



Washington Township Schools

"Making a Difference"

Mrs. Levine Announces Her Retirement

Mrs. Levine, the Principal of Port Colden School, tendered her resignation for retirement to the Board at their February board meeting. As you might expect, the Board accepted it with deepest regret. Mrs. Levine not only serves as Principal of Port Colden School but is also the Director of our District's Child Study Team.

Initially hired in October 2002 as the Principal of Brass Castle School, Mrs. Levine became Principal of Port Colden in 2005, thereby fulfilling a lifelong desire to work with primary-age students. When asked about her greatest accomplishments, Mrs. Levine replied "having the opportunity to implement a continuum of programs for all learners while working to facilitate a common set of goals and ideals for all district employees."

Mrs. Levine plans on spending time with her 4 grandchildren and traveling with her husband, Stu. She also plans on doing occasional part-time consulting in the field of special education. Mrs. Levine's final day in district will be August 31, 2009. If you have an opportunity to stop in and see her prior to that day please do so.

Port Colden School
Brass Castle School

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Mrs. Kelly Mason



New Principal Appointed

Once the announcement was made that the Washington Township School District was hiring a principal for the Port Colden School, over 65 candidates submitted their resumes for consideration. An Ad Hoc committee, composed of parents, secretaries, teachers and administrators, interviewed 8 candidates on March 18th and 19th. The Board's Personnel Committee then interviewed 4 candidates with the goal of moving the finalists forward to the full Board. After the Personnel Committee's thoughtful consideration of all of the finalists and a comprehensive check of references, the Board appointed Mrs. Kelly Mason to the position on March 30th.

Mrs. Mason graduated from Muhlenberg College Magna Cum Laude with a New Jersey K-6 Elementary Teaching Certificate which included a concentration in History. Mrs. Mason then went on to receive her Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Fairleigh Dickenson University and now holds a K-12 Principal's license. She began her teaching career as a 1st grade teacher in the Hillside Elementary School, Allendale, NJ and has taught 2nd grade in the Shafer Elementary School in Nazareth, PA. While at the Hillside School, Mrs. Mason completed her Principal Internship. When asked what one would expect to see when visiting a school in which she was principal she immediately responded, "Smiling children who enjoy coming to school." Mrs. Mason will assume the Principalship effective July 1st. If you have the opportunity to visit the Port Colden School over the summer, please stop in and introduce yourself to our new Principal.

Old Schoolhouse Project Receives Additional Grant



On February 27th our central office received a letter from Dorothy P. Guzzo, Executive Director of the New Jersey Historic Trust, congratulating the district for being selected for a grant in the amount of \$273,800 for the renovation of the Old Schoolhouse. The grant application was written by Denise Jordan, Port Colden school secretary, and Donna Detrick, former guidance counselor for our school. Over the course of the past 8 years Mrs. Jordan and Mrs. Detrick have been tenacious in their goal of obtaining funding for the renovation of the Old Schoolhouse. Thanks to their efforts we have received well over \$830,800 towards its restoration. We now expect to take occupancy by July 2009. The Old Schoolhouse, built in 1869, is an absolute treasure and will continue to be enjoyed by children, parents, staff and community members for many years to come.

Pick Up at Brass Castle

Please note our procedure for the line of cars at Brass Castle during dismissal: We are keeping the students in the front of the building and waiting for the cars to move up to the front of the school before we release your child. Our goal is to keep the students off the sidewalk to prevent any mishaps due to the proximity of the cars to the sidewalk.

If you have to pick up materials inside the building, please park in the parking spaces in front of the school. This will ensure that our line keeps moving in a safe manner. Thank you for your support in keeping our children out of harm's way at dismissal!

Dates to Note

6th Grade Farewell: Tuesday, June 23rd
(This is an early dismissal day)

Final Day of School: Wednesday, June 24th
(This is an early dismissal day)

Child Care will not be in session on the
last day of school.

