



**KENNETT
CONSOLIDATED
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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**WINTER
2018**

Kennett Middle School Redesignated a School to Watch

For the third time since 2012, Kennett Middle School was recognized by the Pennsylvania Don Eichhorn Schools: Schools to Watch program. This redesignation will be celebrated in May during a ceremony at the middle school.

The Pennsylvania Schools to Watch program annually recognizes a small number of diverse, high-performing, growth-oriented middle schools that demonstrate academic excellence, developmental responsiveness to the unique challenges of early adolescence, social equity, and school structures and processes that support and sustain the path to excellence. The middle school joins a very select cadre of 35 schools in Pennsylvania and more than 450 schools across the country that have earned the distinction of being Schools to Watch; only five others are located in the Delaware Valley Region.

A Pennsylvania Don Eichhorn School is a school that has made marked progress in meeting all of the nationally endorsed criteria for high-performing middle schools, including the following:

- **Academic Excellence.** They challenge all students to use their minds well.
- **Developmental Responsiveness.** Sensitive to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.
- **Social Equity.** Socially equitable, democratic, and fair. They provide every student with high-quality teachers, resources, learning opportunities, and support. They keep positive options open for all students.
- **Organizational Structures and Processes.** They establish norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory toward excellence.

As part of the evaluation process, a group of educators visited Kennett Middle School to observe firsthand how the school functions on a daily basis. During their observation, they noted several areas where Kennett was exceeding expectations, including the following:

Students, teachers, administrators, and parents take great pride in the school community.

Middle school leaders are greatly respected by the staff for their passion for the middle level in focusing on what is best for the students.

The school provides many outstanding school- and community-based programs that support the school's Latino/a population.

The SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) program has strengthened lesson designs and student expectations.

"This was a collaborative effort that included every person throughout our school," Kennett Middle School principal Mr. Lorenzo DeAngelis says. "It took an honest collective effort to complete the evaluation process, and am extremely proud of our students, staff, and faculty."

Mr. DeAngelis appreciates the Schools to Watch process. "I am a self-reflective person, and the Schools to Watch committee looks at four large areas and provides feedback on our strengths and the areas that need improvement," he explains. "Being named a School to Watch is not an award to be won. It is a reflective process for growth. It is not a once and done process—it is a model for growth."

Science teacher Mrs. Joy Rosser and English language teacher Mrs. Brooke Giffi were members of the Schools to Watch team and were responsible for compiling

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Kennett High School Named One of Nation's Best

The Kennett Consolidated School District is proud to announce that U.S. News & World Report has once again named Kennett High School one of America's Best High Schools.

To produce the 2017 Best High Schools rankings, U.S. News & World Report teamed up with North Carolina based RTI International, a global nonprofit social-science research firm. The comprehensive rankings methodology is based on the key principles that a great high school must serve all of its students well, including disadvantaged populations, and that it must be able to produce measurable academic outcomes to show it is successfully educating its student body across a range of performance indicators.

Additionally, the graduation rate for ranked schools is 15 percent higher than schools that are not ranked.

New this year, U.S. News & World Report began factoring Advanced Placement® (AP)

exams in the ranking methodology to highlight schools that expose their students to a diverse and rigorous high school curriculum. With an AP pass rate of 66 percent (meaning students scored a three or higher on an AP exam), Kennett High School students have shown that they can rise to a challenge.

"Congratulations to our students, faculty, staff, administration, parents, and Board of Education," says Kennett Consolidated School District superintendent Dr. Barry Tomasetti. "These awards are the result of many focused individuals giving their best efforts to provide a remarkable educational experience for our children. A Kennett education is second to none in preparing students for a successful future."

"The most recent recognition by U.S. News & World Report naming Kennett High School as one of America's best is something that all students and teachers should embrace with pride," says Kennett High School principal Dr. Jeremy Hritz. "This prestigious honor is the result of their hard work and dedication."

For more information on the U.S. News & World Report's ranking processes and details on Kennett High School's rankings, please visit www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools.

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Kennett Consolidated School District Comes Together for a Cause

Penn State University is known for many things—excellent academics, competitive athletics, and a loyal alumni network—but one of its crowning achievements is the Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon, more commonly known as THON. This campus-wide tradition has a contagious energy that has trickled down to high schools and middle schools across the state which join in on the fun and host their own Mini THONs, including right here in the Kennett Consolidated School District. On February 23 and 24, Kennett High School held its third annual Mini THON fundraiser.

