



Kennett High School's First Mini-THON Exceeds Expectations

Approximately 170 Kennett High School students stayed on their feet from 10 p.m. Friday, February 26, to 6 a.m. Saturday morning for their first annual Mini-THON. Mini-THONs are popular events to raise money for the Four Diamonds Fund that benefits pediatric cancer research and families whose children are battling the disease.

Hosted by the school Humanitarian Club, the first Kennett High School Mini-THON was a huge success. Organizers set a first-year fundraising goal of \$5,000. Due to students' hard work and the kindness of the Kennett community, when all donations were tallied they raised more than \$18,000, more than tripling the goal amount.

Modeled after Penn State's Dance Marathon (THON), Kennett High School's Mini-THON featured eight hours packed with fun activities for participants. Students enjoyed Zumba, yoga, line dancing, basketball, dodgeball, floor hockey, and soccer. They were entertained by Kennett High School's faculty band, Teacher Band, and two student bands, Californium and Seeking Asylum. Students danced to music

selected by student DJs, battled each other in a lip-syncing contest, and raced scooters across the gym—all while taking regular breaks to feast on a variety of pizzas, sandwiches, quesadillas, pastas, fresh fruit and vegetables, and baked goods generously donated by local merchants.

Gemma Erickson, a Kennett High School junior, raised \$1,100 and earned herself the top fundraising prize of a 55-inch flat-screen Smart TV.

When asked what motivated her to raise such an impressive total, Gemma said, "I wanted to help kids. Plus, members of my family have attended Penn State and some of my cousins have danced in THON, so it really meant something to me." As for her prize TV? "The whole family is using it," she said.

Faculty advisors for the event were Mrs. Lisa Teixeira, Kennett High School



librarian and Humanitarian Club moderator; Mrs. Erin McDonnell-Jones, English teacher; and Mr. Tom Brientnall, social studies teacher. Both Mrs. McDonnell-Jones and Mr. Brientnall are Penn State graduates and former THON participants. Student organizers were led by senior Sean Connolly and junior Austin Maxwell, event co-chairs, along with seniors Zoe Livingston and Bridget Fox, Humanitarian Club co-presidents.

"The kids did an amazing job, especially for the first time organizing an event of this magnitude. They all demonstrated leadership, compassion, and cooperation," said Mrs. Teixeira.

Kennett Consolidated School District extends its congratulations to everyone involved.

Kennett Middle School Students Design Award-Winning Autonomous Robot

This year, eight innovative Kennett Middle School students participated in the FIRST LEGO League Robotics Competition. The FIRST LEGO League is an international competition organized by FIRST Inc. for fifth to eighth grade students. Led by coaches Ms. Jillian Tomaino and Mrs. Lynne Seligman, Kennett Middle School's team competed against 27 other middle school robotics teams recently at Patton Middle School.

Every year on September 1, the FIRST LEGO League releases a challenge based on a real-world scientific topic. Each challenge has three parts: the robot game, the project, and the core values. For the 2015–2016 challenge, the FIRST LEGO League presented each team with the theme of Trash Trek. This theme challenged students to find

solutions to prevent waste production or to improve the way waste is handled. More specifically, the competing teams were instructed to choose a specific type of waste and identify major problems. From there, the student teams produced a solution to the problem by programming an autonomous robot to carry out their innovative solutions.

Following the Trash Trek theme, Kennett Middle School's robotics team focused on the topic of space junk. For the robot game portion, the team designed and programmed an autonomous robot made exclusively of LEGO parts that was able to complete a series of tasks related to waste-management technologies.

For the project portion of the competition, the team researched using journals, videos, and the Internet. They also interviewed scientific leaders in the field, including Mr. Brian Weedon, an international expert on space policy from the Secure World Foundation, and Mr. Josh Poley, of AGI, an Exton-based firm that provides space debris tracking and warning services to NASA and the international community.

The final portion of the competition was the core values evaluation. The robot game and project portions had to embody FIRST LEGO League's core values in order to be successful. The robotics team demonstrated these values to the judges by explaining its mentorship activity, in which team members worked with a new robotics team in rural Greensboro, Alabama, to build and program their first robot.

The FIRST LEGO League Robotics Competition adds up to tons of fun as students learned to apply science, technology, engineering, and math concepts (STEM), plus a big dose of imagination, to solve a problem. Along the team's discovery journey, the Kennett Middle School students developed critical thinking and team-building

skills, basic STEM applications, and even presentation skills as they had to present their solutions to the judges with a dash of creativity.

The Kennett Middle School robotics team members used their creativity to their advantage. Together, they won the Judge's Rising Stars Award. This award was presented to the team that showed the most creativity and camaraderie while developing a functioning autonomous robot. The judges were impressed with the team's efforts, performance, and team dynamics. The award specifically cited the team's name, "(Insert Cool Name Here)," as evidence that the students had created a spirited and creative team.

Kennett Consolidated School District would like to congratulate everyone involved. Our students are tomorrow's innovators!

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Alumna Spotlight: A Lifelong Dedication to Education

Kennett High School alumna Dr. Joy Lesnick, class of 1994, has taken her passion for education all the way to Washington, D.C.

A native of Kennett Square, Dr. Lesnick grew up in a household of educators. Her parents, who met while pursuing teaching degrees at West Chester University, both had lifelong careers in education. Her father, Mr. Edward Lesnick, was a social studies teacher in the Kennett Consolidated School District for 30 years. It was no surprise to anyone that Dr. Lesnick quickly showed an interest in the field of education. Upon entering Kennett High School, her interest in education blossomed into a passion.

