



NSD students participate in 'Hour of Code'

Coding the future



Students at Maple Point MS watch a demonstration of a Raspberry Pi experimental computer during an Hour of Code event.

1,600 students from all three Neshaminy middle schools and Neshaminy High School participated in the worldwide 'Hour of Code' in December, honing their computer programming skills through everything from creating their own mobile apps and games to sharing their computer knowledge with classmates and younger students.

The Hour of Code is a non-profit educational

program dedicated to teaching the fundamentals of computer programming to kids, and reaches millions of students in 180 countries through the web site www.code.org. It is backed by some of the biggest names in technology, including Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, and The College Board, according to the project web site.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday January 13

School Board work session, 7 pm

Thursday January 15

PTO forum, 9:30 am

Board Facilities and Finance Committee, 7 pm

Tuesday January 20

Board Educational Development Committee, 6:30 pm

Saturday January 24

Breakfast with the Superintendent, 9 am

Tuesday January 27

School Board meeting, 7 pm

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

BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

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Superintendents Message

Moving Forward

As our students head back to the classroom after the holiday break, we can look back to the first part of the school year with pride for their accomplishments both in and out of the classroom, and for the success of new educational initiatives in the district. At the same time, we must remain sharply focused on moving forward, striving for excellence in every program at every grade level.



Robert Copeland

Among the changes this year, Neshaminy implemented full-day kindergarten for the first time, introduced the new Middle Grades Developmental Reading Program, adopted a Balanced Literacy Framework for all grades, and increased the focus on STEM programs (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) in both the middle schools and high school with the introduction of courses in engineering, robotics and automation.

These initiatives will accelerate during the next school year,

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Coding the Future

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507 Neshaminy High School students used the Hour of Code tutorials to work with pre-coded blocks, and created coding puzzles and games to learn language concepts. Students wrote a program that animated their name, edited strings, included math operations, added Booleans, variables, functions and arrays to JavaScript code.

At Maple Point Middle School, BCIT students heard from guest speakers that work in the technology industry,



Students work on coding projects at Poquessing Middle School in December.

according to BCIT teacher Siri Sammartino. One student demonstrated a Raspberry Pi, a small, inexpensive, easily programmable open-source computer that is designed for experimentation and exploring new applications. Another student demonstrated her programmable robot, called MIP (Mobile Inverted Pendulum). This robot can be operated through an iPad and move about freely while intelligently avoiding obstacles, balancing objects and transport items across the room on a plastic tray.

Students at Carl Sandburg Middle School learned the basics of JavaScript programming by using a programming language called Blockly (from Google) and Scratch (from MIT), and involved characters from such popular games as Angry Birds, Plants vs. Zombies 2 and Ice Age. Students also created their own version of the recently-popular game Flappy Bird. They were allowed to bring in their mobile

devices to play their own games (example [HERE](#)).

Earlier in the year, seventh-graders at Sandburg designed bracelets using the Blockly language to program a 3-D printer. The students submitted their designs to www.madewithcode.org, another educational coding site geared toward involving girls with programming technology. They received their bracelets a few weeks later from the creators of the site – free of charge.

Sandburg principal Dawn Kelly called the Hour of Code, “Probably one of the greatest initiatives ever.”

Members of the Poquessing (Middle School) Computer Science Club invited fourth and fifth-grade students from nearby Ferderbar Elementary School to their computer lab as part of their Hour of Code project. The middle school students tutored the younger students on the Code.org site, helping them navigate the basics of programming and creating simple games. The Ferderbar students also received Hour of Code certificates for participating in the program. Poquessing BCIT teacher Karen Moraes and Ferderbar Library Media Specialist Gery Casterline collaborated on the project. Club members will also be competing in the Bucks County Computer Science Fair in March.

More Info

- Bucks County Computer Science Fair Competition: March 20, 2015
- Video, student games, more photos: www.neshaminy.org

Moving Forward

(continued from page 1)

along with new programs such as world language instruction for the middle schools, which is part of the 5-8 grade configuration plan set to begin in September.

