

Neshaminy UPDATE

February, 2015



Neshaminy School District
Langhorne, PA

Robert L. Copeland, Superintendent

www.neshaminy.org

Youngest students thrive with new schedule

Full-day K settles in

Late afternoons in Judy Oswald's all-day kindergarten class at Pearl S. Buck Elementary School are a study in organization – the children are spread around the room, each focused on an activity. Some are quietly reading, some assembling Lego creations on the floor, others drawing.

Judy, a kindergarten teacher in the district since 1991, is sitting at a table in a rocking chair, surrounded by a rotating group of students getting individual help with their assignments. The students are free to move around the room, but the expectation is that they are doing something constructive (and cleaning up as they move along).



Just before dismissal, the students gather on a carpet around a globe, eagerly answering questions about meridians and compass roses for a lesson about maps.

Since the district started all-day kindergarten at the beginning of this school year, Judy says she has something very important which she never had before – time.

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Superintendents Message

New Programs



Robert Copeland

As we pass the halfway point in the school year, this month we are taking a look at the new full-day kindergarten in the district. This program, the product of several years of study and planning, has proven to not only be popular with parents and educators, but is a success with the students themselves as they learn new routines and expand their reading, writing, math and social skills.

In the next newsletter we will take a look at another initiative that started this year - the expanded reading program in all three middle schools.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday February 3

School Board public work session, 7 pm

Monday February 9

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

Tuesday February 10

*Board Educational Development Committee
6:30 pm*

Tuesday February 17

School Board public meeting, 7 pm

Thursday February 19

PTO Forum, 9:30 am

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

BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

	Region
Mr. Scott Congdon, <i>President</i>	1
Ms. Irene Boyle, <i>Vice-President</i>	3
Mr. John Allen	2
Mrs. Susan Cummings	1
Mr. Mike Morris	2
Mr. Stephen Pirritano	1
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ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Robert L. Copeland
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

Full-Day K

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“For me it’s wonderful because the flow is so much nicer than it was with the half day,” she said after school one recent afternoon.

“We can actually start something and finish it, or depending on the children’s needs we can start something, stop it completely and revisit it later in the day. Before we didn’t have that gift of time.”

“We are doing more reading and more small-group instruction. We do a lot more fun, hands-on activities. They think more and are able to express themselves a little bit better because we have time.”

Neshaminy Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Dr. Gloria Hancock echoes that sentiment.

“Kindergarten is a wonderful and exciting time of exploration for children,” she said. “During this developmental phase, they are very curious and begin to become more



confident, self-reliant and independent. As parents we want to help them continue to reach key developmental milestones, especially since the expectations for kindergarten are much higher than they were years ago.”

Currently 583 students are enrolled in the full-day kindergarten program at district elementary schools.

“Some children will be beginning readers while others are still learning letters,” Dr. Hancock said. “There is plenty of support available to help your child improve on their basic skills. Perhaps the single most important way parents can help is to read to and with their children every day to build their vocabulary.”

“Together we can make a difference. With an investment in full day kindergarten at Neshaminy, we are well on our way.”



A typical day in Judy’s class starts with a morning greeting, done in a different language each day. Next is some calendar math, followed by a morning of reading, writing and word work.

“They love it so much we don’t even take a break in the morning,” she said.

After recess, the students jump into math, then specials, followed by social studies and science. Students can choose their activity at the end of the day, or work in small groups with their teacher.

“I love just about everything in kindergarten. I love the age, I love that they’re so excited to learn - they’re pleasers, they just want to make us happy.”

Senior tax rebate available

The 2014 Neshaminy School District Property Tax Assistance Program is now available. The purpose of the program is to provide property tax relief to our senior citizens. The program is available to homeowners who reached the age of 65 by December 31, 2014.

The program provides tax rebates of up to \$650 to 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 will make every effort to send a rebate application for to complete each year. If you have not received a rebate in the past, the rebate application forms is available on the Neshaminy School District web site, at your local tax collector office, or the district will send one via US Mail by calling the Business Office directly at 215-809-6522.