Dr. Lesnick excelled both athletically and academically during her four years at Kennett High School. She was recognized as one of the best setters to play under head volleyball coach Mr. Ray Basilio. She also played softball. Dr. Lesnick was voted Class President by her peers and has fond memories of her classmates. She also graduated as class Valedictorian.

"If you can remember teachers 20 years later, you know they were exceptional," explained Dr. Lesnick in a recent interview. "Mrs. Deborah Roselle, Dr. Kay Biondi, and Mr. Tom Tatum are just a few of the wonderful teachers I had. Their interactive projects truly engaged the class and created lifelong memories."

After high school, Dr. Lesnick chose to attend Rutgers University where she earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in history. As a collegiate athlete, she made a major impact on the women's volleyball team. Dr. Lesnick's athletics highlights included leading the team in aces and being second on the team for assists. After graduating Summa Cum Laude from Rutgers University, Dr. Lesnick pursued her master's degree at Rutgers University's Graduate School of Education. She then earned her Master of Education in early childhood and elementary education.

"My father, Mr. Lesnick, played a large role in my decision to pursue a career in education," Dr. Lesnick continued. "My time in the Kennett Consolidated School District was truly enhanced by

the dedicated teachers who genuinely cared about their students' futures."

Upon graduation, Dr. Lesnick taught for two years. She explained that seeing firsthand the time spent taking standardized tests was troubling to her, and it was what prompted her to return to school to pursue her doctorate degree.

"I wanted to affect change in many schools and districts and thought I might be able to do that by pursuing a career in research and policy," Dr. Lesnick explained.

After earning her Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Lesnick earned a postdoctoral fellowship at Vanderbilt University.

Dr. Lesnick currently works at the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C. where she is serving dual roles: Acting Commissioner, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), and Associate Commissioner of the Knowledge Utilization Division within NCEE. She is responsible for overseeing personnel, projects, and the budget of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

"My job is challenging, but it has to be," stated Dr. Lesnick. "It is my top priority to help shift education in a direction

that can benefit students, teachers, and policy makers the best we can from the federal level."

"Together, we can create opportunities for teachers and school districts by providing them with the resources they need," Dr. Lesnick continued. "My time at Kennett Consolidated School District created a foundation for my passion in education, and I hope to help students around the country reach their greatest potential."

Dr. Lesnick is passionate about raising suicide awareness. She is a recent board member for the National Capital Area Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention as well as an active volunteer. Dr. Lesnick believes in the importance of having an ongoing discussion about suicide prevention in schools and communities alike.

Currently, Dr. Lesnick resides in Philadelphia with her partner of almost 20 years, Ms. Polly Hayes. They enjoy hiking, running, and travelling. Recently, Dr. Lesnick and Ms. Hayes rode their bicycles from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Maryland, on the Great Allegheny Passage, a journey of 150 miles of connected hiking and biking trails.

If you know of a Kennett High School alumna who would be a good candidate for a spotlight, please email PR@KCSD.org.



Dr. Joy Lesnick (right) and her partner, Ms. Holly Hayes (left) rooting for the home team.

Musician Qualifies to All-State Band

Yvonna Liszewski, a junior at Kennett High School, has qualified for the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association All-State Festival as part of the All-State Concert Band. The band is comprised of approximately one hundred of the best musicians from across the Commonwealth.

Yvonna was one of only four flutists who qualified from PMEA Region VI that includes high school musicians from Chester, Bucks, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties.

Always humble, Yvonna said, "The way auditions are handled, it's really just a snapshot of your playing ability. So, while I might have been better on that particular day, there are so many talented musicians in our region."

Mr. Anton Romano, Kennett High School's Band Director asserted, "It's amazing to make it once, and Yvonna has made it two consecutive years. She really is just that good."

The festival will be held from March 30 to April 2, culminating in a concert at the Hershey Convention Center on the final day.



Greenwood Elementary School Students Travel to the Moon

As part of their Earth, Moon, and Sun unit, Greenwood Elementary School third grade students in Ms. Andrea Smith's class took a unique expedition to the moon using Google's new Expeditions Pioneer Program.

Google's Expeditions are ready-made virtual field trips that allow teachers and their students to explore parts of the world they may never otherwise have the chance to visit. Whether classes journey to the Great Wall of China or fly to the moon, the program is giving students once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to see the world.

Because Expeditions is a pioneer program, only select schools around the world are able to participate. Ms. Smith immediately recognized the value in the program and coordinated with other Greenwood Elementary

School teachers to sign up. Schools must have at least 18 teachers willing to participate in order to become eligible.

Once a school is selected, Google provides kits to teachers that include everything a classroom needs to venture out on Google Expeditions. The kits include special smartphones and Google Cardboard for each student, which turns the provided smartphones into virtual-reality headsets. Teachers receive a tablet that enables them to act as the tour guide and a router that allows Google Expeditions to run without an Internet connection. Along with the materials, Google provides a team of experts to set up the equipment and show teachers how to use the software. There is no cost associated with the program, but in return schools are asked to provide feedback about their experiences.

Greenwood Elementary School students and teachers have all had wonderful experiences with their Google Expeditions. Twenty different classes at Greenwood Elementary School have gone on virtual trips to destinations they had been studying. Second grade students studying Tanzania's Gombe National Park were able to visit the far-off destination without permission slips or the costs of travel. Fourth grade students visited the depths of the Grand Canyon and climbed to the top of Mount Everest. Fifth grade students visited Gettysburg and were able to point out where major events had occurred.