None of this will happen without ongoing assessment and adjustment to ensure current and new educational programs are meeting or exceeding expectations. Principals in all district schools have worked collaboratively to create Strategic Development Plans to support these efforts. As part of this, each principal has been presenting a summary of their plans to the Educational Development Committee during the year.

Though change is never easy, what we are doing now will build the future for our students and the Neshaminy community for years to come. I encourage every parent and community member to stay informed of these changes.

May you have a safe and happy New Year.

- Robert L. Copeland

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

Lesson Plans

One of the foundational tasks of teaching is the process of designing the lesson. This process involves the complex task of matching materials, strategies and content to the needs of the students.

In November, teachers from the elementary, middle and high school levels worked together to develop a lesson design template to support our planning and instruction. The resulting lesson design templates will provide a road map that will guide planning, instruction and assessment for student learning.

Kindergarten Assessments



Samuel Everitt Elementary School teachers, led by principal Andre Modica and reading specialist Colleen Stahl, piloted the Children’s Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA) to students in grades K-2 during the 2013-2014 school year. This assessment was designed by Columbia University and MIT researchers.

Following a short computer based assessment, educators had access to reliable and teacher-friendly reports designed to guide targeted instruction for every student. CPAA also provides easy-to-understand parent reports and instructional activities for the home.

Based on this positive experience at Samuel Everitt, the CPAA was chosen as a district wide assessment for all kindergarten students this year.

Teachers Tackle Tech

The BCIT (Business Computer and Information Technology) Common In-Service Day in November was a successful day of professional development and training. 46 teachers

from seven surrounding school districts attended, including Neshaminy, Centennial, Bensalem, Council Rock, Morrisville, Hatboro-Horsham and Bristol Borough.

Hands-on training and informative expansion of applications were offered in Google Classroom, Google Docs and Google Tools, as well as Alice programming, Scratch, and HTML. The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia distributed financial and economic education materials, and informed teachers of online resources for financial literacy that are designed by the Federal Reserve and available for classroom use.

NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

Pearl S. Buck Elementary

Students help the homeless

Pearl S. Buck Elementary School has partnered with a local group which helps homeless children and their families.

Family Promise of Lower Bucks (FPLB) is a new nonprofit group that focuses on helping families with children get back on their feet, occasionally working in conjunction with Family Services. The mission of Family Promise of Lower Bucks is to mobilize collaboration within the local community by providing shelter, meals and comprehensive services to those in need, while helping them to lasting self-sufficiency.



In October, Pearl Buck students created 450 Breakfast and Personal Care bags. Students in the school participated by bringing in breakfast items, creating greeting cards, and filling one gallon Ziploc bags with granola bars, teas, hot chocolate, oatmeal, mini-cereals, and milk, or toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, and shampoo.

In November, students attended a recess “Dance for Dollars” to benefit FPLB raising over \$1,000. In December, a gift card collection is planned.

Samuel Everitt Elementary

Lesson reaches beyond the classroom

It's one thing to learn about community, as the second-graders in Maureen Baker's class did recently for their Social Studies unit.

This class stepped it up and put their lessons to work, creating fleece blankets with some help from their teacher and parent volunteers that will be donated to an area homeless shelter. Baker purchased the fleece, and the students cut and tied the ends to create the blankets.

Baker said this was a good way to help, especially at this time of the year.

First-graders write to veterans

Students in all three first-grade classes created hand-written cards thanking veterans for their service in November. The cards were handed out at the Maple Point Veterans Day ceremony, which was attended by approximately 90 area veterans.

The card project was a collaboration between teachers Beth Boyle, Kerry Bettelli and Bret Wells, to use as part of a lesson on history, community service and of course, writing.

One of the Army veterans, Theresa Abromowitz, was so impressed with the effort that she visited the students at Everitt to thank them in person following the ceremony.



Joseph Ferderbar Elementary

Elf Fund dinner raises \$2799

The annual Elf Fund spaghetti dinner was a big success, with nearly \$2800 raised to help families in the community facing economic adversity. 5th-grade students served meals to over 200 diners at the Poquessing Middle School cafeteria in November.

Another service learning project was participation in the Coats for Kids project in partnership with the Feasterville Rotary Club. Over 150 new winter coats were distributed to kids in the area.

