



## Middle school debate students question everything

During an election year that been marked by some rather uncivil discourse, students at the three District middle schools are learning how to tackle issues without tackling each other in the process. Seventh-grade students in the Public Speaking and Debate class are learning how to examine issues that are directly related to them as well as analyzing issues that impact society.

In the course, students explore topics through speeches, discussions and debate. In the speech unit students choose a topic for which they have great passion and then share this passion with their classmates in an effort to affect change.

Topics addressed include environmental issues such as pollution, recycling and wildlife to social issues such as homelessness to mental and physical health matters such as bullying, self-harm, depression, abuse and smoking. Students are encouraged to take action on issues presented to them by their peers.

Issues are also brought to the forefront in the Discussions Unit through fishbowl and Socratic methodologies where students

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## Heckman, Lower Southampton to close

### Time of transition for elementary schools

As the new Tawanka Elementary School building takes shape, the Neshaminy School Board voted to close both Oliver Heckman and Lower Southampton Elementary School at the end of the current school year. About 170 residents showed up at a special Board meeting on April 12, and about 32 spoke about the closings, mostly regarding Heckman. The final vote was 9-0 to close Lower Southampton and 5-4 to close Heckman.

Both closures are part of the District's Road Map plan, which includes the Tawanka construction as well as energy-saving and safety improvements to other District buildings including work already completed at Albert Schweitzer ES, Herbert Hoover ES, and Carl Sandburg MS. More improvements are scheduled to begin this summer at Poquessing MS and Joseph Ferderbar ES.

Lower Southampton and Oliver Heckman were targeted for closure both due to their location (in proximity to the new Tawanka) and the amount of improvements they would have needed to bring them up to modern standards of comfort, utility and safety. Lower South, built in 1951, is the oldest school in the District. It was improved once to add extra classrooms and a gymnasium in 1966. Heckman opened in 1966 and has never had extensive renovations or additions.

Samuel Everitt Elementary School was closed at the end of the 2014-2015 as part of the Road Map as well with students transferred to other schools in the Levittown area. With the closures, plus the new construction and the transfer of the fifth grade to the District's three middle schools, the utilization of the schools will more closely match the student population, which has declined steadily over the past 20 years.

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## UPCOMING MEETINGS

**Tuesday May 3**

*Special Meeting and Public Work Session  
7 pm*

**Monday May 16**

*Board Facilities and Finance Committee  
6:30 pm*

**Tuesday May 17**

*Board Public Meeting, 7 pm*

**Tuesday May 24**

*Board Educational Development Committee  
Meeting, 6:30 pm*

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

*Please consult the Neshaminy district web site for  
any updates and/or additions.*

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Mike Morris	2
Robert Sanna	2
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## Debate

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examine issues that affect them directly such as school uniforms and single gender classrooms, to more complex social issues on parenting and crime.

As students build confidence to speak out on issues, they transition to the Debate Unit for their Public Forum Debate. This transition requires students to use critical thinking and logic-reasoning skills to effectively debate in what is essentially a "mental throw-Down!" Students research both sides of an argument to defend one side while citing research and sticking to the facts without getting personal - some would argue much unlike our presidential debates!

By having an open dialogue on controversial issues, we break down barriers that divide us and learn conflict resolution skills through an academic approach. Students of all backgrounds and experiences flourish. We create a microcosm of real-world voters and policy-makers alike as students are exposed to the many consequential outcomes of laws and policies. Mostly students know they can affect change by learning the issues, seeing a global perspective, learning where they stand, and adopting the idea that issues are not static. Students begin to identify their place in this world. Self-awareness and global awareness are key to being productive citizens. So, yes, 7th grade students are on their way to changing the world!

- Submitted by Carol Degnan, Maple Point Middle School  
communications teacher

## Hoover teacher honored

Congratulations to Herbert Hoover Elementary School physical education teacher Tara Ring, who has been named a Teacher of the Year by the Southeastern District of the Pennsylvania State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (PSAHPERD). Tara will be honored for this achievement at their annual spring dinner and awards program on April 26, and is now eligible for consideration in the state-wide Teacher of the Year award.



## Transition

(continued from page 1)

The District expects the plan to reap substantial savings and cost avoidance through reduction of administrative overhead, operational costs, as well as possible income from the lease or sale



of the closed schools and their surrounding property. The Bucks County Intermediate Unit currently operates a special needs school at the former Samuel Everitt Elementary School, which nets the District \$309,000 a year in rent.