When students put on their Google Cardboard headsets, they do not simply look at pictures; they become fully immersed in a full 360-degree panoramic view. Teachers can click on small annotated bubbles along their journey to

learn more about objects and locations. For example, Ms. Smith's students were able to study the Lunar Rover more closely as they explored the moon's surface. At the moment, teachers can choose from a library of more than 100 virtual destinations. Google plans on expanding its list of expeditions over time.

Beyond just increasing engagement, Google Expeditions is helping students gain a deeper understanding of the world beyond the classroom.

"It is unheard of for students to go home for the day with an everlasting memory of exploring the moon or Mount Everest," said Ms. Smith. "We are extremely honored that Greenwood Elementary School was able to be part of Google's Expeditions Pioneer Program."

Kennett Middle School Students Attend 2016 Festival of Words

Twelve eighth grade students from Kennett Middle School traveled to Wilmington to attend the 16th Annual Festival of Words at Stanton Middle School. Leading the group of dedicated students were eighth grade language arts teachers Mrs. Kate Madigan and Mrs. Judy Jester, as well as school librarian Mrs. Virginia McGarvey.

The 16th Annual Festival of Words focused on young adult literature and featured authors, book discussions, and writing workshops. The event provides a truly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students to not only hear published authors speak but to work side by side with them. Authors Mr. Chris Crutcher, Mr. Jason Reynolds, Ms. Sharon Roat, and Ms. Cristin Terrill gave presentations, led small discussion groups, and signed books. Sessions focused on discussing suggested readings, activities to develop writing

and poetry skills, and expression through art and writing.

The students prepared for the event by reading novels by the authors who were in attendance. In particular, novels written by Mr. Crutcher and Mr. Reynolds were popular choices among the students. Students were given the opportunity to have their novels autographed.

"I don't like to read and write, and I always thought that I couldn't do it," said eighth grade student Samantha Cedomio. "After attending the Festival of Words and learning about the writing process and the authors' stories about how they started to write and read, they have inspired me to read, which is something I don't often do in my free time."

What a wonderful way to spend a Saturday.



Young adult author Mr. Chris Crutcher poses with eighth grade students (from left) Aided Balbuena, Kayla Tapia Alvarez, Spencer Kent, and Ulises Luna Botella

High School Musicians Selected for District Festivals

Eight Kennett High School musicians have been selected by audition to various Pennsylvania Music Educators Association District 12 Honor Festivals. District 12 includes Chester and Delaware counties and is undeniably one of the most competitive in the state.

Erin Dooley (clarinet), Yvonna Liszewski (flute), Rebecca Ploener (bass trombone), and Sarah Ploener (clarinet) were a part of the District Band Festival, January 28 – 30, at Phoenixville High School. These students are directed at Kennett High School by Mr. Anton Romano.

Participating in the District Chorus were Samantha Castleton (soprano), Erin Dooley (alto), Yvonna Liszewski (alto), Alex Mark (bass), and Jimmy Rosser (tenor). The event was held at Unionville High School. Ms. Katie Soukup is the choral director at Kennett High School.

District Orchestra was held in January. Students Julie Bates (viola) and Erin Dooley (clarinet) represented Kennett High School. The Kennett High School Orchestra is conducted by Mrs. Jessica Williams.

Auditions for selection to the District Festivals were held in November. Students had to demonstrate excellence in major and chromatic scales as well as solo performance or choral selections in order to earn the right to participate at the District Festivals. At their respective festivals, students re-auditioned for the opportunity to go on to Region and State levels.



Birding at New Garden Elementary School

Ms. Erika Smith's fifth grade science class recently participated in a Bird Feeder Challenge as part of its life science unit. Together, students designed and created eco-friendly bird feeders to be placed in New Garden Elementary School's butterfly garden. Students were introduced to the real-life career of ornithology, a branch of zoology that concerns the study of birds, and learned valuable lessons on nature and life science.

The Bird Feeder Challenge was a friendly competition between students. The students had to follow material requirements and be thoughtful about their creations' impact on nature. Each student was asked to use recycled or natural materials to construct his or her bird feeder. Having material requirements not only taught students the importance of reducing their carbon footprint but also sparked their creativity and challenged them to think outside the box.

During class, students actively researched birds native to the

region. Students utilized New Garden Elementary School's library, where they found resource books and other reading material on their bird friends. The class was visited by parent volunteer Mrs. Rebecca Shelton who spoke to the students about birding in their region. Mrs. Shelton also introduced the class to the computer app Merlin. Designed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the app helped the class identify specific birds by recording the bird's identifying characteristics. Ms. Smith encouraged students to think about the birds' diets, preferred habitats, and size when creating their feeders. Collectively, students discovered that their most frequent bird visitors would be bluebirds, dark eyed juncos, and red-winged blackbirds.

At the end of the competition, student-made bird feeders were judged on creativity, uniqueness, and the best use of recycled or natural materials. The students' main goal was to make the most useful bird feeder. The decision of which feeder was the most useful was ultimately made by the birds themselves;

tracking revealed which feeder received the most activity.

"This project was a great opportunity for everyone who participated. It gave us a chance to do something for school that we normally would not have the chance to do," said fifth grade student Aaron Shelton. "It made me feel that I was building something that would actually help the environment. It was really exciting to see the birds using our feeders!"

"Every year, we ask our fifth grade students what they want to be when they grow up," said Ms. Smith. "I was very proud to hear that after this project, my student Ethan Canter changed his yearbook goals to 'grow up to become an ornithologist!'"

