

# Neshaminy UPDATE

October 2015



Neshaminy School District  
Langhorne, PA

[www.neshaminy.org](http://www.neshaminy.org)

## STEM starts young

When Joseph Ferderbar Elementary School kindergarten teacher Jessica Frisch saw participants in the Summer STEM Academy - whose age ranged from 3rd-graders to middle school students - exercising their natural curiosity for science and technology by working together to solve problems and explore technology, she thought, "I wonder what STEM would look like for kindergarten?"

When school started this year, she decided to find out by designing her own mini-STEM Academy.

"First of all, it's got to be a lot of fun," she said, "and actively engaging them. So for the first challenge I picked a 'how tall can you build it.' I got them a tape measure, and they took off running with that. They tried different ways of stacking things, they helped each other measure them."

The next project was a magnet challenge. Working in pairs, the students tested small magnets on various surfaces around the room to see if they would stick.

"I was thrilled with how involved they got and how enthusiastic the children were, even the ones I thought wouldn't be inspired by it."

Once the challenge is complete, the students gather to write out and discuss their findings. Frisch is planning on coming up with a new challenge every week, which will

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### UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday October 6  
Board Policy Committee, 6:30 pm

Monday October 12  
Neshaminy Education Foundation, 4 pm  
C&I conference room, Maple Point

Tuesday October 13  
Regular Board Action Meeting 7 pm

Tuesday October 20  
Board Educational Development  
Committee, 7 pm

Tuesday October 27  
Board Public Meeting, 7 pm

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

### BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

Region

Mr. Scott Congdon, President	1
Ms. Irene Boyle, Vice-President	3
Mr. John Allen	2
Mrs. Susan Cummings	1
Mr. Mike Morris	2
Mr. Stephen Pirritano	1
Mr. Ron Rudy	3
Mr. Mark Shubin	3
Mr. Anthony Sposato	2

### 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

## Dr. Gloria Hancock appointed Acting Superintendent

As the search for a permanent superintendent gets underway, the School Board of Directors appointed Dr. Gloria Hancock as Acting Superintendent at their Public Board Meeting in September. Dr. Hancock, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, will serve in a dual role and replace Dr. David Baugh as Acting Superintendent after he left to take a job as Superintendent in the Centennial School District (Warminster). Dr. Baugh was with the district for just over two months.

Dr. Hancock will be working under terms of a maximum one-year contract, which will expire as soon as a new Superintendent is appointed. She will return to her former position at that time. She was instrumental in the 5-8 grade configuration transition last year, as well as leading the introduction of many new curriculum initiatives including a new reading program in the middle schools, increased STEM offerings at all levels, and the re-introduction of a foreign language program for the middle schools.

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## Kinder-STEM

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relate to the subjects they are already studying in the classroom.

It is not by chance that Mrs. Frisch gravitates toward STEM topics - her father was an engineer and she says she grew up in an environment where she was fascinated by how things were built and work.

"I'm glad that I can bring some of that into my classroom so the kids can experience it, too," she said. "It's my goal to inspire them to look beyond play and see the value of learning in what they are playing with."

To see a video of Mrs. Frisch's class in action, visit the district web site: [www.neshaminy.org](http://www.neshaminy.org).

## Acting Superintendent

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Dr. Hancock has over thirty years of experience in public education. She began her career as a special educator at the Woodbridge State School in New Jersey. In 1999, she moved to the NJ Department of Education, where she served in various executive roles including Assistant Commissioner, Division of Student Services, and Chief of Staff, Office of the Commissioner and Director.

She served as Assistant Superintendent, Division of Student Services, for the Trenton Public School District before serving as Chief School Administrator / High School Principal of Camden's Leap Academy. In 2008, Hancock served as the Deputy Executive Director of Programs at the New Jersey Department of Law & Public Safety, Office of the Attorney General, Juvenile Justice Commission. In December of 2011, she was tapped to serve as the Acting Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice Commission. She held both posts until she joined Neshaminy in 2013.