THON is the largest student-run philanthropic venture in the world, both in revenue raised and involvement. It began in 1973, raising \$2,000 with 39 couples dancing for 30 hours straight. Since then, THON has grown exponentially—the weekend is now a 36-hour, no-sleep, no-sitting dance marathon. In 2017 alone, THON raised more than \$10 million for the Four Diamonds Foundation, an organization that assists families with medical bills and funds pediatric cancer research. The mission of THON is to dance until there's a cure—and they do it all “for the kids.”

The high school and middle school events have the same format as the original THON, with students hosting a dance marathon to raise money for the Four Diamonds Foundation. Students have been working on Mini THON efforts since the beginning of the school year, and on Friday, January 26, Kennett High School officially kicked off THON activities with a rally to give students a sneak peek of what to expect. There was high energy music, games, and information on how donation dollars are spent and the impact of THON on the children and families affected by pediatric cancer.

The rally also featured a special guest, New Garden Elementary School first grade student Grayson Savery, along with his mother, Mrs. Jaclyn Savery. Grayson was diagnosed with a form of pediatric brain cancer in 2012, when he was just two years old. He completed 18 months of chemotherapy at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; as a result, his cancer is in remission. During the rally, Mrs. Savery shared the story of how three friends Grayson made while in recovery had passed away in the previous year. Grayson, moved by his friends' passings, assembled an “angel shelf” with four items: three representing his friends and one representing himself, for when he becomes an angel. His mother was touched by Grayson's compassion and understanding of life. She thanked everyone at Kennett who dedicated themselves to dance for kids like Grayson and his friends.

In the spirit of the original THON, Kennett High School's Mini THON is a student led effort. The first Mini THON

began with student Shaun Connelly in 2015. Shaun, now a Penn State student, approached Mrs. Lisa Teixeira, library media specialist, about starting the dance marathon fundraiser at the high school. While she first thought it was like most other fundraisers, she quickly realized the magnitude of a Mini THON event. “It's really at another level than other fundraisers,” says Mrs. Teixeira.

This year's chairs are twelfth grade students Anna Wilson and Erin Duffy and eleventh grade student Jayna Bruno. Both Anna and Erin have been involved since their sophomore year.

“We started off making posters [as sophomores] and now we oversee meetings and make sure that the committees have the support they need,” said Anna. There are 15 committees, including technology, operations, event fundraising, social media, entertainment, and food. The students have a thorough understanding of all it takes to host an event like this.

While the Mini THON is a new tradition, it's made such an impact on the student participants that they return as alumni. Mike Bellino, Drexel student and member of the Class of 2017, returned to DJ the Mini THON. “I really want to make sure the event keeps going,” says Mike. He recalls a Mini THON leadership summit he attended as a Kennett student where he listened to the story of a family whose child had passed away from pediatric cancer. One day after their child's passing, the family received a medical bill for \$30,000. They called their Four Diamonds representative and never saw that bill again. “It's stories like that that inspire me,” adds Mike.

In 2018, the whole Kennett Consolidated School District also participated by attending the Harlem Wizards game



Kennett High School freshmen (from left) Ryan Myers, Julia Snoke, Jacob Thompson, Jack Ryan, Robert Rauscher, David Diokno, Shannon Gouge, and Josette Wynn enjoyed their first Mini THON.

on February 10. Mr. Shawn Duffy, social studies teacher and new adviser to Mini THON, proposed not only raising money but having an event that brings the whole District together. That idea brought in the Harlem Wizards.

The Harlem Wizards provide family friendly entertainment while helping schools raise money. They performed for the District on Saturday, February 10, to a sold out crowd.

After months of preparation and planning, the students finally celebrated the fruits of their labor. From 8 PM on Friday, February 23, to 6 AM on Saturday, February 24, more than 200 enthusiastic participants stayed on their feet to raise money for pediatric cancer patients and research. The night was filled with games, laughter, and plenty of snacks as the students danced the night away. The community was also invited to participate on Friday evening from 8 to 10 PM. By the time all was said and done, Kennett High School's 2018 Mini THON events raised \$46,395.93 for the Four Diamonds Foundation.

