

The Wallingford-Swarthmore District Newsletter

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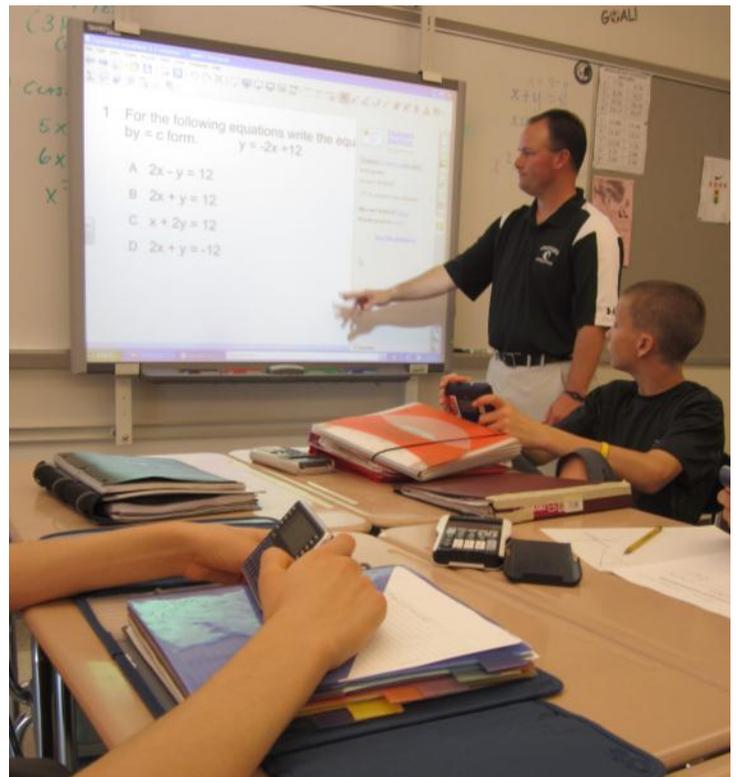
Vision Team Focuses on District's Tech Future

With Mark Finlayson's arrival at WSSD four years ago as Director of Instructional and Information Technology for WSSD came a major emphasis on upgrading technology across the District. "We were really behind in 2008," says Finlayson, "but now we are moving into a leadership position among school districts in Pennsylvania. We have been getting calls from other districts asking 'how are you doing this?', and this year, we had four faculty members give leading edge presentations at the PA Educational Technology Expo and Conference."

WSSD is working to ensure planned and continuous improvement that identifies the future instructional technology needs of our schools. Constituted in fall of 2011, the Technology Vision Team is a primary resource for achieving this goal. The TVT's 25 members -- students, teachers, parents, and administrators -- have met four times to strategize data collection, investigate and discuss findings, and recommend future directions.

Among the TVT's findings were many positive observations endorsing the way the District is employing technology - high marks for communication and responsiveness to teacher and student needs, kudos for teacher training opportunities and programs, and endorsement of the systematic upgrades which have dramatically expanded learning and teaching technologies.

The District has made major upgrades in the quality of laptop computers used in its classrooms. Outdated equipment had been replaced by new leased computers, and the proportion of owned computers is



SHMS Math Teacher Brian Fili uses the SMART Board in his Algebra 1 classroom to quiz students, who record their answers on SMART Response XE handheld devices furnished through a grant from the Foundation for Wallingford Swarthmore Schools.

down to 20%. Leasing computers reduces overhead and obsolescence, and the District will continue toward full leasing of computers.

Superintendent Rich Noonan sees the need for con-

(Continued on page 7)

WES Reconstruction Nears Completion

Wallingford Elementary School Principal Ellen Milgrim recently toured the construction site at her school with Lee Muchinsky, Project Supervisor for Reynolds Construction Management (left) and Jim Hardy, WSSD Supervisor of Operations (middle). The project is on schedule for students and classes to move into the new and renovated facilities at WES by the start of the 2012-2013 school year in September.



Celebrating Putty Willets



Left to right: SRS Teacher and World of Work School Coordinator Elma Jones, SRS Principal Dr. Angela Tuck, Putty Willets, Superintendent Rich Noonan, and SRS Teacher and World of Work Coordinator Renee Strehle.