She has also served as an adjunct faculty member at Rutgers University Graduate School of Education, Dissertation Committee member at Rowan University, Mercer County Community College and Garden State Youth Correctional Center.

Dr. Hancock attended Thomas Edison State College, where she earned her associate and baccalaureate degrees in human services; Rutgers University, where she received her master's degree in public administration; and the University of Pennsylvania, where she attained her doctorate degree in education and organizational leadership.

She and her family are long-time residents of Newtown.



*Dr. Hancock*

## AE change committee convenes

Approximately 70 parents, teachers and administrators attended an Academic Enrichment (AE) Program Change Committee kick-off meeting September 14. The group reviewed the AE Program Quality Review, the district response to the review, and discussed their next steps. There was time for open discussion, and committee members signed up for one of six Action Planning Teams:

Area 1: Goals, Objectives, Philosophy & Vision

Area 2: Screening, Identification, and Placement

Area 3: Communication

Area 4: Resources & Technology

Area 5: Staff Development

Area 6: Curriculum/Integration

The AE Task Force Action Teams will meet monthly throughout the entire 2015-16 school year to develop an updated and improved K-12 Academic Enrichment / Gifted Services delivery model for the 2016-17 school year and will consider a wide array of gifted services options.

For more information about changes to the AE program, documents and presentations and committee updates, please check the district web site, [www.neshaminy.org](http://www.neshaminy.org).

## Tawanka structure takes shape

After months of site work and demolition, the steel beams are going up at the new Tawanka Elementary School site in Lower Southampton Township. Demolition on the old building was completed in mid-September, and favorable weather conditions allowed crews to stay on schedule preparing the footers and pouring the foundation in preparation for the beams.

In December the School Board will begin consideration of which schools will close and what students will attend Tawanka. Current plans call for students from Lower Southampton Elementary and Heckman Elementary to attend Tawanka beginning in the 2016-2017 school year.





## CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

### Middle Schools field test Amplify science program

Sixth grade science teachers are excited about the opportunity to field test a new curriculum. The University of California Berkeley Lawrence Hall of Science (LHS) and Amplify Education, Inc., (Amplify) are creating a world-class science curriculum for grades 6-8 that addresses the Next Generation Science Standards and a substantial portion of the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts as they relate to Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects. This curriculum draws on the strengths and prior work of the Lawrence Hall of Science. A key component of the curriculum is the pairing of science content, scientific practices, cross cutting concepts and disciplinary literacy in:

- Asking questions and defining problems
- Planning and conducting investigations
- Analyzing data and models
- Constructing arguments using evidence
- Understanding systems and system models

During the field trial, 6th grade science teachers will teach a chemical reactions unit that includes assessments of student learning. Students will have the opportunity to learn through hands-on investigations, reading, writing, listening, speaking, and visualizing within the context of science. Students will interact with the curriculum through digital devices and engage in interactive simulations and class activities designed to enhance understanding and build science abilities and practices.

**More info:** [www.amplify.com/curriculum/amplifyscienceintro](http://www.amplify.com/curriculum/amplifyscienceintro)

### 3rd-grade pilots Junior Great Books program



Several district third-grade teachers tested the Junior Great Books Reading Program last year. The program was successful in delivering strong, inquiry-based lessons that allowed students to extend their reading, thinking and communication skills. Because of this success, the program has now been rolled out to all third and fourth grade students in the district.

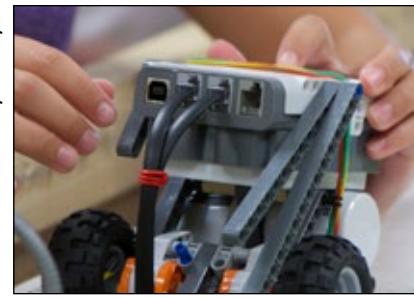
The children will engage in read-alouds from selections that are rich in ideas and chosen because they invite deep thinking and multiple interpretations. This shared inquiry helps those students develop critical thinking skills by getting them to ask questions, share their opinions and support their ideas using evidence from their readings.