Fourth-grade students walked to Giant supermarket to purchase food items which were organized into holiday gift bags for needy families.

Students write to Navy crew

The entire Ferderbar community has been collecting items for Food4Troops, a local non-profit dedicated to providing necessities for military troops serving overseas and at home.

In addition, students started a letter-writing campaign for crew members on the USS Carl Vinson, a Navy aircraft carrier. The letters will be delivered by Lt. Justin Brown, son of principal Judy Brown, who is a Navy pilot serving on the carrier.

Oliver Heckman Elementary

Teddy Bear Day for charity

Students and staff collected \$380.00 for the Penndel Food Bank by paying \$1 for the privilege of bringing a favorite teddy bear (or other soft friend) to school.

Heckman unites to help families in need

With help from the Health office, including Colleen McIlhenny, RN and Jeanne Drake, LPN, 14 families received gifts for their children as well as a holiday meal.

The Middletown Community Foundation donated a \$50 gift card for each child, and the Langhorne Business Association provided numerous gifts for a local family.

Many current and former Heckman parents as well as Heckman staff also provided gifts. Three Heckman families were also included in a \$6400 Sons of Italy holiday drive, which helped 32 families altogether.

Heckman students and staff also gathered and donated winter gloves, socks and hats to an orphanage.

Herbert Hoover Elementary

Pennies for Paws

As a community service project, students and staff at Herbert Hoover Elementary School helped one group that is easily forgotten during the holiday season - shelter pets.

Since early November, the Hoover community gathered pet supplies - water bottles, food, crates, blankets, leashes, collars, toys, cleaning supplies, and even gift cards to local pet stores.

In addition, students dropped their spare change in jars, which will be tallied and donated to local animal shelters.

along with the supplies. Each wing of the school (hallway) had its own jar, and the students with classrooms in the



wing with the highest donation won an extra recess.

Hoover guidance counselor Christie Wood, a self-described animal-lover, is running the program. Christie said, "This is a wonderful event that will provide some happiness to our furry friends during the holidays."

"We want to provide 'presents' for our lovable animals that are still waiting for their 'forever' home," she said.

Lower Southampton Elementary

Families go to school

Over 134 families visited classrooms at Lower Southampton during American Education Week in November. Schools throughout the district invited parents and the community to see education at work in Neshaminy during the annual event.

Spirit of the holidays

Students, their families and the staff at Lower Southampton prepared for the holidays with several special projects.

Students and teachers incorporated '12 days of kindness' into their daily routines, where each day had a 'kind act' for students and staff to remember throughout the day.

The school created a 'Giving Tree' with ornaments each describing a gift to purchase for a needy child. With the proceeds, over 20 families received a happy holiday through the generosity of families and staff members.

The Sons of Italy also donated gift cards and shopping vouchers that allowed an additional 15 families to receive holiday packages.

Staff members donated \$5.00 in order to wear jeans on two Fridays in December. The donations went towards the Giving Tree and to help families who couldn't afford to pay for field trips.

Walter Miller Elementary

December Community Service Project

During the month of December, students at Walter Miller organized a Holiday Service Project. Students collected items to help stock Mary's Cupboard, a local food pantry. Mary's Cupboard, located in Levittown, is a food pantry that provides items for individuals and families in emergency situations.

2nd-graders shop for charity

Second-grade students went on a field trip in December - but this wasn't your average trip to a museum.

With nearly \$1000 to spend from a fund-raiser in the school, the children, their teachers and

parent chaperons took school buses to the Target store in Langhorne to buy holiday gifts for families in need.

Local media and a crew from Action News (Channel 6) joined them.



Albert Schweitzer Elementary

Penny Drive

The Student Ambassadors and officers at Albert Schweitzer, under the direction of Mrs. Mary Ellen Pulak, organized a Penny Drive. The Ambassadors wanted to provide a special holiday to needy children of our school community, so they encouraged their schoolmates to bring in loose change. They kept track of donations for each homeroom by counting the change daily.

Once the drive concluded, items were purchased for identified families. The students wrapped the items and gave them to the families. Congratulations to our students for identifying a worthy cause and doing something to make a difference!

