philadelphia, which provides critical services for runaway, homeless and at-risk youth.

The blankets are two-ply fleece, decorated with frills and artistic patterns. Ricciardi said she wanted the blankets to be more than utilitarian.

The fabric was purchased with funds raised by Interact, along with some donated from patrons at the fabric store. The Langhorne and Feasterville Rotary Clubs, which sponsors Interact, also donated \$100 toward the purchase of more fabric. The club is also seeking sponsors for each blanket, which cost \$10 each. Interested donors can contact Neshaminy High School for details on how to help.

8th-grade musicians join NHS choir, orchestra

Members of the choirs and string orchestras from the three district middle schools visited Neshaminy High School in November and early December not only to prepare for a joint holiday concert, but also to build excitement for the musical opportunities available to them once the move up next year.

During rehearsals each morning before two concerts - one for the symphony orchestra and one for the choir - the eighth-grade



students watched their high school counterparts perform as a group as well as individual performances. They then rehearsed together for grand finales which were performed at the holiday concerts during the evening.



A similar program and concert will be held for band students in January.

Neshaminy Education Foundation

Fall raffle winner

Neshaminy High School teacher Kate Romano is the winner of the Eagles ticket raffle. Her name was drawn from a basket by NEF Board members Susan Weber and Mary Immordino on Wednesday, December 2. The basket included tickets to the Eagles - Arizona game on December 24 along with a variety of branded Eagles items.



A second basket of hair care products donated by Regis Hair Salon at the Oxford Valley Mall valued at \$200 was won by Danielle Brooks, a teacher at Maple Point Middle School.

The raffle raised approximately \$700 for the foundation, which will be used to support scholarship and grant programs. A spring raffle and other fund-raisers are also planned.

Amazon Smile program

This holiday season, why not help out the Neshaminy Education Foundation while you shop at Amazon.com? It's easy and will not cost you a dime! All you have to do is choose the NEF as your default charity at Smile.Amazon.com, then 0.5% of every purchase you make will be donated to the Foundation at no extra cost to you! This is an official charity program of Amazon.

Be sure to use the Smile.Amazon.com URL every time you shop to ensure that the NEF receives a donation. The shopping experience

amazon smile
You shop. Amazon gives.

is exactly the same, and all discounts including Amazon Prime will still apply.

Senior Tax Assistance Program

The 2015 Neshaminy School District Property Tax Assistance Program will begin in January 2016. The purpose of the program is to provide property tax relief to our senior citizens. The program is available to homeowners who will reach the age of 65 by December 31, 2015. The program will provide tax rebates of up to \$650 for senior citizens whose household income is less than \$20,000. This includes reporting half of Social Security or Railroad Retirement Benefits, and 100% of any other income. If you have received a rebate in the past, the district makes every effort to send a rebate application for you to complete each year. If you have not received a rebate in the past, rebate application forms will be available beginning in January 2016. They will be available on the Neshaminy School District website, www.neshaminy.org, at your local tax collector's office or by U.S. mail by calling the Business Office directly at 215-809-6522.

This program is entering its Thirty-Eighth year. Since 1977, rebates totaling over \$2.5 million have been paid by the school district, with over 245 senior citizens participating last year. We hope that the amount for which you qualify helps to partially overcome today's high cost of living for those on fixed incomes.

Neshaminy Update is published monthly during the school year. Copies can be obtained at the District Office or at each school office.

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