This process is closely aligned with Pennsylvania Core Standards and will allow them to practice these critical skills using authentic and engaging literature.

### STEM offerings grow in popularity

Project Lead the Way (PLTW), the district's program of science, technology, engineering and math programs continues to grow at Neshaminy High School. In the 2013 - 2014 school year, 90 students enrolled in three sections of Introduction to Engineering Design and two sections of Principles of Engineering. That number grew to 120 students in 2014 - 2015 with two sections of Introduction to Engineering Design, two sections of Principles of Engineering and one section of Digital Electronics. In 2014 the district also introduced a PLTW course, Design and Modeling, with the Inventor Computer Assisted Drawing course which uses 3D printers in all three middle schools.

This year, 138 students requested one section of Introduction to Engineering Design, one section of Principles of Engineering, one section of Digital Electronics, one section of Civil Engineering and Architecture and one section of Computer



Science and Software Engineering. All of the engineering courses have been elevated to honors level courses as well Robotics.

Most of our PLTW teachers are certified in one or more courses ranging from Principles of Engineering, Design and Modeling, Digital Electronics, Civil Engineering and Architecture, and Computer Science and Software Engineering.

### Genre Lab builds 9th grade literary skills

Two 9th-grade teachers and the NHS Literacy Coach piloted the Genre Reading Labs program during the 2014-2015 school year. Students were immersed in novels and non-fiction pieces in either dystopian or contemporary realistic fiction genres.

The pilot was a success and the program is being rolled out to the entire ninth-grade during the 2015-2016 school year. Approximately 1,500 books were purchased and cataloged over the summer to support the genre studies in dystopian, contemporary realistic fiction and mystery.



Students work off a core text within the classroom and read a different book every week (or longer depending on the length and complexity of the material) within one of these specific genres. Students are then escorted to the library to check out additional books of their own choosing within the highlighted genre.

Teachers will use a novel or set of short stories within the genres to teach reading skills and literary analysis. Students will also engage in research on companion topics to create their own narratives in the genre. Students will then conduct a literary analysis of the genre comparing the class texts with their independent reading.



## NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

### Pearl S. Buck Elementary

#### Students learn words the foamy way



Mrs. Schaeffer's kindergartners practiced the art of shaving in September...well, not exactly...but they were having fun with shaving cream as they practiced writing all of their learned Sight Words, letters, and first names. Tactile learning experiences such as these are not only enjoyable, but also provide a multi-sensory approach to learning, increasing engagement and retention of information.

#### Robotics added to after-school program

A class in robotics has been added to the Mad Science after-school enrichment program starting in October. During the 8-week class, which is offered to 3rd and 4th graders, students can explore the fundamentals of robotics, electronic circuits and sensors to explore the world around them.

### Joseph Ferderbar Elementary

#### Elves preparing for annual dinner

Summer may not be far behind us, but Ferderbar is already preparing for their annual Elf Fund Spaghetti Dinner. This holiday program has been in existence at Ferderbar for over twenty years. The spaghetti dinner is cooked by teachers, served by the students and enjoyed by the Ferderbar community. The money raised through donations and ticket sales provide gift cards, gifts and toys to students and families in need in our own community. This year the dinner will be held on Thursday, November 12.

### Oliver Heckman Elementary

#### Bear project helps Hope Alive

Third grade students at Oliver Heckman are preparing for their annual service learning project. They will hold a walk-a-thon at the Oxford Valley Mall in November to raise money which will be used to build and donate stuffed bears to Hope Alive, a mission based in Haiti.

Hope Alive services children who were orphaned as a result of the 2010 earthquake. The organization's founders spoke to the students in early October. Their presentation included a slide show of former recipients of Heckman bears.