ON THE WEB

District launches a new Facebook page

To better serve the goal of 'reaching people where they are,' Neshaminy has launched a new district-wide Facebook page.

According to Community Relations Coordinator Chris Stanley, the purpose of the page is not to replace other internet applications such as Parent Link, Home Access or the district web site, but rather to supplement those by directing visitors to new school and administrative information, highlighting the many activities in the schools, and fostering community involvement with



district.

Inclement weather alerts and other vital information will also be posted on the page in addition to current alert methods.

The new page can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/neshaminysd>.

Earlier in the year, the district also launched a new Twitter account, @neshaminy_sd with a similar purpose of providing alerts and links to new information.

School comprehensive plans available

Since November, each NSD principal has been presenting a report to the School Board Educational Development Committee outlining challenges, goals and action plans to meet those goals for their schools.

A bullet-list summary of those presentations is available on the district web site home page under 'Our District' then 'Mission and Strategic Plans' in the site navigation menu.

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

1:1 Technology Initiative in the works

In January, a district delegation of 13 members including teachers, administrators and technology experts visited Quibbletown Middle School in Piscataway, NJ, to observe their 1:1 Technology Initiative. That program, in which each student is issued their own device such as an iPad or

Chromebook for their exclusive educational use, is under consideration for Neshaminy middle-school students and could begin for some of those students as early as September.

1:1 technology initiatives have become increasingly popular over the past few years, and a recent study indicates that more than 7 in 10 students report that using

these devices for their lessons

increases their engagement in school.

Using an online portal called My Big Campus, students can access homework assignments, lessons, student textbooks and more through the devices, eliminating the need to carry around books and papers while keeping their homework organized 'in the cloud'.

In Quibbletown, students used iPads to interact with lab stations as they peered through microscopes, simultaneously accessing resources, taking pictures and writing hypotheses directly into the iPads. Physical education teachers created a health 'textbook' which can be updated as needed.

Teachers reported that training was key to the success of the program, for both staff and students.

Upper Merion School District began a 1:1 pilot program in 2008, and today every student in grades 9-12 participates.

The stated goals of their program are to increase academic rigor, increase student engagement, and 'level the playing field' to allow equal access to technology for all students. Both teachers and students report great success with the program there.

The exact configuration of such a program at Neshaminy and the type of devices that would be used is still under review. Such details as whether the devices would remain in school or be taken home each day, security measures, training, and the types of applications used are all on the agenda for the 5-8 Study Work Group, which is spearheading the initiative along with the district Information Technology Department. Those groups are expected to make their final recommendations to the district administration in a few weeks.



NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

Pearl S. Buck Elementary

Buck, Heckman students honor MLK Day

Some students in Neshaminy spent their day off on Martin Luther King, Jr...in school. And two groups of students from Buck and Oliver Heckman ES honored the spirit of the day by participating in a charity 3-on-3 basketball game at Maple Point Elementary School.

Each student paid \$25 to play in the game to benefit Family Promise a local agency that helps homeless families in Lower Bucks County.

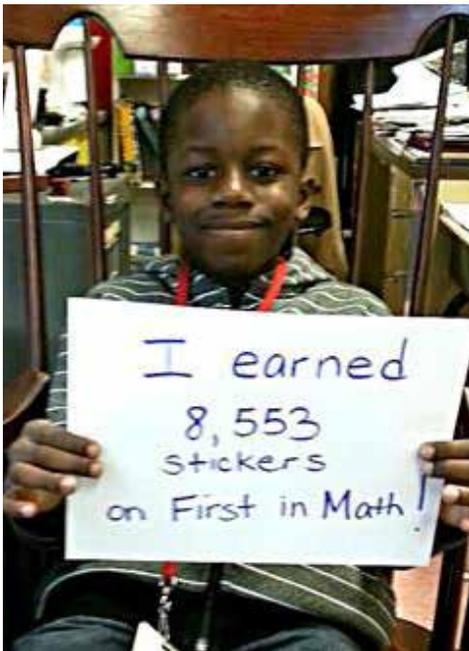
Students also had the opportunity to participate in a free project making various craft items for first responders, senior citizens, chocolate-covered pretzels for a homeless shelter and other items.

