



Washington Township Schools

"Making a Difference"

Teacher of the Year

Washington Township has wonderful teachers, and the seven teachers nominated for the honor of Teacher of the Year exemplifies that fact! The seven teachers nominated for this prestigious award include: Susan Graham, Laura Hawk, Susan Lee, Nancy Mason, Kim Sigman, Pam Slack and Linda Watters. A committee of parents, teachers and Board members selected two finalists from those nominated and they are: Mrs. Slack and Mrs. Sigman.

Mrs. Pam Slack was selected to represent Port Colden School. Mrs. Slack fosters a classroom environment that is both loving and respectful. Mrs. Slack is a master teacher who nurtures her students and helps them to grow not only academically but socially as well. Mrs. Slack has initiated as well as embraced many programs at Port Colden: Responsive Classroom, Guided Reading/Literacy by Design and SMART board technology.

Mrs. Kim Sigman was selected to represent Brass Castle School. Mrs. Sigman is a dedicated teacher who has had diverse teaching experiences working with students in the areas of basic skills, technology, gifted & talented, and classroom teacher as well as now serving as the district's Technology Coordinator. Mrs. Sigman instills in her students a love of learning and gives them the confidence and the encouragement they will need to be lifelong learners. Mrs. Sigman has initiated and involved our students with environmental and community service projects, such as the Project WET Water Festival, the Musconetcong Watershed classroom presentations, and marking of the storm water drains.



Mrs. Slack

Mrs. Sigman

It is no wonder that Mrs. Slack and Mrs. Sigman were nominated by their peers and chosen by the selection committee. Both teachers will attend a luncheon to celebrate Teacher of the Year candidates from all Warren County school districts on May 1st.

Port Colden School
Brass Castle School

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Traffic Control

Thank you to all parents who have been following the traffic flow during drop-off and pick-up at our schools. Thank you also for driving slowly and cautiously. We all need to work together to ensure that our students arrive and leave school safely.

Please remember that the "Do Not Enter" sign at the start of the Brass Castle driveway means just that. Cars should not enter the front circle in the morning until that sign is removed.

At Port Colden, please remember to park in the upper parking lot when picking up and dropping off at all times. Cars should not park near the fencing of the old schoolhouse.

Thank you for doing your part in keeping the safety of our students first and foremost!

**CAUTION
DO NOT ENTER**

Spell On!

We are proud to announce that Juan Cornejo, our district spelling bee champ, has advanced to the Regional Finals in the Express Times 23rd Annual Scripps National Spelling Bee. At the Preliminary to the Regional Finals, Juan was required to take the written portion of the competition by recording 25 words. One point was awarded for each correct spelling. Zero points were awarded for an incorrect spelling. Ninety-two students advanced to the next level of competition.

Juan is a fifth grader in Mrs. Young's class who likes to play sports in his spare time. When asked about his experience Juan says, "I felt nervous at the competition but tried my best." Juan is preparing for the Regional Finals by utilizing the spelling bee website (www.spellingbee.com). He also reports that teachers ask him to spell words when they see him in the hallway, getting on or off the bus, and in the cafeteria.

Goodbyes

The Board recently accepted retirement resignations from two individuals: Brenda Hoppe and Betty Marason. Mrs. Hoppe was hired on December 14, 1998 and worked at the Port Colden School until being transferred to the Brass Castle in September of this school year. Mrs. Hoppe's final day was March 1st. Mrs. Marason was hired on August 22, 2002 and has worked in the Brass Castle School. Her final day will be March 30th.

Mrs. Marason and Mrs. Hoppe were very conscientious employees, they will be missed.

Ms. Tammy Wilson, transportation secretary, was recently appointed transportation coordinator for the Montville School District. Ms. Wilson has worked in district's transportation office since January 7, 2000. We also wish Ms. Wilson well in her new position.

Learning Never Takes a Vacation in Washington Township

Believe it or not, summer is just around the corner. We have been busy planning our summer line-up of programs and would like to provide you with a sneak preview:

Extended School Year - Beginning on June 29th, students recommended for this IEP driven program will attend classes daily during a four week or six week program. This year, we are hoping to partner with the Oxford School District in this endeavor.

Summer School - Summer School begins for students recommended for additional support in core curriculum areas. Dates: July 13th to July 31st.

Summer Enrichment - New this summer is our Summer Enrichment program, which offers identified students opportunities to enrich their knowledge and skills in core curriculum areas in fun and creative ways. Business Basics, Legacy of the Samurai, and Going to Court are a few of the classes being offered. Dates: July 13th to July 31st.

Summer Recreation - Once again, our ever popular Township Summer Recreation program begins. As in the past, students attending the aforementioned programs can also participate in coordinated Summer Recreation programs whenever appropriate. Dates: July 13th to July 31st.

Parents will be receiving information about all of our summer programs in the near future.