### Herbert Hoover Elementary

#### Hoover starts the year strong

After a summer of extensive building renovations, the Hoover staff worked hard to get the school cleaned up and the classrooms ready for the first days of school in early September. Once the students were back in class, they were able to immediately enjoy the new air conditioning as summer weather held on for a couple of weeks.

The PTO also welcomed students back with their annual Tailgate Party in the Hoover parking lot on September 18. Families gathered again for an Ice Cream Social thanks to the PTO and several teachers who came out as volunteer scoopers on October 2.

### Lower Southampton Elementary

#### LoSo students 'makes their mark'

Lower South ES is working as a school community to "Make their Mark" this year. Throughout the school year they will make our mark within the school, the community, and plan how they will

make their mark on the world.

Several activities took place in September to begin working towards our theme/goal. This picture exhibits one example of how students are literally leaving their mark. Students are individually creating a rock garden and painting rocks to leave their mark at Lower South! Next time you stop by the school, check out their beautiful rock garden!

### Walter Miller Elementary

#### School year off to a cool start

The PTO started the new school year off with an Ice Cream Social Friday September 18. Students, parents and Miller staff member enjoyed sweet treats, fun and conversation while dancing to the cool sounds of D.J. Dave.

#### Book Fair a family event

Miller held its annual Fall Book Fair during the week of September 25 - October 1, 2015. Students previewed and had the opportunity to purchase books during their regularly scheduled weekly library classes, followed by our Book Fair Family Fun Night on October 1st.



# Albert Schweitzer Elementary

## State Farm awards \$25K grant for recycling program

Albert Schweitzer Elementary School will receive a \$25,000 service-learning grant from the State Farm Youth Advisory Board to further develop their "Recycles and Reuses" program.

The Schweitzer Elementary Recycles and Reuses program is a youth-led environmental science project that includes everything from placing triple sorting recycle bins in each classroom to purchasing compost bins for their Garden Club to recycle cafeteria waste into fresh garden soil. Recycle bins will also be purchased for the athletic fields as well as for the adjoining Carl Sandburg Middle School.

The students will also partner with a local artist to turn trash into an artistic treasure, teaching the students how to make beautiful new creations out of recycled materials.



*Some of the former Schweitzer ES students (now at Sandburg MS) who helped apply for the State Farm grant during the 2014-2015 school year.*

Since 2012, the students have discovered methods to help the school and local community by raising money. These funds and their projects have helped local homeless individuals/families, the elderly, the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and a local animal shelter to name a few. They continue to hosts fundraisers monthly to support their efforts.

"The Service Learning Club is designed to empower students and teach them how to collaboratively solve complex problems in society," said club advisor JoEllen Exner. "This project's mission will enable the students of Albert Schweitzer Elementary to understand that through their group effort, they can make a positive difference in the lives of others and their community."

# Maple Point Middle School

## Constitution Day includes well-known speakers

Maple Point took their Constitution Day celebration (September 17) well past the boundaries of the day by inviting several well-known speakers to school during September. The speakers included Pennsylvania Rep. Frank Farry, who spoke to fifth-

grade students on September 18; U.S. Rep. Mike Fitzpatrick, who spoke to 7th-graders on September 22; and former Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham, who spoke to eighth-graders on September 24. In late October eighth grade students will hear from Mary Beth Tinker, the defendant in a landmark 1960's free speech case (Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent Community School District).

Both Farry and Fitzpatrick talked about the legislative branch



Fitzpatrick



Farry



Abraham

and how they apply those principles through their own offices. Abraham talked about the judicial system, citing passages from a copy of the Constitution she carries with her and citing cases from her extensive career as examples.

The program was arranged by social studies department chair Anne Schmidt. Video clips from all the speeches can be found on the district web site, [www.neshaminy.org](http://www.neshaminy.org).