The next step will be to finalize attendance zones for students in areas near the new Tawanka Elementary School. This process began at a Facilities and Finance Committee meeting on April 18, and will continue at upcoming Public Board meetings as needed. The goal is to reduce the number of families affected outside zones served by Heckman and Lower Southampton as much as possible, and also avoid any family from having to change schools more than once during the Road Map implementation process. A number of scenarios are under consideration, taking into account such factors as building capacities, student transportation times, historic boundaries, neighborhood population trends and special education needs. A final plan will be discussed and approved by the School Board, likely by the end of the current school year.

Once the boundaries are set, the District will begin the process of assigning staff to Tawanka Elementary School, planning the distribution and re-use of educational materials and furniture from the closed buildings to the new school, and finalizing student transportation plans. A search for a principal is currently under way.

## On the web site

More information about the Road Map including project details, timelines, updates, documents, maps, and financial information can be found on the District web site

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

Updates regarding the transition process including documents and a Q&A have also been posted.



## CURRICULUM NEWS

### Hoover repeats as Distinguished Title 1 School

Title I, Part A is the largest single federal aid for elementary and secondary education. The purpose of the grant is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging academic achievement standards that the state has set for all children. Title I funds are used to support an additional Reading Specialist in the five elementary schools receiving Title I Funds.

We are especially proud that Herbert Hoover Elementary School has been designated as a Distinguished Title I school for the second year in row.

### Federal programs support District goals

Title II, Part A is a federal grant meant to increase academic achievement. The purpose for this grant is twofold: 1) increase student academic achievement through strategies such as improving teacher and principal quality and increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in the classroom and highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools; and 2) hold local educational agencies and schools accountable for improvements in student academic achievement. Title II funds have helped the Neshaminy School District afford partnerships with La Salle University and the Penn Center for Educational Leadership, which have been providing us with professional development courses such as "Introduction to Instructional Leadership" for teachers and "Leadership Dynamics" for administrators respectively.

Title III is a federally funded supplemental program that concentrates on delivering language instruction educational programs to students who have a primary language other than English. This program is designed to improve the education of limited English proficient (LEP) children and youths by helping them learn English and meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards. At the elementary level our ESL programs are clustered at Joseph Ferderbar and Pearl Buck Elementary schools. Middle school and high school receive support in their home buildings. ESL instruction is considered a "core subject" and students work with ESL teachers daily.

### ESL program success noted

Dr. Rebecca Reumann-Morre and Ms. Katrina Morrison from Research in Action visited Neshaminy School District in March to meet with English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers Joanna Biello, Michael Brown, as well as Ferderbar Elementary School principal Judy Brown.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has contracted with Research in Action to identify schools demonstrating success in moving English Language Learners (ELL) to proficiency in 5 years as measured by the annual WIDA assessment. Neshaminy was one of 5 districts across PA identified as demonstrating success.

The researchers asked questions about our program. Their report will guide PDE in policy decisions and provided information on best practices to share with other PA school districts.

Neshaminy has about 100 ESL students who receive instruction every day. The top native languages are Arabic, Russian and Spanish.

### Data drives student success

Performance Plus is an assessment management software application used by teachers and administrators in the Neshaminy School District. It provides a virtual file cabinet to collect and store a wide range of assessment data for each student. Once the data is collected and organized, we go to work using the data as a guide when making decisions.

For example:

- A first grade teacher may use the reading data to discuss a child's progress during a parent teacher meeting
- A reading specialist may use grade level data to identify students in need of additional reading support
- A principal may create a chart that shows growth in math performance from 6th to 7th grade for all the students in the building
- Lead teachers and curriculum supervisors may examine students' performance on specific standards measured on the PSSA or Keystone exams to make adjustments in the content and organization of curriculum

Although all of these educators are using the same data, the focus, discussions, and decisions are as varied as the data we collect.

### Second 5-8 report delivered

Dr. Lawrence Martin and Dr. Michael Masko from the Bucks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) #22 presented the second of three planned reports on the transition of the District's fifth grade to middle school in March.

According to the report, which is available for viewing on the District web site,

*"We continue to observe the benefits of the comprehensive, research-based planning process that was begun in February 2014, nineteen months before the middle school changes were implemented. Our observations and the evidence collected continue to affirm that the planning process provided a strong design for the middle school transition while addressing community concerns."*

The report outlines progress in 8 key areas such as academic progress, school climate, social acclimation, transportation and support services. The report also examined key subject areas such as the 5-8 reading initiative, the 1:1 iPad technology program and the world language program.

As part of the evaluation, the BCIU created an online poll for parents of fifth-graders to gather feedback in all these areas. About 200 parents responded, for the most part giving positive feedback. Among the few areas of concern the parents expressed was the amount of homework their children face each night, as well as a desire to increase the number of co-curricular activities available to fifth-graders.

## NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

### District

#### Neshaminy Health Fair draws hundreds

Scores of families attended the first-ever Neshaminy Health Fair March 30 at Herbert Hoover Elementary School, enjoying a variety of activities, exhibits and giveaways. The fair was sponsored by the Neshaminy Certified School Nurses, who set up displays of their own filled with information for families as well as career information about nursing. Families had the opportunity to learn CPR basics, get their blood pressure measured, and even take advantage of a free professional neck massage.

Many community groups and businesses had displays set up, including medical professionals, fire and EMS services from Penn del and the William Penn Fire Company, Middletown Police, the Lions Club, and several local and county social service agencies.



#### 2nd annual STEAM Expo another high-tech hit

The second annual STEAM Expo drew hundreds of families to Neshaminy High School April 7 for a night of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math.



The Expo has several goals - to excite students about the expanding world of technology and science; to showcase STEAM curriculum in all Neshaminy schools; to give older students the chance to share their knowledge and excitement of STEAM subjects with their younger peers; and to invite STEAM-related community groups and businesses into our schools to share their knowledge and expertise with our students.

Visitors to this years edition had a choice of many activities, including computer games, robotics, TV studio tours, art projects, a number of science experiments, the Star Lab, consumer science demonstrations, and displays from elementary school Science Fair winners.



### Pearl S. Buck Elementary

#### Bucket drums make beautiful music

Leon Jordan presented a bucket drumming assembly in March. He was joined by Randy Sutin (Mrs. Sutin's husband), Jim Stager and Chris Aschman to round out the ensemble. Mrs. Sutin also joined the group for the last song.

Students were presented with a very enjoyable performance, and learned a few things about the various instruments in the ensemble: drums, bass guitar, vibraphone, trumpet and steel





drums. About 30 students were invited to perform on plastic buckets, providing a rhythmic accompaniment while the professional musicians performed a jazz tune. Thanks to the Buck PTO for their support of this assembly.

## Joseph Ferderbar Elementary

### Science projects shared across the grades



A group of 8th grade students from Mrs. Pulford's science class at Poquessing Middle School paid a visit to Ferderbar's kindergarten classrooms to share their inventive and creative roller coaster projects. The middle school students used a variety of materials such as cardboard, tape, straws and paper to construct the towers.

### Ferderbar goes green

Students throughout the school dressed appropriately for St. Patrick's Day in March.



## Oliver Heckman Elementary



### Reading challenge winners get in the game

75 Heckman students, parents and staff went to a Philadelphia Soul arena football game in April to celebrate the school's Reading Challenge. Students read over 200 books during this year's challenge, and each student participating was given a certificate and other prizes. Twelve lucky participants were chosen to attend the Soul game, and were able to go out on the field when the players were introduced.

## Herbert Hoover Elementary

### Pennies for Paws helps shelter pets

Hoover students once again helped out our four-legged friends

by participating in the 2nd annual Pennies for Paws fund raiser in March, benefiting the Women's Humane Society. Among the activities in Mr. Richardson's class was having students bring in pictures of their pets and display them proudly on the door. Some other classes wrote about their pets or a pet they would like to have in the future. Students donated supplies and funds to help the shelter.

The emphasis of this project is to help the animals in shelters still waiting to find their "forever" home.



## Lower Southampton Elementary

### LoSo earns Positive Behavior program banner

Congratulations to the staff at Lower South as they have been awarded a banner marking a top score on their School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (SWPBIS) program. The program, which is administered by the Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support Network, scores schools on their positive behavior programs. The banner will be presented during a conference in Hershey on May 5 and 6. Carl Sandburg Middle School will also be receiving a banner for their program at the conference.

### Talent abounds during annual show



Students and teachers alike took to the stage in late March for the annual 'Putting on the Hits' show held at Poquessing Middle School.

## Walter Miller Elementary

### Miller makes PSSA time a little brighter

Keeping students motivated and focused can be a challenge during PSSA testing time. Many schools have adopted a number of games, incentives and slight alterations of the rules to add a little fun on testing days - everything from post-test dance exercises to

pretzel parties. Walter Miller is no exception, with a number of fun activities for students to look forward to each day:

- Week 1- Tuesday - Kickoff Day! Wear Miller T-shirt or a shirt the same color. Wednesday – Hard Candy Day! Bring in Life Savers/mints/hard candy. Thursday – Sports Day! Wear your favorite team shirt. Friday - Neshaminy Pride Day! Wear all blue and red for our District's colors.
- Week 2- Monday - Wear All One Color Day! Wear your favorite color or whatever you would like, but be dressed head to toe in that one color. Tuesday - Mix Match Day! Wear colors and patterns that don't match, etc. Wednesday – Walter Miller Pride Day! Wear Miller T-shirt or a shirt the same color.