The Kennett High School Mini THON was sponsored in part by Sinton Air Conditioning and Heating, Energy Transfer Solutions, Kelly's Sports, and the Kennett Education Foundation.

DISTRICT DIRECTORY

KENNETT CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT

300 East South Street
Kennett Square, PA 19348
610-444-6600
Fax: 610-444-6614
www.KCSD.org

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Alumna Spotlight on Susan Magee

On March 4, millions of people tuned in to watch the 90th Academy Awards. Winners like Guillermo del Toro, Frances McDormand, and Jordan Peele were celebrated along with the normally unsung heroes of filmmaking, like sound mixers and lighting designers. Although most of us cannot recall the winner for best sound editing (it was Alex Gibson and Richard King for Dunkirk), those winners and nominees still only represent a fraction of the people power needed to create a film. Cast and crew need to be fed, dressed up, and—most importantly—paid. That is the glamorous role of Kennett High School alumna Susan Magee (nee George), who works as a post-production accountant.

Susan ensures payment for all vendors while a film is in its post-production phase where it is edited and music is added. Those to be paid include actors, producers, directors, music rights, special effects studios, and more. “Basically, I keep all the bills paid,” Susan says.

Although she didn’t dream of being a post-production accountant, Susan knew from a young age that she wanted to work in the film industry. In high school, she participated in choir and chorale, cross country, and track and was the yearbook editor. Her family moved to Kennett during high school, and while making a major move wasn’t ideal, Susan was glad it was to Kennett. “Being at Kennett was a really good experience for me,” she adds. During the summer, she took classes at Syracuse University and Harvard University, studying topics from rhetoric to French to screenwriting. That was when she discovered her passion for screenwriting.

When she graduated from Kennett High School, Susan decided to pour her writing skills into a different area: advertising. She attended Penn State University, where she obtained a degree in advertising with a minor in film.

After graduation, Susan freelanced in advertising and publishing for four years and moved away from her Pennsylvania home to New Mexico where she fell back in love with writing. Eventually, she and her husband

moved back to Pennsylvania. She applied to two highly rated film programs at American University and Columbia University. “I figured, if I’m going to do this, I’m going to go big,” she says. She was accepted into both programs and completed her MFA in screenwriting at Columbia.

Susan remembers Columbia fondly: “It was a very nurturing and creative community and I wrote—a lot.” She discovered an interest in accounting during a class on producing. Her professor, a producer actively working in the industry, brought in several people he worked with, including set and costume designers. One day, he brought in his accountant, the person who would eventually bring Susan into the profession. They stayed in touch, and once Susan had completed her classwork, it turned out her professor’s accountant was looking for an assistant. That was the opportunity that began her career. In 2002, Susan officially began working on films. With her career taking off and a new family, she put writing to the side for a time.

Susan has worked as a post-production accountant on several films, including Silver Linings Playbook and Straight Outta Compton. She says her most memorable experiences happened on the beloved romantic comedy *Must Love Dogs* (2005) and the not-so-beloved adventure film *10,000 B.C.* (2008).

Susan sat in on a *Must Love Dogs* pre-production meeting with the rest of the crew. The script was still in development, so the film director, Gary David Goldberg, best known for his work on *Family Ties*, encouraged everyone to look at it and submit any notes they might have. “TV is a very collaborative environment, and he brought that energy to this project,” adds Susan.

That night, she pored over the script and came back with five pages of notes, which she handed off to an assistant. A few days later, the director called her to go over the notes; one of her ideas made it into the final cut of the film. One of the film’s stars, Diane Lane, also read one of Susan’s scripts.

While *10,000 B.C.* was not as well received as *Must*



Love Dogs, working on it allowed Susan to explore Namibia and South Africa; after her work wrapped up, her husband joined her and they traveled around Africa together.

Susan has completed four full-length features, including an action film, a drama, and a romantic comedy. She’s also written television scripts for the programs *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Roswell*, and *Friends*.

In 2013, Susan began working on a graphic novel titled *Denial* about a woman who loses her child after a car accident. The woman’s grief rips holes in the universe, making parallel universes collide. With her oldest daughter helping her find balance, they band together to save the world.