# Poquessing Middle School

## Select Choir receives top invites

The Poquessing Middle School Select Choir, under the direction of Jason Leigh, will be attending two prestigious music conferences this year following a competitive process in which they submitted recordings of their performance last spring. Though some of the choir members have since moved on to the high school, the remaining and new choir members have been busy rehearsing their songs, which can take months to learn and perfect.

The first is the American Choir Directors Association - Pennsylvania Fall Conference at Susquehanna University on Saturday, October 31st. Poquessing will be the only middle school choir performing at this conference, along side choirs from high schools and colleges, including Penn State.

The second is the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association annual In-Service Conference at the Hershey Convention Center on Friday, April 1, 2016.

The average length of a song is three minutes, and the choir members are preparing for performances of 25 and 45 minutes. That is a lot of music for a middle school choir!



## Future Problem Solvers earn top scores

Congratulations to the Poquessing Middle School Future Problem Solvers and their adviser Dave Martys, who just found out that they finished the World Junior Division competition with the 7th highest overall score out of 54 teams from around the globe! This score was attained through completed answers on the topic of Global Issues at the 2015 FPS International Conference at Iowa State University this summer. The team in this competition finished first in the state in the Junior Division of Future Problem Solvers (grades 4-6) last year before competing at the International Division. We are proud of their commitment, ability to collaborate and determination!

## Carl Sandburg Middle School

### Concert Choir to sing at Temple game Oct. 17

On Saturday October 17th, the Carl Sandburg MS Concert Choir will be singing the national anthem for the Temple University vs. University of Central Florida game at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia.



### 6th grade tests new science program

It is an exciting time to be in 6th grade science! Sixth grade science teachers are piloting a new chemistry program developed by the University of California-Berkley.

The students are joining a team of forensic chemists to solve a problem. In a fictional town, the drinking water became contaminated which has caused the water to come out of the spigot red. This is an interactive program using the iPad. This is a great way to start the district iPad initiative for 6th graders. Through the use of these devices the students will be actively engaged in learning about atoms, chemical reactions, reactants, products and chemical formulas. This will provide them with the tools they need in order to figure out what happened to the drinking water and how to correct it.

## Neshaminy High School

### 5K walk / run benefits scholarships

The Middletown Community Foundation sponsored a 5K run / 1K walk on Sunday October 4 to benefit their educational scholarship program. The event was held at Neshaminy High School. The foundation supports scholarships which benefit students from Neshaminy High School as well as other schools for those that live in the township.

### Show Us Your Socks! returns to NHS

The Interact Club made oversized striped socks fashionable by holding their annual Show Us Your Socks fundraiser for the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House. Staff members and



students purchased their socks (as worn by Ronald McDonald) as well as rubber bracelets and wore them in school on Friday October 2 as well as to the home football game on Saturday October 3. There they were joined by therapy dogs from the Ronald McDonald House.

### Fair draws 40 colleges

The 3rd annual National Honor Society College Fair was held Thursday October 1 in Gym 1 at NHS. About 40 institutions were



represented, ranging from local schools such as Temple University and Bucks County Community College to those further away such as Ohio State and Syracuse University.



National Honor Society members had been working since the beginning of summer to contact the schools and arrange their participation in the fair. Students from all grades at the high school attended with their families to pick up literature and chat with the representatives from the colleges.

Many colleges also visit Neshaminy High School on a rotating basis during the school day. The schedule of these visits is available on the morning announcements and through Naviance, where students can set up appointments to meet the representatives from these schools.

## **Students win design award**

The Columbia Scholastic Press Association announced the winners from the newspaper and magazine categories of its 32th Gold Circle Awards program recently, and a pair of Neshaminy High School students were honored.

Playwickian junior editors Gauri Mangala and Ashley Reiss were awarded first place in the Feature Page Design Category for their spread "What am I Going to Do This Summer?" published on pages 6B and 7B in the June 10, 2015 issue of The Playwickian. The nationally award winning design can be found in PDF format



at the Playwickian web site, [www.playwickian.com](http://www.playwickian.com)

The Awards attracted over 11,000 entries produced by students at colleges, universities and secondary schools throughout the United States.