Samuel Everitt Elementary

First-grader ranks high in math competition

First-grade student Augustine Owusu-Sarfo is making a name for himself playing the educational online math game First In Math.

He ranked 38th among the top 100 ranked first graders in the entire state of Pennsylvania. The game is a multi-grade resource for teaching math in a competitive, fun way. It is designed to complement common-core standards, offering math fluency and practice skills that introduce children as young as kindergarten and first-grade to basic elements of algebra. It is web-based and can be played anywhere and any time, encouraging kids to build good practice habits.



Joseph Ferderbar Elementary

Aristocats entertain school and School Board



A group of 40 students gave a rousing musical performance to the NSD School Board during their work session on January 13, performing the song 'Everybody Wants to be a Cat' from their recent school musical, The Aristocats.

Made especially with elementary performers in mind, this show was performed at the school on November 19th. Students started rehearsing in September, Monday and Friday mornings before school. Many students also gave up a recess once a week to rehearse.

The Ferderbar Home and School Association provided the funds, and helped with the sets, costumes, and props. Guidance counselor Pam Sporny choreographed the big musical numbers. First grade teacher JoAnne Cariola was the assistant director.

A video of the School Board performance is available on the district web site.

Herbert Hoover Elementary

Hoover named Title I Distinguished School

Herbert Hoover Elementary School has been named a Title 1 Distinguished School for the 2014 - 2015 school year by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, one of only 96 in the state to receive this honor.

The school was designated "Reward High Achievement" 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.

According to Hoover principal Michael Rodriguez,

“Hoover’s achievement is a testament to the efforts and dedication of Hoover’s teachers, staff, students, and parents. Earning this designation out of hundreds of schools in



Pennsylvania is quite an accomplishment.”

“I could not be more proud to work with this team,” he added.

The award also makes Hoover eligible to apply to a competitive

Innovation Grant, worth up to \$50,000, for the purpose of promoting the implementation of new learning structures and processes.

Lower Southampton Elementary

New program encourages positive behavior

Lower South initiated a new positive behavior program this year, the Principals Tiger Club. Each day, five staff members are on the lookout for students that exemplify how a Lower South student should act. Students who are “caught” following the school-wide rules are given a Tiger Sticker that is redeemed in the principals office for a spot on the Principals Tiger Club board. The contest is similar to bingo in that the board has numbered squares where students place their name in a square that coincides with a randomly drawn numbered chip. Once an entire row of 10 is filled, those students whose names appear in those boxes in the winning row receive a small token of appreciation, and one student with the number randomly selected wins the Principals Mystery Motivator reward such as a gift card or tickets to a local movie theatre.

Upon completion of a cycle, usually about two weeks, the board is wiped clean and the process starts again. The goal of the Principals Tiger Club is increased positive behavior and reduced office discipline referrals, as well as an additional opportunity for staff to interact positively with students and families.

Walter Miller Elementary

Miller takes over Barnes & Noble

On January 29, Walter Miller ES held it Barnes and Noble

Bookfair at the store in Fairless Hills. Many students and their parents braved the cold weather to warm up with a warm book or two.



Several Miller teachers read stories in the children’s section of the store, and students were even treated to a surprise visit by The Cat in the Hat.

Albert Schweitzer Elementary

Grant gets students gardening for charity

The Albert Schweitzer Elementary School has been named the recipient of a 2014 Lowe’s Toolbox for Education grant of \$2825, according to Joan Higginbotham, Director of Community Relations for Lowe’s.

The grant will be used by the school’s Community Service Club to plant and maintain a vegetable garden at the school this spring. The students plan to continue maintaining the garden throughout the summer by having their families vol-



unteer time over the school vacation to continue the work.

The produce from the garden will be donated to the Penn-del Food Pantry.