For young people looking to enter film or any creative industry, Susan says: “Dream big. If you want to make movies, make movies every day; if you want to write, write every day. Keep putting yourself out there.” She also encourages students to look at opportunities to get involved with the local film industry through Philadelphia and Pittsburgh film offices.

Kennett Middle School Receives National Recognition for Innovative STEM Curriculum

The Kennett Consolidated School District is pleased to announce that Kennett Middle School has been recognized as a Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Distinguished School for providing broad access to transformative learning opportunities for students through PLTW Gateway. It is one of just 110 middle schools across the United States to receive this honor.

This recognition honors schools committed to increasing student access, engagement, and achievement in their PLTW programs. To be eligible for the designation, Kennett Middle School had to:

- offer at least one PLTW Gateway unit at each grade level;
- have more than 50 percent of the student body participate in the program during the 2016–2017 school year; and
- have 25 percent of students advancing to high school participate in two or more units.

The PLTW curriculum was implemented five years ago during the 2012–2013 school year. Previously, Kennett Middle School had only a few technology courses. The District wanted to grow by implementing the best program it could find, which research showed to be the PLTW curriculum. The program is ranked nationally and internationally and includes training that allows Kennett teachers to collaborate with colleagues who teach from the same curriculum.

When it comes to the quality of the curriculum, STEM teacher Mr. Jeff Powell says, “You can’t write a better one.” Its comprehensive and easy-to-use format gives teachers the freedom to customize the learning

experience for all the students they serve. “This program is really the best of the best,” adds STEM teacher Mrs. Jillian Bonacquisti.

Students in all grade levels move through the three STEM courses during their time in the middle school. Much like art or consumer science courses, the STEM courses rotate on a quarterly basis, so students participate in this curriculum every day for a quarter of the school year.

In sixth grade, they study design and modeling where they discover the design process and develop an understanding of the influence of creativity and innovation in their lives, creating the foundation for more advanced STEM classes. In seventh grade, they move onto app creation where they are exposed to computer science by developing solutions to problems through mobile app development. They learn skills like coding and solve problems in a variety of areas, including health, environment, and education. This builds on their foundations and prepares them for the more rigorous eighth grade class which focuses on the history, development, and influence of automation and robotics. They learn about mechanical systems, energy transfer, and machine automation and put those principles to the test using the VEX Robotics platform. The application of real-world problems continues in this class; students are asked to think like mechanical, electrical, and computer engineers collaborating on projects.

The students love the hands-on STEM learning environment. “We have students who work on projects during lunch time,” said Mr. Powell. “We even have students who ask if they can take the STEM class again next quarter.”

Thanks to PLTW, students are learning more than how to program robots or design apps for mobile devices: they’re developing skills they can use in all areas of life. “They’re learning how to think outside the box and be their own leaders,” says Mrs. Bonacquisti.

Mr. Lorenzo DeAngelis, principal at Kennett Middle School, says, “Project Lead the Way has taken our school to the next level. With the excellent training and professional development, our teachers have been able to execute the program with fidelity. Mrs. Bonacquisti and Mr. Powell have been an integral part of the implementation and success of our program. All of the students in our STEM classes are actively engaged and excited to participate in the PLTW curriculum.”

“We’re really thankful for what the district has done to create these opportunities,” adds Mrs. Bonacquisti.

About PLTW

Project Lead The Way is a nonprofit organization that provides a transformative learning experience for K-12 students and teachers across the United States. Project Lead The Way empowers students to develop in-demand, transportable knowledge and skills through pathways in computer science, engineering, and biomedical science. Project Lead The Way’s teacher training and resources support teachers as they engage their students in real-world learning. More than 10,500 elementary, middle, and high schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia offer Project Lead The Way programs. For more information on Project Lead The Way, visit pltw.org.

Kennett High School Mock Trial Team Places Fourth

Kennett High School's Mock Trial Senior Team placed 4th out of 18 teams in the Chester County Round of this year's statewide Mock Trial Competition sponsored by the Pennsylvania Bar Association Young Lawyers Division.

Throughout February, 249 high schools across Pennsylvania competed at the district and regional levels. Pennsylvania's mock trial program, now in its 35th year, is one of the largest in the nation according to the Pennsylvania Bar Association.