## **Howler literary magazine honored**

The 2014-2015 Howler magazine was honored by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association as a Crown Finalist for the 2016 awards. The Crown Awards honor top student publications chosen by CSPA members, including newspapers, magazines, yearbooks or online publications. The contest judges these publications on their concept, design, photography, writing and coverage overall. Howler is a product of the Creative Writing Club at NHS, featuring prose, poetry and art of all mediums created by students.

## **Preschool Lab looking for students**

Neshaminy High School's Preschool Laboratory still has openings this year for 4 year olds in their 4x / week classes, where they will interact with students in the NHS Child Development & Parenting classes. This year's session begins on October 12 and runs two sessions each day Monday through Thursday until May. For more information please call 215-809-6680 or visit the district web site for more information.



The Child Development and Parenting course provides a framework for learning about issues affecting parents, caregivers, and those involved in careers associated with young children. Child Development students are given the opportunity to understand the growth, development, and guidance of preschool children through participation in the Neshaminy Preschool Laboratory. Students plan, prepare, and observe learning activities in the laboratory preschool for our community's three, four, and five



year-olds. These experiences offer high school students a model from which they can learn and discuss real-life issues related to child development. Students who plan a career in childcare may work towards earning their Child Development Associate Ready Certification in this course: the candidacy requirement for the national C.D.A. Credential.

## District Notes

### Class size agreement keeps kids close to home

NSD Director of Administration Paul Meehan reports that the new class size limits negotiated in the most recent one-year contract between the district and the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers has eliminated the necessity of sending any students to schools other than their designated school, a process known as 'sister-schooling'.

Under the old class size rules, 16 students would have been sister-schooled in the 2015-2016 school year. The new rules allow some flexibility by allowing one or two extra students in certain classes as long as the average class size in each grade across the district remains lower. This means that for every extra child in a class, another class must have one less child to maintain the agreed average (which varies by grade).

## Neshaminy Education Foundation

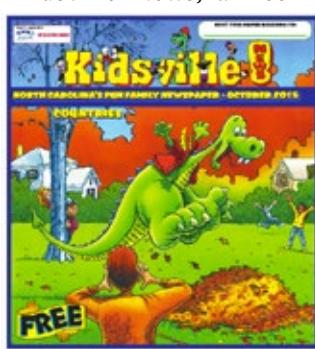
### Dining for Dollars

The NEF held a back-to-school Dining for Dollars fundraiser once again at Bertucci's near the Oxford Valley Mall in September, raising approximately \$700. Thanks to the many families and staff members who came to enjoy a meal and support the Foundation!

### Kidsville comes to Neshaminy

Kidsville News, a free newspaper geared toward students in elementary and middle schools, will be made available to teachers and students starting with the October issue. Each issue includes timely articles, informational items, fiction, kid-generated prose and reviews, puzzles, brain teasers and more. It is currently available at local businesses, day care centers, libraries and other public places.

The NEF and the district agreed to distribute copies each month to schools where teachers can pick them up to hand out to their students or even use them in class. The foundation will get a free



advertisement in each issue to increase their visibility in the community and promote its activities.

### Eagles tickets, Tawanka window fundraisers

Upcoming NEF fundraisers include an Eagles ticket raffle, coming up in October. Raffle tickets will be available at the Homecoming football game and Senior Night, as well as in the schools.

Another unique fundraiser is also planned for this fall - a number of fiberglass windows featuring Native American designs that were salvaged from the old Tawanka Elementary School will be sold via an online auction with proceeds going to the NEF.



Each window is different, and they are approximately 2' x 3' and will come mounted in their metal frames. Details of this auction will be

made available on the NEF web site, [www.neshaminy.org/nef](http://www.neshaminy.org/nef) and through the District Facebook page.

*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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