### Cancer-fighting drive honors a Miller family

On March 11, Miller staff and students were encouraged to wear blue to unite for a future free of colon cancer. Collections took place in classrooms on Friday morning. A donation of \$1,690 was made to Face Off Against Cancer in memory of the mother of a Miller student who lost her battle with cancer.

Face Off Against Cancer provides assistance to cancer patients and their families directly. Contributions make the biggest impact by helping to offset some of the medical costs these local families have to absorb as they Face Off Against Cancer.

## Albert Schweitzer Elementary

### Lucky leprechauns help fund a trip to the zoo



In March first-grade students held a Saint Patrick's Day Leprechaun Breakfast to earn money for an upcoming field trip to the zoo. Among the activities: students ate Lucky Charms cereal or Cheerios with green-dyed milk and participated in games and other activities.

### Reading gazebo installation finished

A gazebo purchased with money obtained from a 2014 Lowe's Toolbox for Education grant of about \$2800 has been installed and students are now able to use it as a quiet spot to spend some quality reading time. Parent volunteers helped lay the brick foundation for the structure in February, and the District Facilities staff put it together and installed it shortly after. The project also included the installation



of a raised garden box to be used for various planting projects.

## Maple Point Middle School

### Entire school rallies for Villanova star Arcidiacono

An enthusiastic crowd of students from all grades filled the stands during a rally for Maple Point alumnus Ryan Arcidiacono as his Villanova University basketball team was getting ready to compete in the NCAA national championship in April. The students, some wearing Villanova shirts and hats, held hand-made signs as they loudly offered their support in front of a group of TV cameras and photographers from local media as well as school staff members.

Arcidiacono attended Maple Point in ninth grade (which was a middle school grade then) before moving on to Neshaminy High School. He graduated in 2012.



Arcidiacono acknowledged a photo and a video taken of the rally during the tournament, which was emailed to his family by Maple Point athletic director Skip Mason the day before the Final Four game. Villanova went on to win the championship against North Carolina, with a now-famous buzzer-beating, game-winning throw by Villanova's Kris Jenkins assisted by none other than Ryan Arcidiacono.

### 6th-grade artist honored



Zachary Vasquez was honored in a ceremony at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) in Doylestown in March for his artistic and creative achievements while in 5th grade at Pearl S. Buck Elementary. Each year, student artwork is selected from each public and private school across Bucks County to represent the Neshaminy art department at the BCIU. His artwork, an oil pastel drawing of a robot titled Robomoonanator 2.0, will be on display in the student art gallery located at the BCIU for the next year.



## Poquessing Middle School

### Middle school students win media awards

On Friday, March 18, Academic Enrichment students from Maple Point, Poquessing and Sandburg Middle Schools competed in the Buck County Computer Fair at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit in Doylestown.

Sandburg had the third place winning team of Sarah McManus and Charlotte Spina in the Digital Movie category, Poquessing took second place with the team of Grant Harm, Dan Gutman, and Fred Miglo and Maple Point had a first place winner in the Digital movie category, Sophie Laurence. Maple Point also had a first place winner in the Animation category, Jenna Muller. Both Sophie and Jenna will compete in a state competition in May.

### Select Choir honored at PMEA conference

The award winning Select Choir was honored by performing for state music educators at the Pennsylvania Music Educator's Association Annual State Conference. Dr. Gloria Hancock, Acting Superintendent of Schools, accompanied by Principal, Joann Holland presented a plaque to Director Jason Leigh and the esteemed middle school performers. The trip to Hershey was made possible with the support of the Poquessing Music Boosters and parents.

## Carl Sandburg Middle School

### Swimming pool re-opens with a party

The swimming pool at Carl Sandburg Middle School reopened at the beginning of April after several months of renovations. The school celebrated with an after-school pool party attended by about 135 students and a number of staff members.

The renovation was part of the GESA (Guaranteed Energy Savings Act) project completed over the summer at Sandburg and two other schools to modernize their infrastructure and improve energy efficiency. As the name implies, the District is guaranteed to enjoy an energy savings over a period of years under this state program as a result of the completion of these projects by qualified contractors.

Swimmers have been sharing the swimming pool at Poquessing Middle School while the Sandburg pool renovations were under way. Now that the Sandburg portion of the project is complete, work will shift to the Poquessing pool where a similar project has already begun. That work is scheduled to be complete by the start of the 2016-2017 school year, and the District will once again have two upgraded pools for use.