"From Oobleck to Diffendoofer"

Read Across America activities abounded at Port Colden. Teachers incorporated Dr. Seuss books into their daily curricular lessons. For example, the students in Mrs. Slack's and Mrs. Rohmann's classes learned that "oobleck" possesses the qualities of a solid as well as a liquid! In Mrs. Kupcha's class students read *Hooray for Diffendoofer Day* and created a pantomime dramatization of the story. At the end of the Day 'The Cat in the Hat' paid a surprise visit to our school.



Brass Castle Students Meet the Challenge!

This year's theme for Read Across America Day was "Building a Nation of Readers". Here at Brass Castle our students faced a challenge from Mrs. Mattes for grades 4-6 to read and research about each of the 50 state flags. Mrs. Mason, who coordinated the day's activities at Brass Castle, created a bulletin board in the front hallway that displayed each flag. As students completed the task, they were allowed to put a sticker on that specific flag located on the bulletin board. If each flag had three stickers (one per grade level) by March 2nd, Mrs. Mattes agreed to serve students lunch and wash their tables that day. Well, our students were up for the challenge! Guess who served lunch and washed tables on Read Across America Day? Other activities for the day included wearing pajamas, guest readers, and a visit from our own Cat in the Hat. Some classes made green eggs and ham. Our PTA provided red, white and blue cupcakes! It was a day to celebrate Dr. Seuss and the joy of reading!



Sneakers Recycled

Hmmm, what to do with those old, worn out sneakers? In an effort to "Go Green" and in conjunction with Earth Day on April 22nd, Mrs. Meyerhofer's second grade class will be collecting old, used sneakers to be recycled through the "Nike's Reuse-a-Shoe" program.

Through the "Reuse-a-Shoe" program sneakers are recycled into playing surfaces such as tracks for track and field competitions. Nike encourages recycling of any brand of athletic shoe. This program was started in 1990 and has collected over 22 million pairs of sneakers and counting! Our goal is to collect and recycle 100 pairs of athletic sneakers between April 1 and April 30, 2009. Look for the bin to be placed near the front doors at Port Colden School.

Humanity is Right up Our Alley!

On March 9, 2009, about 50 fourth graders helped to "strike" out the existing balance that remains on the Habitat for Humanity house under construction in our district.

For the second year, Mrs. Watters has organized this event. Last year the fourth graders were able to raise nearly \$1,000.00. This year, she challenged the students to double that amount. She is pleased to say that the students "bowled a perfect game" by meeting that challenge!

A special thanks goes out to Mr. Plenge, of Oakwood Lanes, for providing the facilities for this worthy event! So, if you have any "spare" change that you don't want left in the "gutter", don't be a "turkey" and donate to this cause.

Happy 100th Day

On Tuesday, February 17th, the Kindergarten classes celebrated the "100th Day of School". In preparation for this special day, the students wrote their numbers to 100, listened to stories, drew pictures of what they would be doing when they were 100 years old and kept track of the 100 days on our class "Counterpillar". Each student also made a special collection of 100 items to display in the classroom.

In order to make the 100th Day more memorable, we included a community service project. We decided to collect \$100 to donate to the Warren County Habitat for Humanity. The kindergarten teachers were overwhelmed by the generosity of our students, parents and staff when the final tally reached \$214.

The students had an exciting 100th Day. Wearing 100 Day headbands, they completed centers about the number "100", received special pencils and enjoyed a treat of ice cream and Oreos provided by Mrs. Cambria, Mrs. Mason and Mrs. Palavido.

Lunch Committee Meeting

(A student's perspective)

Yum! Delicious! A kid's favorite words...I guess besides food! On February 2nd, 2009 I, Kira Loveatz, along with Mrs. Mattes, Mrs. Levine, student representatives from 4th and 5th grade, a parent, two teachers, and the wonderful lunch lady, Mrs. Roberts, herself, were invited by Mrs. Flynn, the district's Business Administrator, to attend a lunch committee meeting.

The purpose of this lunch meeting was to get our feedback on all the things about lunch that we think are good and also about some of the things we think can be improved upon. Let's just say, there were more comments made that expressed what we thought were good compared to the not so good. One of the most important features that we students noted is that the people in the lunch room are very nice. That is very important to us! It was noted that the food is very good, especially the mac and cheese... which is our teachers' favorite too! One area that we thought needed improvement was adding more variety in our lunches. Although we found out that Mrs. Roberts has to follow state guidelines for nutritional content, we would like our lunches to be spiced up a little! So, I almost guarantee you that Brass Castle lunch is going to be on fire! So, if you don't normally buy, now is the time.

Instructional Council

Here in Washington Township School District we have a group of professionals called the Instructional Council. The Instructional Council is comprised of a teacher representative from each grade level as well as administrative staff and a representative from the special areas.

The Instructional Council was formed in 2002 and was started in order to articulate about such matters as curriculum improvements and development, teaching techniques, instructional organizational patterns, experimentation, extracurricular programs, in-service training and staff development, pupil testing and evaluation, philosophy and educational goals of the district, and educational research. The goal of the committee is to strengthen the district's overall educational program.