The Community Service Club was established in 2012 and

has helped local organizations such as St. Mary's Hospital, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the Knights of Columbus in the past, according to teacher Joellen Exner, one of the co-advisers of the club along with fellow staff members Jen Hanley and Mary Ellen Pulak.

Exner, who wrote the grant application, said the club's goal is to donate over 2000 pounds of fresh produce to the pantry. The first plantings could come as early as March, since the school already has a greenhouse obtained in a previous Lowe's Toolbox for Education grant in 2011. The current grant will be used to add raised vegetable beds to a courtyard at the school.

"Seventy-five families rely on this service to feed their children," she said. "Fresh produce is a treasure and treat for these needy families."

Maple Point Middle School

Veteran essays win awards

Two Maple Point students were honored by the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) for essays they entered in a national contest recently.



Devon Place won 1st place at the VFW Post 6393 in Yardley and also took 2nd place at the regional level (District 8).

Rachel Schudowski was the 3rd place winner on the local level. Each year more than 100,000 students in grades 6-8 enter the

VFW Patriot's Pen youth essay contest. The contest encourages young minds to examine America's history, along with their own experiences in modern American society, by drafting a 300- to 400-word essay, expressing their views based on a patriotic theme chosen by the VFW Commander-in-Chief.

Both students also read their essays at the recent Maple Point Veterans Day service in November.

Students pitch in for Day of Service

About 100 Maple Point ES students partnered with friends at Our Lady of Grace Church in Pennel for the annual

Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. Students, staff and family members joined to work with Aid for Friends to prepare meals and breakfast bags for the elderly and shut-ins.



Poquessing Middle School

Musicians perform with NHS band

On January 14th, eighth-grade band students joined with 8th grade students from Carl Sandburg MS and Maple Point MS to attend the 8th Grade Band Showcase at Neshaminy High School. They practiced with the HS Band, heard about the music program at the high school and had lunch with band members.

These students were invited back in the evening to perform at the NHS Winter Concert.

Carl Sandburg Middle School

Super Friday Football Frenzy



The Eagles may not have even made the playoffs this year, but that didn't deflate the football excitement at Sandburg. On the Friday before the Super Bowl, students wore their Eagles green - along with a good sampling of jerseys from other favorite NFL teams - to get ready for the big game.

Neshaminy High School

NHS to host music festival

The 2015 Bucks County Music Festival will be held at NHS March 5-7, 2015. The following students recently auditioned with students from other schools throughout Bucks County, and will participate in the festival High School Band, Orchestra, Chorus and Middle School Band and Chorus.

Neshaminy High School: Rebecca Allen, Danny Aslanian, Katie Benson, Sarah Boyle, Jacklynn Campos, Christina Chen, Amaya Christie, Angela Cook, Alex Dixon, Tyler Ebinger, Emre Fisher, Tiera Fogg, Josh Hartley, Jordan Hayes, Stephen Hopkins, Schuyler Janzen, Evan Kelbaugh, Payton Kelly, Samantha Lawson, Drew Luniewski, Francesca Marren, Skyla Martz, Dana McCabe, Jarod Mellus, Liz Mooney, Andrew Northrup, Becky Raffin, Joseph Rippert, Isaiah Rodriguez, Stephanie Rue, Kaitlyn Sibre, Joseph Stanford, Chris Thomas, Brian Thomas, Adam Victor, Cassandra Weber and Bryant Zagorodny

Carl Sandburg Middle School: Haley Clark, Kayla Davidson, Wyatt Mellus, Ricky Moyer, Jordyn Souder and MaKenzie Young.

Maple Point Middle School: Samuel Ackerman, Gavin Bowman, Brandon Caban, Bella Collins, Hannah DiMemmo, Hailey Doherty, Greg Drapkin, Maddie Galvelis, James Gavrushenko, Mackenzie Gursky, Mackenzie Lawson, Ainsley Lederer, Rishi Madnani, Emily McCormick, Connor Menzel, Aaron Morrison, Connor Perry, Devon Place, Jared Preston, Rachel Schodowski, Eddie Tamanini, Kyle Teoh and Elizabeth Tuttle.