At Sandburg, the pool filtration system was replaced with a more efficient, modern unit. The HVAC system was replaced, and a new ventilation system delivers increased air flow with less humidity



in the pool area. New high-intensity LED lighting improves the brightness in the room with dramatically lower energy cost than previous lights. New windows and roofing also increase energy efficiency while keeping swimmers and spectators comfortable no matter what the weather outside. The pool was drained and re-grouted, and the walls were re-painted. Sound-dampening material was also installed on the ceiling.

The pool renovations at Poquessing will be similar with the exception of the filtration system. New pumps and filters were installed on that pool several years ago, so an upgrade is not needed at this time.

## Neshaminy High School

### 180 guests enjoy 4th annual Senior Ball

About 180 Neshaminy area senior citizens turned out for the fourth annual Senior Citizen Ball at Neshaminy High School Friday April 15. The purpose of the event is to give seniors their own prom, complete with decorations, music, dancing, food, and even a King and Queen of the ball. The theme this year was 'An Evening in the Orient,' and Gym 1 at the high school was decked out with red and black balloons, paper lanterns, bamboo plants, and other decorations hand-made by students.



The Ball is a project of the NHS Student Council and the Service Learning Club, and admission for the senior guests was free. Much of the food and beverages was donated by NHS families, local businesses and grocery stores. Students and seniors alike danced together to music that ranged from Big Band to classic rock and

current party standards, including a number of line dances.

Newly engaged couple Mary Valeri and Harold Ruent were crowned Queen and King of the Ball, and celebrated by dancing to the music of Frank Sinatra.

### 1st NHS MiniTHON nets \$15K in donations

Neshaminy High School held its first-ever MiniTHON Saturday April 16, and raised \$15,002.85 in pledges and donations for the Four Diamonds Fund, which supports research and care to fight pediatric cancer. The MiniTHON is a high school counterpart to the enormously popular THON dance marathon at Penn State University, which has raised millions of dollars for cancer research and care over the past several years.



The MiniTHON had approximately 110 participants, and was the brainchild of two seniors who came to administration with the idea, Abby Bedesem and Maria Palmieri. Planning started during the last school year, and over 30 staff chaperons helped out.

The corporate sponsors were Rooney Family Screen Printing and Embroidery, The Newtown Athletic Club, RJ's Bagels in Yardley, Peppi's Pizza, Uncle Bill's Homestyle Deli and Country Market, A Taste of Philly Soft Pretzels, J Inflatables, and Zeeno's Pizza.

Dozens of students spent six hours dancing to music from a DJ and playing games, and invited their families and the public in to share the final hour of their mini-marathon. Students had been collecting pledges for MiniTHON, which were added to a \$970.21

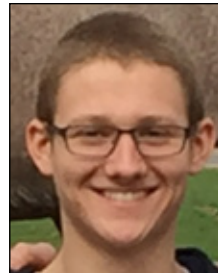


donation from a 'No Shave November' contest at NHS, during which students and staff could vote on the best facial hair grown by participating faculty members by making a donation.

During the final hour of MiniTHON a special guest joined the crowd - NHS alumnus and Villanova basketball star Ryan Arcidiacono made an appearance along with his family members, posing for photos with students, faculty and administrators, and even shooting a few hoops with some of the younger children in attendance.

### David Kneiss honored as 'Swimmer of the Year'

For NHS senior David Kneiss, breaking school swimming records had become a habit. With the season now over, he is the current Neshaminy record-holder in five events, the 50, 100 and 200 yard freestyles; the 100 yard butterfly and the 100 yard backstroke. In addition, he is a member of relay teams that hold records in the 200 medley relay, 200 freestyle relay and 400 freestyle relay, giving him a total of eight school records. No Neshaminy swimmer has achieved this number of records in so many events.



For his accomplishments, David was named the Swimmer of the Year by the Bucks County Courier Times in April.

### Government class gets an insider view of D.C.

The NHS Advanced Placement Government class under lead teacher of social studies David Heaney recently spent two days in Washington D.C. The students were in the places and seeing the people they have been reading about in the text book all year. Congressman Mike Fitzpatrick met the group on the first day to give them a special tour of the Capitol building. Students were able to sit on the House of Representatives floor during the visit.



The following morning the group sat in reserved seats to hear oral arguments before the Supreme Court. Students and chaperons witnessed the judicial process as lawyers presented their cases while the justices asked questions about the case points and their relationships to constitutional law. Afterward, they took a guided tour of the Supreme Court building.

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