Stars and Stripes

On March 24, 2009 Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6701, of Washington, presented Brass Castle School with a new American flag that was flown over the White House. The flag will be mounted in the multi-purpose room and will be displayed for the Pledge of Allegiance before assemblies and sporting events.

The VFW also presented certificates to grade 6 students who participated in the Patriot's Pen Contest, an essay competition open to students in grades 6-8. Regional winners were acknowledged: Brittany Heerwagen, first-place winner - who read her essay; and Evan Turner, second place winner.



Pictured from left: Principal Valerie Mattes, Jack Trimmer, VFW treasurer; Evan Turner, second-place winner; Jeff Maury, VFW commander; Brittany Heerwagen, first-place winner; and Ed Case, VFW junior vice commander.

Greek Week Wax Museum

Students in sixth grade recently stepped back in time and became a historical figure from Ancient Greece. Students researched their person, wrote a speech from the character's point-of-view and designed a costume with props that portrayed that character. Students were characters such as Greek Gods and Goddesses, Aristotle, and Alexander the Great. Each student did a spectacular job of being a character from another time period. Visitors to the class "museum" were enlightened as they watched the figures come alive and give his or her speech.



Left to right: Jessica Harrison, Olivia Stuber, Kira Loveatz, Amanda Crampton, Emma Fink, and Paige Childers - Mrs. Galoppo's homeroom.

Keeping Children Safe

During the week of March 23, 2009 second and fourth grade students participated in the Child Assault Prevention (CAP) Project. The CAP project aims to prevent child assault by teaching children to recognize and deal with potentially dangerous situations, and by training teachers and parents to help prevent victimization of children. The program has three components: a parent program, individual classroom workshops for children in 2nd and 4th grade and individual student-discussion groups as needed. Our parent program was held on Thursday, March 19th at 7pm at the Brass Castle library. This program included information on child sexual assault, identification of assault victims, reporting of abuse, crisis counseling skills and a detailed description of the children's workshop.

The classroom workshop combined guided group discussion with a series of role-plays focusing on situations children frequently encounter; * a child against child assault, * adult stranger to child assault and * an assault involving an adult the child knows.

Discussion helps children identify what options they have to protect themselves. The strategies were self assertion, peer support and telling a trusted adult.

Brass Castle's Battles

There was no fooling the competition on April 1st when our fifth and sixth grade students competed in a Battle of the Books competition at Great Meadows Middle School against other area schools. Students read 10 books in addition to their regular school work and met frequently to discuss and challenge each other with questions about the books. Both teams did very well and we're very proud of their hard work!

How many decameters are in 3 kilometers? Our fifth and sixth grade Gifted and Talented students answered questions such as these at the Battle of the Minds county-wide competition at Franklin Elementary School in March. Battle of the Minds is a competition that challenges students with questions in subjects such as history, science, language arts, pop culture, and the arts. Our fifth grade team went to an exciting tie-break round and won 3rd place in the competition and our sixth grade team won 5th place.

Looping in Grades 1/2 & 3/4

Looping is a practice that allows teachers to remain with the same class for a period of two years/grade levels. It requires a partnership of two teachers in contiguous grades. In the looping classroom the teacher becomes the heart of the class with the students as the focus. Looping provides stability and builds a sense of community within the classroom resulting in many benefits that include fewer student absences, fewer discipline problems, and a time-efficient environment.

Currently our District has successfully implemented Grade 1-2 Looping for 9 years. Students in grade 3 will, for the first time, loop with their teacher in September 2009. Parents of kindergarten and grade 2 students are welcome to join us at the Brass Castle School on Wed., April 29th at 7pm for an information session about this program.

Third Grade Pen Pals

Miss Mitchell's third grade class has been developing their writing skills through their correspondence with third-grade pen pals from Orlando, Florida. Miss Mitchell's students have already learned many fun and interesting facts about Orlando. They have learned about the local climate, culture, family traditions of the students, as well as some of the things the people of Orlando are well known for and proud of. In turn, Miss Mitchell's students have shared their own knowledge and experiences of Washington Township and the Port Colden School. This exercise has been important for the students to practice their composition skills as well connect and build relationships with new and interesting people.