Poquessing Middle School: Evelyn Alexander, Daniel Aungst, Haley Brennan, Olivia Costa, Jonathan Desir, Heather Dixon, Andrea Duckenfield, Christine Fitzpatrick, Sanskaar Gupta, Grant Harm Miller, Emily Kirsch, Brielle Lewandowski, Cassidy Liu, Dylan Lorenz, Jack Meyer, Latrice Morgan, Hunter Potts, Christopher Quinlan, Erica Whelan, Ragan Yates and Samantha Yeagle.

Dance Team makes Bowl appearance

The Neshaminy High School Dance Team was excited to represent NHS the final week of December in Florida where the team was invited to participate in the Russell Athletic Bowl Halftime show on Monday, December 29. Prior to performing in the game that pits Clemson Tigers against the Oklahoma Sooners, the team worked with acclaimed choreographer Bonnie Story from 'So You Think You Can Dance' with over 500 students from 15 schools scattered all over the country.



The team was also featured in the Universal Studios Macy's Parade, along with the very same balloons that float down the streets of New York City during the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Winter drama sells out; musical on tap

The NSD Drama troupe sold out two Ten Minute Showcase performances in January. Each night, a different cast was featured performing in a series of short plays at the Black Box Theater.



The Vocal Music performers will be holding their Winter 2015 Musical, *The Drowsy Chaperone* February 4-7 at the Theodore Kloos Auditorium. Shows are at 7pm each night with a matinee on Saturday

February 7 at 1:30 pm.

The Tony-award-winning Broadway musical is a send-up of the Jazz-Age musical featuring over-the-top musical numbers, characters and gangsters.

Art, business students enter the Shark Tank

The Business, Art, and Technology Education departments at NHS put together a Shark Tank Jr. event on January 13 in

the NHS auditorium.

The concept for this version of the hit TV show “Shark Tank” is that the students have learned a variety of skills and concepts in a class (or classes), and the students did presentations that show how they could (or already did) take the



things they learned in class and turn it into a marketable product, business or brand. The students then got feedback from the student “sharks” enrolled in the Entrepreneurship class (some of whom agreed to work with them to help develop the ‘business’).

After the student ‘sharks’ gave their feedback, two local business owners / guest sharks (who are also Neshaminy grads) offered their critiques.

NHS bowler scores a perfect game

Congratulations to NHS student David Moffitt who bowled a perfect 300 game at Penndel Lanes on January 28. This is David’s second perfect game on the NHS Bowling Team and the first perfect game for any team in the Suburban One League this season.

Search underway for new football coach

After one year as Head Football Coach, Mike Frederick resigned January 28, citing concerns that a recent change in his job would prevent him from having the flexibility to carry out the coaching duties moving forward.

Frederick thanked the district, the assistant coaches and the players for the opportunity to coach the team. Football team members were informed of the decision during the school day.

“Mike took on a student-first, player-first philosophy,” Athletic Director Tom Magdelinkas said.

“He was highly concerned with the emotional and social development of his players. He brought a tremendous amount of football knowledge, having played with some

of the best coaches at the collegiate and professional level. He was able to communicate that knowledge in a positive, effective manner to his players.”

Frederick continued to work with players in the off-season, both with college recruitment efforts and actively working with Assistant Head Coach Steve Wilmot on player development.

“He will be sorely missed,” Magdelinkas said.

EDUCATION FOUNDATION

NEF seeking new community board members

The Neshaminy Education Foundation is a partnership between the community, teachers and district administration. The NEF Board of Directors reflects this partnership, and is looking for additional community members to help out.

The purpose of NEF, established in 1993, is to channel resources to Neshaminy schools for programs, scholarships and grants for a variety of educational purposes. These resources come from generous donations from Neshaminy staff payroll deductions, gifts and donations from individuals and groups, and fund-raising activities.

The board meets approximately once a month at the district office. If you are able to join, please contact the district office at (215)809-6500 for information.

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