It can be said that all of New Garden Elementary School's students and staff members are enjoying their new bird friends. Kennett Consolidated School District is proud to provide unique opportunities to our students. Together, New Garden Elementary School students and staff members are making a difference, one bird feeder at a time!



Bancroft Elementary School Brings Home Blue Ribbons

On March 8, at West Chester East High School, three teams of Bancroft Elementary School students competed in the Chester County Reading Olympics. All three of Bancroft's teams won the highest honor at the competition, the coveted blue ribbon.

Mr. David Livergood, the school's library media specialist and coordinator for Bancroft Elementary School's Reading Olympics teams, is proud of his students' dedication and teamwork.

"The Reading Olympics is designed to inspire students to not only increase the quantity of the books they read but also the quality," Mr. Livergood said. "This competition is a win-win.

Students have fun while building their vocabulary, teamwork, and reading comprehension skills."

Reading Olympics is a trivia-based competition among Chester County schools in which teams of 12 or fewer students read 45 books throughout the school year. This year, Bancroft Elementary School had three teams of 10 students each. In addition to helping students develop a habit of daily reading for pleasure, the Reading Olympics provides students with the opportunity to have interactive discussions with their peers on the content of the books. The competition is meant to celebrate reading and promote teamwork and collaboration.

At the beginning of each year, all interested students are placed into Reading Olympics teams. Then, students are presented with a list of 45 books that each team must collectively read. Book choices range from classics, such as *Stuart Little* by E.B. White, to new bestsellers, such as *Shakespeare's Secret* by Elise Broach. When students finish a book, they take a reading comprehension quiz to determine how well they understand the book's plot, characters, and themes. When students pass the quiz, they are allowed to check the book off of their team's list and move on to another one. Multiple students from each team can read the same books, or they can divide the list up and become experts on specific books. Each student must read at least four books in

order to be eligible to compete. Teams are led by student-elected captains who coordinate book assignments and are responsible for answering or delegating teammates to answer questions during competition.

During the competition, students answered 20 reading comprehension questions based on the assigned reading list. The teams accumulated points for every correct answer during three rounds of questioning. Volunteers from area schools served as moderators and scorekeepers.

The Kennett Consolidated School District congratulates the students and Mr. Livergood on their first place finishes.

ELLs and SIOP - An Educational Marriage for Success at Kennett Middle School

By Mrs. Joy Rosser, sixth grade teacher

Kennett Middle School is changing lives through the strategies and support of its students. More specifically, the staff is igniting the English-Language Learners (ELL) population throughout the building in ways that are serving, embracing, and encouraging. In their quest for excellence, teachers personally sought out research on the marriage of Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and English-Language Learners to improve best instructional practices in classrooms and to establish a framework for organized, high-quality instruction for all students. With a population of approximately 10% English-Language Learners, Kennett Middle School recognizes the need for meeting these students where they are and acquiring strategies to move them forward - socially, academically and emotionally.

Teachers were creatively ignited by a 2015 Edutopia.org article entitled, "Strategies and Resources for Supporting English-Language Learners." Edu-

topia.org was founded by George Lucas and is considered to be a leading voice illuminating and showcasing what works in education.

The richness of staff collaboration came alive when a sample of self-motivated teachers read the article, recognized its value, and encouraged fellow staff members to consider the impact it would have throughout Kennett Middle School. The drive and desire for better teaching practices to benefit the students was and is prevalent.

SIOP training is in full swing at Kennett Middle School; teachers are focused on planning and delivering purposeful instruction that contains a Content Objective (what they want the students to know or learn) and a Language Objective (how the students will communicate or prove the learning) in daily lessons. All students benefit from SIOP instruction, and all students benefit from the advanced instructional practices implemented. For a school which

strongly believes that the needs of its students drive all decisions, SIOP and ELL are at the forefront of its journey, bound for greater success.

Most significantly, the teachers discovered that the list of strategies provided by the ELL article mirrored teaching practices already alive in the Kennett Middle School classrooms and afforded new ideas as well. Listed below are a few of the strategies for supporting all ELLs. The list in its entirety can be found in the article.

- Speak slower, not louder.
- Provide outlines, advanced organizers, or visual guides.
- Integrate games.
- Integrate listening centers.
- Provide exemplars of successful projects.
- Let students use their home language in the classroom to solve work.
- Use pictures, sketches, and graphic organizers.

- Make videos of presentations for ELLs to replay if needed.
- Pair up ELLs with strong oral and written English skills.
- Provide opportunities for low-stakes writing

Evidence of teachers igniting themselves for their students at Kennett Middle School is having a successful impact on the instructional practices and on the learning environment. ELLs are fortunate to be members of a school that is utilizing the best strategies for learning with the interest of the students at the heart of the implementation. SIOP is currently shaping high-quality instructional practices with ELLs being just one cohort of the many prosperous recipients.

Mrs. Joy Rosser is currently serving as secretary on the DVR-PASCD Board, teaching sixth grade science at Kennett Middle School, and serving on the Pennsylvania Don Eichhorn Schools To Watch State Team.

Celebrating Dr. Seuss and Read Across America Week

Bancroft Elementary School and the Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center recently celebrated Read Across America. This weeklong celebration invited students and staff members to participate in fun reading-based activities.

Children's ability to read has a direct effect on their future, and the educators at the Kennett Consolidated School District know that by encouraging active reading habits at an early age, they will increase students' vocabularies and improve their reading fluency and comprehension.

Bancroft Elementary School kicked off its Read Across America celebration with Reader's Oath Day when students and staff took an oath to read every day. The next day, students and staff participated in Drop Everything and Read where students take small, random breaks from normal classes to read their favorite books.