The Instructional Council meets approximately six times a year, sometimes as separate buildings and sometimes as a district. Some topics that have been addressed over the past few years are: honors and high honors policies, district wide headings, curriculum mapping, professional development, Focused Enrichment, report cards, learner outcomes, and curriculum issues.

The Instructional Council is an effective means for administration, teachers, and staff to bring important issues to the forefront for discussion. It has become a tool that brings the two schools together in a cohesive manner, so we can all work together for the betterment of the education of the children in our district.

Garden Club is Ready to Spring Forward

Does your child have a love of nature and plants? If they do, then the Garden Club is the place for them this spring! The Garden Club is open to all students in grades 4 through 6. The club meets on Tuesdays from 3:30 until 4:25. During the fall and spring months, students work on flower beds in the front of Brass Castle School. They also tend the plantings between the library and the 5th grade wing. The club will resume in April after spring break.

Members get the opportunity to learn about weeds and their differing root systems. There is even a Garden Club Weed "Hall of Fame" for the most common and most difficult weeds. Garden Club members also learn the names, characteristics, and growing habits of the bulbs and flowers they plant. Working together and being in the fresh air is fun for the students and the adults alike. Mrs. Balzer and Mrs. App, both avid gardeners, are the advisors for the Garden Club.

Battle of the Minds

Do you know what the initials UCLA stand for? Fifth and sixth grade Gifted and Talented students will be answering questions such as these and competing against other area schools in a Battle of the Minds competition on March 26th at Franklin Elementary School. Students will be working as a team to answer questions about history, math, English, and other subjects.

Battle of the Books

Students in grades 3-6 have been reading 10 pre-selected books to prepare for this year's Battle of the Books competition. The fifth and sixth grade students will be competing on April 1st at Great Meadows Middle School; the third and fourth grade competition will be held at White Township Elementary School on May 27th. Students were recommended to participate by their teachers for being excellent readers, having high test scores and being motivated to read so many books.



Confessions of a Star Struck Teacher

Yes, I admit it; I am absolutely, positively star struck. So as you can imagine, when the opportunity came along to be at this year's Oscar's ceremony as a seat replacement, I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. Besides being on stage, front row, 5 months pregnant during a Bon Jovi concert, nothing quite this exciting has ever happened to me. Naturally I mean outside of the thrill of motherhood and finding the perfect job here at Brass Castle.

My friends, who are teachers from another district, and I awoke at 6:30 a.m. on Sunday morning to greet our hair-stylist in our hotel room. Three and a half hours later, we were dressed and out the door. With literally one minute to spare, we arrived at our meeting place to check in, grab our 'swag', and head to the Kodak Theater.

As we waited in the hallway outside the theater entrance, I caught my first glimpse of the celebrities with whom I'd spend the day: Cuba Gooding, Jr., Kurt Russell, and the cast of *Slumdog Millionaire*. This was when the awe and amazement of what was happening really set in. Yes, I had to choke back a squeak as Brangelina passed by me, so close I felt a slight breeze, and when Jessica Biel spoke to me-ME! And I am embarrassed to admit that I gushed like a pre-teen when Jennifer Aniston, Marisa Tomei, and Tina Fey walked by and said hello. (Jennifer even touched my arm!) Sitting in that theater taking in the performances and awards was so surreal. I honestly still can't believe I was there.

When I watch the Oscar's on TV, it always seems so long. But that day, with the frenzy of moving from seat to seat, in and out of the theater, and making sure you hopped out of your seat as soon as its rightful owner returned, it flew by! Some friends say they saw me on TV. I guess that was my fifteen minutes of fame, and now it is over. But I still won't give up hope that maybe, just maybe, I'll make it there again next year!



So, Does the Apple Belong to the Teacher, the Textbook (Curriculum) or the Computer?

Researchers Robert Slavin and Cynthia Lake recently completed a study comparing three types of approaches to boost math achievement in elementary schools: mathematics curricula (textbooks, curriculum standards), CAI (computer assisted instruction using various mathematics computer software, and classroom instruction techniques/strategies. Their research concluded that the "type of instruction used has a much bigger impact on math achievement than the choice of textbook, curriculum or use of computers." Slavin and Lake report, "There was limited evidence supporting differential effects of various mathematics textbooks. Effects of CAI were moderate. The strongest positive effects were found for instructional process approaches such as forms of cooperative learning, classroom management, motivation programs, and supplemental tutoring programs. Their review concludes that "programs designed to change daily teaching practices appear to have more promise than those that deal primarily with curriculum or technology alone." Slavin goes on to say: "The debate about mathematics reform has focused primarily on curriculum, not on professional development or instruction. Yet this review suggests that in terms of outcomes on traditional measures, such as standardized tests and state accountability assessments, curriculum differences appear to be less consequential than instructional differences are." This research would suggest that the apple does belong to the teacher.

"Effective Programs in Elementary Mathematics: A Best-Evidence Synthesis," by Robert Slavin and Cynthia Lake, Review of Educational Research, September 2008, Volume 78, Number 3, pp. 427-515.