Holiday Helping Hands

Each Holiday Season, under the organization of school counselor Beth O'Driscoll, the Schweitzer staff, PTO, The Middletown Foundation, members

of the Queen of the Universe Parish, and the Notre Dame High School Varsity Cheer leading Squad join together to provide Holiday assistance to those in our school community who are in need. Thanksgiving Baskets and Christmas help are offered to families.

This year, ten families were identified to receive Thanksgiving turkeys and pies, as well as holiday gifts for children. It is our pleasure to partner with community organizations to brighten the holidays for families in our community.

Maple Point Middle School

Holiday food drive

The annual Maple Point Middle School Student Council Thanksgiving Food Drive ended with parents and students unboxing, organizing and sorting hundreds of donated items that fed 40 families in the Neshaminy community with a complete Thanksgiving meal.

The drive started in early November. Students in different



homerooms (Houses) were asked to bring specific items in order to create a full menu for each of the families, from sweet potatoes and vegetables to cranberry sauce and stuffing. Once the drive was complete, the items were placed into decorated boxes along with some basic cooking supplies such as disposable roasting pans.

In addition to the 40 meals, over 2,000 pounds of additional food donations were collected for the Emergency Relief Association of Bucks County.

The non-perishable food donations were coordinated by the Student Council, co-advised by Neil French and Jason Pienta. The turkey donations were coordinated by the Maple Point PTO. Home-made baked goods were also provided by Girl Scout Troop 2978, which consists of students from Maple Point.

Veterans attend ceremony

Over 90 area veterans attended the 13th annual Veterans

Day ceremony in their honor Friday November 7. Eighth-grade students sponsored and attended the event, which was also viewed by the rest of the school via a live television feed. The event included a pre-ceremony reception for the attending veterans; displays; patriotic choral selections; speeches from invited guests State Rep. Frank Farry and Gerald Schmidt, a veteran and father of Maple Point teacher Anne Schmidt (one of the organizers of the event); a roll-call for each veteran, student reflections, and as a finale students and veterans posed around a large flag painted on the field outside the school following the ceremony.

Poquessing Middle School

Students accept 'Rachel's Challenge'

Sixth-grade students at Poquessing Middle School gathered in the auditorium to hear and contemplate some powerful lessons drawn from the life

and premature death of Rachel Scott, a 17-year-old student who was the first victim of the Columbine massacre in 1999.

The lessons came from Rachel's Challenge, a nationwide educational outreach program designed to prevent teen violence and bullying based on the writings and life of Scott. The program has reached over 17 million people in live settings since it was started shortly after the Columbine tragedy.

Keyona Williams, a certified speaker with Rachel's Challenge, presented a combination of photos, videos and narrative to challenge students to create a "chain reaction of kindness and compassion."

The goal of the program is to have students accept 5 challenges:

Dream big and believe in yourself

Be kind to others

Practice 'positive gossip'

Show appreciation for those you love

Be the answer

Each challenge was illustrated examples from Rachel's own diary or life stories. At the end of the program, students were invited to sign a large banner promising to accept the challenges.

Sixth-grade students last year also viewed this pro-



gram, and the school has established a 'Friends of Rachel Club,' which is organizing various team-building and service projects to advance the ideals of Rachel's Challenge throughout the school community.

Carl Sandburg Middle School

Rally includes games, pies in the face

A highlight of the Sandburg school-wide positive behavior program (SPIRIT) was celebrated at the end of December with a pep rally in the gymnasium.

Students who earned SPIRIT cards during the fall for positive acts were eligible to compete in various games for prizes during the rally. Staff members joined in the fun by playing a game of musical chairs - the losers of which were given a shaving cream 'pie' in the face by students.

Staff members also collected points for their own positive acts during the fall, competing against each other by splitting into two teams and tallying the points.

Principal Dawn Kelly said the purpose of the program is to get the entire Sandburg community to display positive behavior through "everything they do every day."

The program is in its third year, and Kelly says discipline problems among the student body has declined during that time.