Buddy Reading Day was a favorite among students and staff members. During Buddy Reading times, students were able to grab a buddy from another classroom or grade and spend time reading and having fun with each other.

Throughout the week students were invited to join in on special themed clothing days such as Read Me Day and Alphabet Dress-Up Day. On Alphabet Dress-Up Day, students selected a letter and accessorized their clothing with items that started with that letter. For example, if students chose the letter 'R,' they could wear a red shirt with riding boots and a raincoat.

The Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center joined in on the fun as well. Students were invited to dress up according to planned themed days such as Pajama Day, Crazy Sock Day, Crazy Hat or Hair Day, and Mismatching Day.

Throughout the week, students made Dr. Seuss-themed bulletin boards that brought cheer to the hallways. It was also a common occurrence to see one or two Cats in the Hat roaming the halls as teachers dressed up to show their passion for reading.

To celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday, students at the Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center were invited to bring in their favorite Dr. Seuss books. Kennett High School students were invited to be guest readers and a few surprise guests, including Superintendent Dr. Barry Tomasetti and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Michael Barber, visited the school as mystery readers.

Kennett Middle School celebrated Read Across America by hosting a spirit week leading up to a student versus faculty basketball game.

To start off the spirit week, students and staff members participated in Happiness Day. Everyone was encouraged to

dress in their brightest colored clothes. Students began their week with a surprise, inspirational message on their locker from the teachers. To add onto the excitement of the day, a photo booth was set up in the cafeteria.

Throughout the week, Kennett Middle School encouraged students and staff members to dress up according to themed days such as Twin Day and Throwback Thursday. Students also participated in a Color Wars day where

each class was assigned a color to wear for the day.

Read Across America is a fun way for students to improve their reading comprehension skills while making memories that will last a lifetime. As Dr. Seuss wrote, "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."



(above, from left) Nora Houck, Marielis Robles Figueroa, Chanti Louanphom, and Wyatt Thompson pose in front of one of many of the Dr. Seuss inspired displays at the Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center.



(right) Fifth and first grade students at Bancroft Elementary School partnered for Drop Everything and Read.

Geography Bee Challenges Middle School Students

Seventh grade student Luke Jeffrey is the champion of Kennett Middle School's Geography Bee. After passing a qualifying exam, Luke and nine other students earned coveted spots as the Bee's top ten finalists.

Using materials prepared by the National Geographic Society, each of the finalists was tested on his or her knowledge of multiple geography-based topics. With questions ranging from cultural geography to plants and animals, students battled to reach the elusive championship round, which features only two participants. This year, Luke was accompanied by eighth grade student Erin Whelan in the championship round. Both students worked hard and answered questions correctly, but in the end Luke prevailed as this year's Geography Bee champion.

"My favorite part of the Geography Bee was the championship round," explained Luke. "It was challenging, but my parents and sisters helped me prepare for the competition."

As champion, Luke will now move on to the qualifying test for the state National Geographic Bee later this year.

"The competition was difficult, but it was really fun," stated reserve champion Erin. "My favorite part of the Geography Bee was coming in second place!"

Other notable performances came from eighth grade students Tim Crane and Noah Schiller who ended the competition tied for third place. Tim and Noah explained that even though the competition was challenging, they both had a great time preparing for and participating in the Geography Bee.

"The purpose of the Geography Bee is to spark student interest in the subject," said Mrs. Jessica Kilmetz, the District's curriculum supervisor for language arts and social studies. "I am extremely proud of the dedication and determination of all the students who participated."



Congratulations to this year's Geography Bee winners: (from left) Luke Jeffrey (first place), Tim Crane (tied for third place), Erin Whelan (second place), and Noah Schiller (tied for third place).

Each year thousands of schools in the United States participate in the National Geographic Bee. The contest is designed to inspire students to be curious about the world. Schools with students in grades four through eight are eligible to participate in this entertaining and

challenging competition. The Kennett Consolidated School District is proud of all of the students who participated and wishes Luke all the best as he continues in the competition.

State Senator Visits Kennett Middle School

When Mrs. Kate Madigan asked her eighth grade language arts class to research and write about something meaningful, her students chose to examine the direct impact the Keystone Exams have on their lives. The Keystone Exams, which are standardized tests administered to the public schools in Pennsylvania, require students to pass exams in algebra, biology, and language arts as a graduation requirement. With growing concerns, Mrs. Madigan's students quickly realized it was time to have their voices heard.

With careful planning and research, the students wrote to Senator Andy Dinniman explaining their concerns regarding the Keystone Exams and suggesting alternative standardized testing methods. Upon receiving the students' letters, Senator Dinniman, who serves as a minority chair of the Senate Education Committee, decided to visit Mrs. Madigan's class and address the students' concerns in person.

On the day of the visit, Senator Dinniman pulled up a desk and spoke to Mrs. Madigan's class with respect and genuine concern. Senator Dinniman, who is a strong critic of using the Keystone Exams as graduation requirements, began the conversation by reflecting on the main conversation points in the student's letters. Students shared that the Keystone Exams create a great deal of stress and take away focus from other subjects. Senator Dinniman also commented on their proposed alternatives, such as splitting the exams into shorter units to be taken throughout the course of a school year. Senator Dinniman discussed these exams thoroughly and

students eagerly participated in the dialogue. It was clear that both the students and Senator Dinniman were gaining valuable insights. Senator Dinniman actively agreed with the students and explained that he had recently sponsored Senate Bill 880, which would delay the graduation requirement associated with the Keystone Exams.