My Experience at the Regional Finals Spelling Bee: *A Student Perspective*

By Juan Cornejo

Here I was sitting on the stage at the Lipkin Theatre at Northampton Community College in Bethlehem Township, Pennsylvania with 64 other participants at the Regional Finals Spelling Bee. It felt scary to be on stage, but I was glad to have been assigned #12. With that number I figured I would get an easy word being so high in the order. It was good to get that number too because I wouldn't have to wait that long. I was pretty nervous sitting there and waiting for my turn. I'm glad that I didn't get #65!

Once #11 finished, it was my turn. I walked over to the microphone which was in the middle of the stage. The judges were on the side and I stood facing them. One judge would ring a xylophone if we spelled the word incorrectly. If we spelled the word correctly, he would say "correct". Everyone knew the xylophone was coming because he would hold the stick in his hand.

My first word was bronchospasm. I thought it didn't have the 'h' so I asked for the definition. Once I heard the definition, I realized the word had an 'h'. I said each letter carefully...b - r - o - n - c - h - o - s - p - a - s - p - a - s - m. I looked at the judge. I was hoping he would say "correct". I was hoping I didn't see him pick up the xylophone stick. Phew! It was a relief to hear the judge pronounce "correct"!

After that I advanced five rounds. I was relieved each time I spelled a word correctly. Then came the word that changed my destiny that day - monogamous. Even though I spelled it incorrectly I still had a chance if only one person left in the round would get it right. Then we would automatically start a new round. Unfortunately, that did not happen and I placed second in the competition. I felt that I got so close but I couldn't do it. My mom said I did really well and my teacher said I did a good job - that it was an accomplishment. Overall, I'm glad for the experience and I look forward to the challenge that next year will bring.

A Saturday with Mrs. Casserly and Mrs. Motzenbecker

Have you ever wondered what teachers do on Saturdays? Well, we shop for groceries, catch up with family and, of course, grade papers. Sometimes we have fun, and sometimes we go to school to learn to be better teachers. Mrs. Casserly and I recently did both. We met in Clinton, boarded the 7:45 bus to New York City, rode the subway to 116th Street, and finally walked up Broadway to 120th Street where we were greeted on the corner by graduate students distributing our agenda for the day. As we have done for the past ten years, we were attending the Columbia University Teachers College Reading and Writing Project's "Saturday Reunion."

It is inspiring to see hundreds of teachers gathering for the morning keynote speaker. This year it was Richard Peck, author of the New York Times bestseller, *On the Wings of Heroes*. We then ran- literally- because often the classroom doors close as eager teacher/students seek their favorite speakers. We were lucky! We attended two workshops offered by Lucy Calkins who is one of the experts in Reading/Writing education. She spoke about Reading and Writing Workshops and generally emphasized the importance of students reading, reading, reading and writing, writing, writing! We also heard Carl Anderson, another well known expert, who spoke about individual conferencing with student writers. For our final workshop we separated. Mrs. Casserly learned about using mentor texts to teach writing and I learned about using book clubs as part of reading instruction. It was a great day, but the best part was Monday, when we put our new ideas to work in our classrooms!

Earth Friendly News

Hello, We are Josh and Gianna reporting from the Big Green Castle, a.k.a. Brass Castle Elementary School. Our mission is to make our school more eco-friendly. The first thing we did was to make sure that every room in the school had a recycling container. That was a hard job! We then made signs saying "Paper Only" which we attached to each container. We finished that project by writing and performing a skit about recycling. Mr. Flumerfelt filmed it and it was aired on the morning news show. We are planning a Part 2 of this program.