Neshaminy High School

Students earn college credit

Neshaminy High School partnered with Gwynedd Mercy University to offer college credit for specified courses. These courses are offered through the Business, Computer and Information Technology (BCIT) Department at the high school where students may choose to participate in the Dual Enrollment Program. This year, 35 students are participating in the program and will receive three undergraduate credits from GMU in June for each specified course.

Students may enroll in more than one BCIT Dual Enrollment course and graduate high school with a maximum of twelve college credits. As some students have multiple BCIT classes, the total Dual Enrollment processed this year is 41 courses among 35 students. These credits are transferable to other colleges and universities.

The high school courses offered for dual enrollment are:

- Accounting III, Honors (GMU Principles of Accounting ACC 106)(3 credits)

- Accounting II (GMU Principles of Accounting ACC 105)(3 credits)
- Information Technology II (GMU Introduction to Desktop Computing CIS 101)(3 credits)
- Microeconomics, Honors (Gwynedd-Mercy University, Microeconomics ECN 102)(3 credits)

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:

- Flute: Kaitlyn Sibre, Tierra Fogg, Payton Kelly, Jacklyn Campos
- Oboe: Katie Benson
- Clarinet: Danny Aslanian, Jarod Mellus, Chris Thomas, Sarah Boyle
- Alto Sax: Becky Raffin
- Tenor Sax: Joe Stanford, Drew Luniewski
- Baritone Sax: Andrew Northrup
- Trumpet: Adam Victor, Schuyler Janzen, Alex Dixon
- French Horn: Stephanie Rue, Stephen Hopkins
- Trombone: Josh Hartley, Evan Kelbaugh, Skyla Martz
- Euphonium: Christina Chen, Tyler Ebinger
- Percussion: Samantha Lawson
- Violin: David Kim, Valerie Fortouna
- Viola: Amaya Christie, Dana McCabe
- Bass: Liz Mooney

Dodge ball tourney nets 80 food baskets

The annual NHS Charity Dodge Ball Tournament was held Wednesday December 17. Eight teams competed, and students even had the chance to compete in some rounds against a team of staff members.



The tournament is the finale to a month-long charity event in which NHS students and staff collected food items that

were made into holiday baskets for needy families in the Neshaminy community. Donors earned one vote for which staff members would participate in the dodge ball tournament by donating a food item in the 'Hunger Games Food Drive.

Admission to the tournament was the donation of a canned food item, or \$2 to be used toward purchases for the baskets. In addition, students in the school's Interact club baked and packaged over 100 boxes of home-made cookies which were added to the baskets.

NHS foreign language teacher Richard Kain, one of the organizers of the tournament, said enough food was collected to make 80 baskets. Other NHS clubs that assisted with the drive include the Student Council, the Environmental Club, the Interact Club, Family Consumer Science Classes, Faculty Donations and Gift Cards and many, many NHS students.

Business students win awards

Neshaminy High School FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) Club competed in the Region 12 FBLA Competition at Delaware Valley College on December 18. This



competition was attended by numerous Bucks County high schools, and this year Neshaminy High School had 110 students participating as FBLA club members. 49 were named regional winners.

FBLA is a nationally recognized organization that promotes business and technology leadership in high schools across the United States.

A majority of the regional winners, 31 students, are now eligible to attend the FBLA State Competition at the Hershey Lodge, in Hershey, Pennsylvania in mid-April. State winners will have the opportunity to compete at the national level, this summer in Chicago.

Basketball tourney honors late teacher

NSD middle school social studies teacher Deby Recupido, who died in June 2014 at the age of 60, was memorialized with a holiday basketball tournament in her name at the high school in December.

Deby, a resident of Langhorne who most recently worked at Maple Point Middle School, was very active in the school community as both a teacher and advisor for school clubs.

She was also a major supporter of district athletic teams who would attend many games along with her husband Fred, a district employee who also works as the timekeeper at NHS basketball games.

The first annual Deby Recupido Memorial Holiday Basketball Tournament was held December 29 and 30. The boys basketball team defeated their SOL rival Upper Merion on the first night, then went on to defeat Philadelphia Public League rival Abraham Lincoln HS to take the tourney title the second night.



Photo courtesy J.S. Garber

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