As the meeting came to an end, Senator Dinniman thanked Mrs. Madigan and her class for the opportunity to visit.

"My visit to Kennett Middle School was rewarding because it gave me the opportunity to discuss the Keystone Exams directly with those who are most impacted—the students. I was impressed with the class's breadth and depth of knowledge of the new standardized tests and interested to hear their views on testing and public education. Their

comments were thoughtful, well articulated, and on target," Dinniman said. "The experience was incredibly valuable in obtaining direct feedback from both students and teachers on what works and what doesn't when it comes to formulating education policy."

Mrs. Madigan has always believed in the importance of student engagement and plans to continue offering lesson plans that give her students options.

"Allowing students to choose topics that interest them is the key to higher levels of student engagement, which results in higher grades," stated Mrs. Madigan. "One problem we face with standardized testing is asking students to write from prompts in which they have no vested interest. Uninterested students produce lower grades and test scores, which can severely inhibit their future."

The unique structure of Kennett Consolidated School District allows for opportunities like a visit from a senator to happen. Teachers in the District are given the freedom to utilize different learning strategies to best reach their students. Mrs. Madigan inspired her students to become invested in their education, and the results speak for themselves.

Just days after his visit, Senator Dinniman was proud to share that the legislature had finalized Senate Bill 880 and the governor had signed it into law, putting a two-year hold on the high school graduation requirement associated with the Keystone Exams. This delay gives the legislature and the Department of Education time to explore more effective methods of student assessment.



Promoting Positive Behavior at Bancroft Elementary School

Even before Bancroft Elementary School opened its doors to students in September 2011, a committee was formed to develop the school's Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) program. A PBIS program is a research-based program that emphasizes positive behaviors in students. It is not a packaged curriculum, scripted intervention, or manual-based strategy. Instead, it is a way for schools to organize evidence-based practices, improve the implementation of those practices, and maximize academic and social behavior outcomes for students.

Life skills teacher Ms. Sara Simasek has been the committee chair since the program's inception. She explains that using the motto for Bancroft Elementary School—Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe, Be the Best that I Can Be—the committee identified areas of the school where students should know how to behave: on the bus, in the cafeteria, in the hallways, in the bathrooms, on the playground, and in the multipurpose room during assemblies.

After identifying the areas of the school, the committee brainstormed ways that the motto would be modeled

in each of these areas. For example, in the hallway, Be Responsible is modeled by treating others as you would like to be treated. For the children, this means using quiet feet, greeting others with a smile, and yielding to others.

Understanding that the students don't arrive at Bancroft Elementary School knowing how to behave, the positive behaviors are taught in a positive manner during the first three days of school.

"We expect to have to teach what we expect of students," said Mrs. Leah McComsey, principal of Bancroft Elementary School. "Everyone's home rules are different."

Interactive modeling is used to teach the students the positive behaviors that are expected. For example, teachers will explain what it looks like to be respectful on the bus, then the students will go outside the school where a school bus is waiting for them, climb aboard, and model what they learned minutes earlier.

After each lesson, the students sign a pledge. For the lower grades, the pledge is a simple statement that the student learned the rules for how to behave on the bus. In the older grades, the students

are asked to write what they remember about the rules and to sign their name.

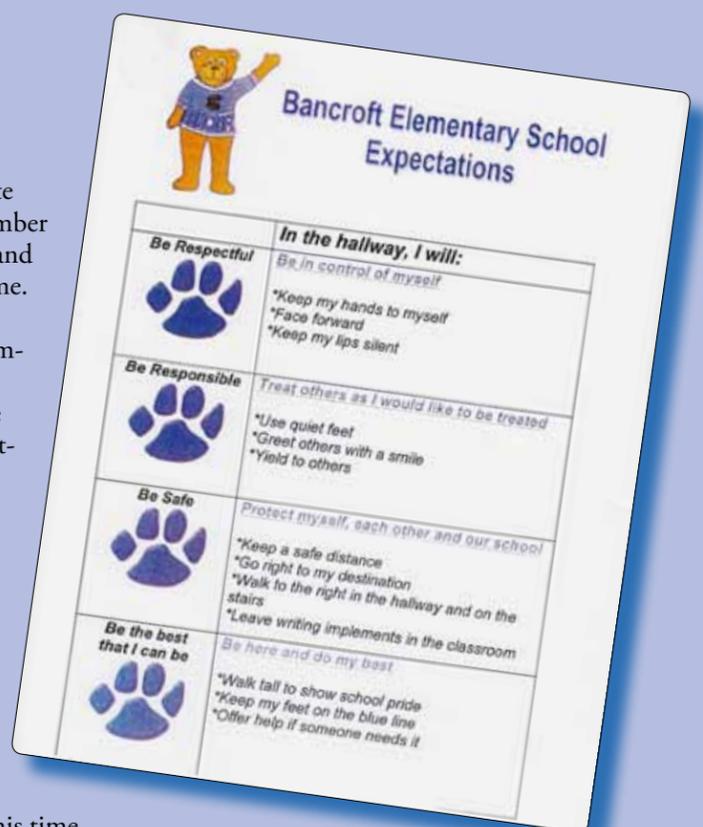
Ms. Simasek commented that the pledge holds the students accountable throughout the year.

"As the year progresses, there may be the need for a class or grade level to revisit a lesson,"

Ms. Simasek explained. "At this time, the students are reminded of the pledges they signed."

If a student is found to be breaking a rule—running in the hallway, for instance—an adult will say, "Remind me how we walk in the hallway" rather than tell the student to stop running.