Did you know that Saturday, March 28th from 8:30pm to 9:30pm the Earth had a rest? We made posters informing students about "Earth Hour" when all lights and electricity were supposed to be turned off worldwide to show support for saving energy and resources. Our favorite day, Earth Day, is coming on April 22nd. While we are trying to make our school eco-friendly, we are asking you to remember to "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rethink" also. Thank you for thinking of our Earth!

Awareness Walk

On Tuesday, May 19th the second graders at Port Colden School will hold an 'awareness walk' to show sympathy and support for families who have lost loved ones and whose loved ones have been stricken with serious illnesses. In lieu of projects focusing on Mother's and Father's Day, these second graders will raise community awareness and understanding about these devastating illnesses. Each class will focus on a certain illness and work toward educating other classes. Students will be researching, writing essays, creating posters, and making banners for the following organizations:

- Ms. Krupka's Class - The Kidney Foundation
- Mrs. Kupcha's Class - The American Cancer Society
- Mrs. Meyerhofer's class - The Brain Aneurysm Foundation
- Mrs. O'Cone's Class - The Diabetes Foundation
- Mrs. Rohmann's Class - The American Heart Association

This worthwhile project will culminate with the awareness walk starting at 1:30 on May 19th at Port Colden School.

Help Your Child Succeed

Is your child uncooperative, working below his or her potential and/or having "melt-downs"? Attend a free workshop to better understand and help your child overcome school and other life difficulties. Workshops take place on the 4th Wednesday of every month from September through May (excluding December) from 1:00pm-2:30pm at Strength for Change, Suite 101, 22 Howard Blvd., Mount Arlington, NJ 07856. No registration is necessary, however, you are strongly recommended to reserve a seat by calling 973-770-7600 extension 1 and leave a message with your name and the workshop date you will be attending.

Workshops are facilitated by either Bernard Ivin, LCSW, or Paul Depinto, LPC, and are designed for parents with children experiencing any of the following: behavioral difficulties, anger and/or other emotional difficulties, school difficulties, attention deficit disorder, depression, bi-polar and/or anxiety disorder.

Workshops participants will learn the three fundamentals of effective parenting: a simple, but extremely effective plan for managing a child's misbehavior; and the number one mistake parents make when handling the "difficult child". Parents will also learn how to discipline their child in a manner that teaches life skills, encourages responsibility and promotes a family atmosphere of respect and cooperation.

Other topics include: strategies for improving a child's school effort and achievement, strategies for reducing sibling conflict and strategies for accessing school and professional resources that may be necessary for a child's wellbeing and life success.

Doors open 15 minutes prior to the start of the program, and doors close once the presentation room is filled to capacity (12 participants in total). Please visit the Strength For Change website www.strengthforchange.com for more information and directions.

Rock 'n Bowl

On March 30th thirty-six sixth graders and their teachers gathered at Oakwood Lanes for an after school "Rock 'N Bowl" event. We all had a great time and raised over \$1300.00 for the local chapter of the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization. The organization serves boys and girls in our community. Also, both Port Colden & Brass Castle Schools host the School-Based Mentoring program sponsored by Big Brothers Big Sisters which benefits some of our students. Thank you again to Mr. Plenge for supporting a fun and worthwhile activity!

Information to Share

If you have a relative, neighbor or friend in New Jersey who is 65 or older or disabled, they may be eligible for the NJ Property Tax Reimbursement Program. This program reimburses eligible senior citizens and disabled persons for property tax increases. The amount of the reimbursement is the difference between the amount of property taxes that were due and paid for the "base year" (the first year that you met all the eligibility requirements) and the amount due and paid for the current year for which you are applying for the reimbursement, provided the amount paid for the current year was greater. You must meet all the eligibility requirements for the base year and for each succeeding year, up to and including the current year to qualify for the reimbursement. The 2007 income limit is \$60,000 or less and the 2008 income limit is \$70,000 or less.

For more information or to receive an application, call the Property Tax Reimbursement Hotline at 1-800-882-6597 or visit: <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/propfrez.shtml>

(All property tax relief program information provided here is based on current law and is subject to change.)