On April 27, SRS hosted a surprise tribute to Alice "Putty" Willets, a pillar of the Swarthmore community and the longtime organizer of Swarthmore-Rutledge School's World of Work in which SRS 5th graders travel with members of the Swarthmore Rotary Club to visit stores and businesses in Swarthmore for the morning. At the conclusion of this year's WOW program in the SRS auditorium, organizers presented Putty with flowers and a commemorative plaque. Putty is a 1943 Swarthmore HS graduate who played for more than a decade on the US Women's Field Hockey and Lacrosse Teams. She was a highly successful coach and district Phys Ed teacher who was later elected to the Temple University, US Women's Lacrosse, and US Women's Field Hockey Hall of Fame. A tireless community advocate, Putty established the Dew Drop Inn senior center in Swarthmore.

Democracy in Action at WES

Fourth grade students at Wallingford Elementary School welcomed Carol Aichele, Secretary of The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, when she recently visited a special mock "legislative session" at WES.

Under the tutelage of the Fourth Grade team, including Rebecca Berman, Jeanette Kaplan, Susan Knight, and Dave Mendell, and with the help of enrichment instructor Debbie Wile, the students spent part of this semester studying state government, including how a law is made. The session of the fourth grade's "Legislature" included debate and voting on four bills which had been suggested, drafted, debated, and amended by various students who played the roles of citizens, representatives, and caucus and committee members. Legislation focused on puppy mills, public-funded health insurance, bridge repair and tax credits for electric cars.

Aichele looked on as the fourth grade "Governor" signed several the bills into law, then spoke to the students about Harrisburg and her own job and background, which includes an earlier career as a fourth grade teacher at Agnes Irwin School in Rosemont. The Secretary reciprocated the students' hospitality and invited the class to visit her office when they visit Harrisburg in Spring.



PA's Secretary of the Commonwealth Carol Aichele (above) spoke about her job and answered questions from students at the end of their legislative session.

**Photos and reporting by
Celeste Sheehan**

Meredith Berman, left, and Geraldine Leech celebrate the passage of a bill. Ava Wilson, right, who had voted against the measure, was not as enthusiastic.

SRS Fifth Graders Create Legacy Before Leaving the Nest

Each year, fifth graders at Swarthmore-Rutledge School create a gift to leave the school through SRS's Dimensions in Art program. Fifth grade parent and project co-chair Molly Scott says "Every fifth grade class leaves a piece of art to thank the community, and this year's graduating class wanted to do something using the theme of building a community." The community these fifth graders have helped create will make their neighborhood cheerier, and chirpier.

The fifth graders created twelve "outdoor bird dwellings" which recently were installed along the east side of the SRS building – a site chosen because the lawn and shrubbery under mature yew trees provides an hospitable habitat for birds, and also because the birdhouses will be visible to passersby on Princeton Avenue. Birdhouses



Parent co-chair Maria Elia joined SRS fifth-graders **Grace Hedges, Rory Cody, Tommy Bennett and Perry Sosi** in preparing the students' birdhouses for new occupants.

Lower photo of **Esther Cohen-Eskin** is by **Laura Maola**



vary in configurations, color schemes, and mounting heights, each intended to attract a species common to our area, from sparrows up to screech owls.

"We hope that all different kinds of birds can live together here," said one fifth grader, though her friend worried: "I don't know if birds will want to live next to a school -- it's too noisy."

Parents and teachers facilitated the quest for a project. Co-chair Maria Elia said "We parents helped develop the theme, and we found a wonderful artist to execute the commission." Esther Cohen-Eskin of Havertown designed the project specifically for SRS, creating the

structures with designs on all four sides, which were then completed in broken tile mosaic by the fifth graders. Parent volunteers dug holes and set posts for the houses, and children visited to watch mounting and final assembly of the new community.

Cohen-Eskin has been artist in residence at several schools before working with SRS students; she knows how important it is to incorporate sessions with each class to underscore how each student's ideas and efforts contribute to realization of a collaborative project, from drawing through installation. Each

(Continued on page 8)

Haven Scientists Reach Olympian Heights

How light a structure can hold up a 15 kilogram weight? How long can a plastic bottle rocket stay aloft? From how far away can a trebuchet be accurate? (And what is a trebuchet, anyhow?) Inquisitive students from Strath Haven Middle School set out to answer these questions through their participation in the Science Olympiad. Their answers were just right to bring home 17 medals from the Southeastern Pennsylvania regionals in March at Cabrini College, finishing first overall and qualifying the Haven team for the State competition at the end of April at Juniata College.