While the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support program is a research-based initiative, it is slightly modified to reflect



Posters, like the one above, hang throughout Bancroft Elementary School to remind students of the expectations for good behavior.

Bancroft Elementary School's Responsive Classroom philosophy, which is that students intrinsically want to do the right thing.

Hands-on Projects Bring Science to Life

By Dr. Lydia Hallman, Curriculum Supervisor Math & Science

From forests and fields to the stars in the night sky, science is all around us. At the Kennett Consolidated School District, our elementary students explore their world using hands-on, project-based learning strategies. These engaging explorations are grounded in current educational research and science standards. The National Science Education Standards confirm that “inquiry activities develop knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas as well as an understanding of how scientists study the natural world.”

The District’s elementary teachers provide students with real-world inquiry-based learning opportunities in the science classroom. As first-grade students at Bancroft Elementary School collected samples during a fall nature walk, they were unaware of the white oak saplings they would be tending now. Mrs. Gretchen Peterson saw the opportunity to extend her students’ learning when the collected acorns began to sprout. As the resulting white oak saplings have grown, they have been used to teach students about soil erosion and weather. Mrs. Peterson hopes to find homes for her

young trees on the grounds of Bancroft and in the backyards of her students.

Yet another exciting opportunity for the first-grade students at Bancroft Elementary School is an upcoming visit from FOX29 traffic anchor, Mr. Bob Kelly, and meteorologist, Ms. Sue Serio. These local anchors will be sharing their knowledge of weather and its impact on our daily lives.

In fifth-grade classrooms, a unit on simple machines is complemented with a challenge to students: Build a catapult that launches a marshmallow. Through collaboration and cooperative learning, students successfully build catapults. Afterward, they explain their thinking, identify the simple machines within the catapult, and question other teams on their designs. The classroom energy and excitement are evident as the final launches and presentations are shared.

It is not always easy to access nature. Sometimes, technology and innovative ideas must be used to allow nature to come to the student. Recently, a mobile planetarium visited the Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center so that

kindergarteners could explore the science behind the sun, planets, and stars through an interactive presentation. A few easy clicks in Merlin, a Cornell University interactive app, allowed fifth-grade students at New Garden Elementary School to identify visiting birds. Meanwhile, students at Greenwood Elementary School visited faraway ecosystems through the interactive technology of Google Expedition. Teachers emphasize curriculum, instruction, and assessment models that build on a child’s natural curiosity. This approach promotes learners with strong critical and creative thinking skills.



Celebrating Mathematics With Pie

Greenwood Elementary School celebrated Pi Day this year by throwing a Pie-themed assembly as a culminating event for their Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) fundraiser.

Throughout the week, students studied the meaning of Pi, the math term for measuring a circle’s circumference. Students were given the opportunity to make fifty cent donations that entered them into a drawing for a chance to throw a non-mathematical pie in the face of a teacher! All donations benefitted the PTO.



President of the PTO, Dr. Erin Bermburg, came across this fundraising idea from her sister who is a teacher at a neighboring school district.

Greenwood Elementary School students (from front to back) Ryan Prince, Lucy Myers, Drew Zieg, and Eduardo Gonzalez-Zarate had fun throwing a pie in the faces of their teachers.

“We thought this would be a fun educational incentive for the students,” said Dr. Bermburg.

At the assembly, students could not contain their excitement. As the brave teachers lined up at the front of the gym, students anxiously awaited to see who would have the honor of throwing a pie in their teacher’s face.

First grade teacher Mrs. Lisa English was one of the brave teachers who volunteered to be pied. “It was a great experience,” she said. “Our goal was to provide students with a memory that will last them a lifetime. What better way is there to remember what Pi means than thinking about the day they got to throw a pie in their teacher’s face?”

The staff at Greenwood Elementary School is truly dedicated to its students’ education.

Studying the Stars Above

Stars and constellations loomed over Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center students’ heads in the darkness: Aries twinkling in the distance, the Big Dipper shining bright, and Leo the lion sparkling in space.

Without leaving the building, the students explored space in the Stars on the Move portable planetarium. Guided by Mrs. Denise Vacca, who owns and operates Stars on the Move and has more than 20 years of experience in astronomy education, the students learned about the stars and constellations.

The planetarium is a large, igloo-shaped tent that is inflated by a high-powered fan. Upon entering the planetarium, the students gazed upward as our galaxy came to life. This amazing opportunity was a culminating activity from the student’s Earth Science unit.

“At the Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center, we recognize the importance of exposing our students to all that we can,” said principal Mrs. April Reynolds. “The planetarium was an amazing experience for our students. We want to make education fun so they continue to want to learn as much as they can.”

Over the course of the unit, students learned about light pollution, stars, and constellations. Teachers explained that the sun is a star and why there is a day and a night. Students also watched videos learning about stars and created constellations of their own based on their astrological signs.

Through these experiences, students at Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center have learned that the sky is the limit!



John McClellan works on the constellation that represents his astrological sign.

Grief and Loss: Tips for Parents and Educators

All of us have been or will be affected by grief and loss. It's important to know how to support loved ones during such difficult times. Grief is not solely related to the death of a loved one. The symptoms, characteristics, and process of grieving can be similar after other types of loss, such as divorce, transition, or moving.

Grief is personal. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. How people grieve can be influenced by their developmental level, cultural traditions, religious beliefs, mental health, disabilities, family, personal characteristics, and previous experiences.