The Science Olympiad is a statewide interscholastic competition involving students from grades six through nine, who participate in 23 different events. Some components are prepared beforehand and brought to the competition; others involve preparing for and completing a written test, or performing an activity or project on the day of the competition. This year's building events included constructing a rocket for maximum time aloft, building the lightest balsa wood tower that can hold 15 kg and constructing a trebuchet (a mediaeval catapult) to fling an object furthest with the greatest accuracy. Written tests elicited students' knowledge of rocks and minerals, astronomy, meteorology and forestry.

SHMS Science teacher Shoshanna Gottlieb, who coaches the team along with science teachers Jennifer Gillespie Buccilli and Lisa Cobb and parent Bill Silverstein, says that students started working on their projects in November, meeting after school one or two days a week for two hours. "Starting in January, we picked up the pace, and the kids started staying after school two or three



Students who participated in at least one Science Olympiad tournament include sixth graders Dean DeRosa and Haley Burdette; seventh graders Julia Gyourko, Claire VanDuyne, Daniel Rostovtsev, Ben Troutman, Adi Risbud, Zoe Brown, Magdalia Campobasso, Sarah Wenger, Katie Wenger, Jacob Knauer, Gracein Hoyle, Zoe Peyton-Jones; eighth graders Priya Badri, Alexander Belanger, Emma Belanger, Sam Petrovitch, David Silverstein, Ben Morbeck, Sabir Ahmed, Kevin Yin, Gabe Morbeck, Noah Arnold, Laura Wiltsee, Alex Brown, Colin Gillespie and ninth graders John Harnsberger, Kaitlin Graham, Kirsten Connell, Robbie Beck and Kevin Wang.

days a week. A total of 32 students helped prepare for the events - most were involved in multiple events --and competed in an invitational practice tournament at the beginning of February."

Fifteen of those students, accompanied by alternates, performed wonderfully in the regionals at Cabrini College, placing first overall among 34 middle schools. Medals were awarded for the top four winners of each of the twenty-three events, and Strath Haven earned nine first place, seven second and one third place medals. Strath Haven High School also sent a team to the competition, competing in the high school division. The High School team also went to the State Competition after winning ten medals and placing 5th overall.



SHHS Clubs Expand and Enrich the School Experience

What makes high schoolers want to come to school early, stay late, and give up weekends and evenings of their own volition? Principal Mary Jo Yannacone knows what moves Strath Haven High School students. "Extracurricular programs are what makes a school feel like a family. Clubs help develop social groups, and students create identity and pride and community around activities."

With faculty sponsors, SHHS students run more than 70 organized clubs and extracurricular programs involved in fine arts and performance, games and sports, foreign languages and culture, citizenship and competition, service and social action, science and technology. The number is fairly stable, but Dr. Yannacone points to several organizations that have really taken off recently.

"With the experience of our students in interscholastic Hi-Q and mock trial competition, **Speech and Debate** seemed the next frontier," Dr. Yannacone says. The Strath Haven team, which traditionally participates in the Pennsylvania High School Speech League, took on an additional challenge in forensics this year, says Senior club leader Nick Shields. "It has been fun and competitive this year, as we joined the Catholic Forensics League, which has strong competition. This year Mr. Kahn, a new teacher to SHHS, took over as mentor, along with Ms. Lawrence, which has also been a positive step for the team, as Mr. Kahn has lots of experience and expertise in debate." Debate topics are often based on current events, policy or moral issues, depending on the style of debate, Nick says. Speeches and presentations are another component of the meets, with topics assigned in genres from Persuasive Speaking to Dramatic Interpretation to Poetry to Humorous Interpretation.

Clubs can also have an educational value, like **Kids on the Block**, which takes students off campus to make presentations on inclusion at area elementary schools and preschools. About 20 club members manipulate life sized puppets with physical and developmental differences, interacting with the children. The younger kids love the presentations, and high school stu-



Kids on the Block puppeteers in performance

dents have gotten interested in education careers through the club. Kids on the Block leader and senior Abby Marriott says: "What I love most about KOTB is experiencing the children's reactions to our puppet shows and their genuine desire to understand the differences we all possess. My brother thought that I would enjoy it, so he recruited me my freshman year. He was right -- I have been a member for the entirety of my time in high school."

Robotics has grown into one of Haven's biggest clubs, involving more than 30 students this year, along with four faculty mentors. It attracts a broad range of students to collaborate in a complex effort that pits Strath Haven against 40 to 60 other schools in intense interscholastic competitions. It's not all about science, says SHHS senior and club leader Kirsten Wise: "We have all kinds of roles: drivers, programmers, engineers, technicians, fabricators,

(Continued on page 7)

Technology Vision Team Focuses On Future

(Continued from page 1)

tinuing an emphasis on faculty training. WSSD offers Staff College courses in fall, spring and summer, which is substantially devoted to technology education. "Training has really created a turnaround," Finlayson says. "Teachers have absorbed the information like a dry sponge, and as soon as we got a dedicated technology integrator, they realized that they didn't have to figure everything out on their own."

That Technology Integrator, Xaras Collins-Brown, is perhaps the most significant tech resource in the District. Her "Ask Xaras" online help desk at the WSSD.org website has become a must-visit area for teachers, and she has regular office hours in each of the District's six school buildings each week, providing guidance and teacher support with immediacy and personality that technology vendors can only dream of. In addition to her sessions at Staff College and technology workshops, Collins-Brown offers group and individual technology training, and co-teaches some classes with faculty members district-wide.

The future needs and interests identified by the Technology Vision Team include ambitious pilot projects introducing tablet computers and e-readers, school-wide use of platforms like "Moodle" to expand teacher-student course interaction, expanded opportunities for teacher training, and greater student participation in quality online learning experiences.

Extra-budgetary funding from home and school groups and the Foundation for Wallingford Schools have allowed for direct purchases of technology like SMART Boards, projectors and iPad tablet computers, which can then be "test driven" in schools, providing feedback that enables the TVT to refine best practices.

According to Finlayson, "Early use of iPads in special education turned out to work great, but Apple struggled to support widespread rollouts of tablets in schools just a year ago." Now, he says, Apple has made significant changes and provides much better support for tablets in K-12 educational settings. "They are now meeting the four requirements for success in tablet computer implementation -- volume licensing, mobile device management, an effective filter, and a well-designed cart/docking system. We think tablets have great potential as tools for our students and teachers in the coming years."



SHHS Clubs and Activities (Continued from page 6)

graphic designers, organizers, and scouts to check out what the other teams are doing. I really enjoy seeing it all come together – in six weeks, with limited parts and time, we develop and create the robots for a two-day district competition." As a top team in the district competitions, Strath Haven qualified for the Northeast Regionals, where the team took second place and qualified to compete in the National Championships.

Dr. Yannacone recalls several conversations with visiting students about how their European school systems compare to ours. "I consistently heard their comments that European schools are just for academics, and then students go home. Here, our days continue to bring students together. We have a real sense of community because of the activities they share after class."



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Al Heinle Joins Nether Providence as Principal

Late in April, the WSSD School Board approved the hiring of Al Heinle as Principal of Nether Providence Elementary. When he joins NPE on July 1, Heinle will succeed Principal Jennifer Gaudio, who will be moving into the position of District Director of Elementary Curriculum.

Heinle commented: "I am looking forward to becoming part of such a community-based school, which embraces the ideals of good citizenship, while maintaining high expectations for all learners. I intend to work with all of the school stakeholders to continue to provide a quality education that brings out the best in each individual student, both in and out of the classroom environment."

The new principal was selected among dozens of highly qualified candidates by a committee of NPE parents and staff and District administrators. Superintendent Rich Noonan noted that in interviews, "Mr. Heinle impressed us as an enthusiastic candidate who would bring a personable, knowledgeable, and effective style of leadership to NPE. We believe he will enable us to sustain all those qualities that are treasured at NPE today, and move the school forward to embrace an even broader level of excellence."

Heinle comes to NPE from the Centennial School District in Bucks County, where he has been Acting Principal in one of the elementary schools. He joined Centennial as an Assistant Principal in 2010 after more than ten years as an Elementary teacher in the Rose Tree Media District. He lives in Media. A graduate of Marist College, Heinle holds Master's degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and Gwynedd-Mercy College.



Al Heinle will begin work July 1 as Principal of Nether Providence Elementary School.

SRS's Birdhouse Community

(Continued from page 4)

student took on one side of a birdhouse as his or her personal product. The birdhouse project is an obvious source of pride for the 2012 SRS fifth-graders. They are sure to follow the pattern of other SRS alumni who are frequently spotted returning to the school to visit their legacy artwork, as birds often return to the same nesting grounds year after year.