Grief is often characterized by sadness, emotional pain, and introspection in adults. However, children's grief reactions differ according to age and developmental level and can include:

- **Preschool** - Regressive behaviors, decreased verbalization, increased anxiety;
- **Elementary** - Decreased academic performance, attention/concentration, and attendance; irritability, aggression, and disruptive behaviors; somatic complaints; sleep/eating disturbances; social withdrawal; guilt, depression, and anxiety; repeated retelling of the event;
- **Middle and High School** - Decreased academic performance, attention/concentration, and attendance; avoidance; withdrawal; high-risk behaviors or substance abuse; difficulty with peer relations; nightmares; flashbacks; emotional numbing or depression.

It is important to remember that grieving does not have a timeline. Schools and loved ones should be aware of anniversaries, birthdays, developmental milestones, and other factors that can affect students months or years after the loss. In meeting milestones during the grief process, individuals are likely to experience (and often re-experience) some or all of the following adjustments and responses:

- Accepting the death;
- Experiencing the feelings and emotional pain associated with death and separation from the deceased;
- Adjusting to changes and an altered environment that no longer includes the deceased; and
- Finding ways to remember and memorialize the deceased.

Things you can do to support someone who is grieving include:

- Maintain routines as normally as possible.
- Give the youth permission to grieve. Be understanding and tolerant of common grief reactions, such as those noted above. Students sometimes also feel anger towards the deceased for leaving them.
- Be simple and straightforward. Discuss death in developmentally appropriate terms for students. Be aware of cultural differences in the grief process and in honoring the dead. Avoid making assumptions or imposing your own beliefs on students.
- Use words such as "death," "die," or "dying" in your conversations and avoid euphemisms such as "they went away," "they are sleeping," "departed," and "passed away." Such euphemisms are abstract and may be confusing, especially for younger children.
- Be brief and patient. Remember that you may have to answer the same question multiple times and repeat key information to ensure understanding.
- Provide age- and developmentally appropriate answers.
- Connect the bereaved with helping professionals and other trusted mentors and adults.

also helps with annual homecoming arrangements and runs other programs to increase attendance at athletic events.

"With the Kennett High School Stadium, Legacy Fields, and the Reynolds Gym, the Kennett Consolidated School District has some of the nicest facilities in the area," says Mark Longacre, president of the Kennett Athletic Booster Club. "But we compete in a very strong Ches-Mont league, and the majority of teams receive significant funding from booster clubs. There is so much learning that can take place on the playing field and, more importantly,

- Encourage students to adopt adaptive coping strategies, particularly ones that will involve interaction with other students, such as sports or clubs.
- Educate teachers and families about what healthy grief is and how to support the student.
- Normalize the feelings students express by telling them that such feelings are common after a death. However, if their expressions include risk to self (such as suicidal thoughts) or to others, refer them immediately to the appropriate professionals.

Things to avoid in supporting someone who is grieving include:

- Using euphemisms when referring to the deceased, such as "they are sleeping" or "they went away."
- Minimizing statements, such as "it was only your great-grandmother" (or dog, neighbor, etc.).
- Predicting a timeframe to complete the grieving process, such as, "It has been a month, you should be getting over this" or "The pain will fade soon."
- Over-identifying statements such as "I know how you feel."

Grieving is a normal response to loss but may require some support. Additional assistance should be provided when the following are noted:

- Marked loss of interest in daily activities;
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits;
- Wishing to be with the deceased loved one;
- Fear of being alone;

the practice field. We want to make sure that our student athletes have a great experience, and we want to maximize the teaching opportunities for our coaches."

The Kennett Athletic Booster Club is somewhat unique, with a two-tier structure. A central organization efficiently handles administrative tasks and funds large programs that affect multiple teams. Subgroups for individual teams leverage the non-profit 501(c)3 status of the Kennett Athletic Booster Club while having the independence to support their sports.



- Significant decreases in academic performance and achievement;
- Increased somatic complaints; or
- Changes in attendance patterns (e.g., chronic absenteeism).

You can seek support and resources via the Kennett Consolidated School District social worker, the school psychologist, and school counselors.

Some resources in the area are:

Supporting Kidds in Hockessin, Delaware: www.supportingkidds.org

Compassionate Friends: www.compassionatefriends.org/home.aspx

Chester County Hospital Bereavement Group

Griefnet.org

The Dougy Center (National Center for Grieving Children & Families)

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

American Cancer Society

Sesame Street Grief Resources

National Alliance for Grieving Children

Coalition to support Grieving Students

Please contact Kate Rentschler at krentschler@kcsd.org with comments or ideas for future "What's on Your Mind" topics.

This article is adapted from NASP School Safety and Crisis Response Committee. (2015). Addressing Grief: Tips for Teachers and Administrators. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Kennett Athletic Booster Club: Supporting Our Student Athletes

Driving around town you're likely to start seeing the round, blue "K" car magnet proudly displayed on cars by members of the Kennett Athletic Booster Club. The Kennett Athletic Booster Club is a growing group of parents, former athletes, and other community members whose purpose is to support student athletes in the Kennett Consolidated School District. They do this by approving coaches' requests for equipment or supplemental training, funding senior recognition gifts, and sponsoring six different student athlete scholarships for graduating seniors. The club

also helps with annual homecoming arrangements and runs other programs to increase attendance at athletic events.

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the practice field. We want to make sure that our student athletes have a great experience, and we want to maximize the teaching opportunities for our coaches."

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There are many opportunities to get involved, both at the central and the individual team levels. If you're able to commit the time, the Kennett Athletic Booster Club welcomes new members. For more information, visit the website at <https://sports.kcsd.org/booster-club>.