On November 3, 2017, the students were given information about a realistic yet fictional case to read and prepare. This year's case involved a civil proceeding to determine whether the plaintiff, Silva Morel, was wrongfully terminated from employment at Tiger Tail Technologies. Mrs. Morel was let go by Tiger Tail Technologies, a firm based in Chester County, after she "blew the whistle" claiming to have witnessed a Tiger Tail Technologies officer bribing a foreign official. Tiger Tail Technologies claimed that no bribe had occurred and that Mrs. Morel's employment was terminated for reasons other than whistleblowing.

Kennett High School had two teams contending: the Senior Team (pictured at right and including juniors Victoria Freire and Avery Chapman and seniors Joe Schlitz, Hannah Church, Eli Smith, Kevin Fiss, Quinn Huffaker, Ryley Harris, Jake Kalscheur, Ben Jordan, Ben Gaver, Tyler Bowdoin, and Brice Chapman) and the Junior Team (Chase Harris, Evan Sharp, Matt Jordan, Sam Griffin, McKenna Norton, Gustavo Andres

Castaneda, Ariatna Ortiz Jasso, Victoria Kelly, Lily Ehren, Tomi Adetayo, Catt Seamon, Katherine Holguin, and Jack Giles).

"All of these students are involved in many clubs, sports, and activities and do an exceptional job managing this difficult extracurricular activity," says Mrs. Mary Kay Gaver, an attorney and one of Kennett High School's Mock Trial team advisors.

Mrs. Gaver adds, "Mock Trial is unique because there is no right answer. The cases are intentionally set up to be ambiguous, so both sides have the ability to win. The fact that there is no 'right' solution to the problem and that the jurors' decision is somewhat subjective is very frustrating for most high school students. Our Mock Trial students have shown a remarkable ability to work through that ambiguity to build a persuasive case."

Kennett's teams competed on February 6 and February 13 at the Justice Center in West Chester. On February 6, half of each team participated on the plaintiffs' side while on February 13, the remaining students on Kennett's two teams vied as the defendants' representation. Kennett went 3-1 in its trials, with the Senior Team winning both of its trials with unanimous jury verdicts. The Senior Team advanced to the district playoffs, where the team lost, but Hannah Church won



the award for Best Advocate and Victoria Friere won Best Witness.

The Mock Trial club is advised by Kennett High School business teacher Mr. Bill Fritsch; Mrs. Mary Kay Gaver, mother of Paul (KHS Class of 2011), Henry (KHS Class of 2014), and Ben (KHS Class of 2018); Lenny Rivera, father of Justin (KHS Class of 2011), Sydney (KHS Class of 2013), and Julia (KHS Class of 2014); Dave Harris, father of Ryley (KHS Class of 2018) and Chase (KHS Class of 2020); and Michelle Barone, an assistant district attorney in the Chester County DA's Office.

New Garden Families Celebrate Their Heritage

When it comes to bringing people together, there is one thing we all love to do - eat! This idea was premise behind New Garden Elementary School's first International Family Night.

When brainstorming activities for the upcoming school year, the New Garden Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) looked to bring the school's families together. Everyone agreed—it's easy to gather people with the promise of food.

PTO president Mrs. Katya Neiburg-Wheeler thought back to her own Russian heritage and how diverse the families of the New Garden community are. "People

love food, so it made sense to have a night dedicated to people's heritages and their food," she says.

Once it was decided, the PTO began advertising, sending flyers home with students with tear-off forms that parents could fill out with what dish they wanted to bring. The response was huge! One hundred and fifty families responded and attended the event, held in the school's cafeteria.

Several countries were featured at the event, including Mexico, China, Egypt, Italy, Ireland, Vietnam, Brazil, the United States, and many more. Every table featured facts about each country, and every student received

a passport and collected a stamp from every country "visited." When their passport was filled, students could enter a raffle to win prizes.

The night wasn't just great for students, it was a way for parents to connect with each other. "I've had parents e-mail me and stop me in the hallway to tell me how great the event was," says Mrs. Neiburg-Wheeler.

The event was so popular among families that the PTO has decided to make it an annual event. "It was a really fun and social night that broke down barriers of culture and language," said New Garden Elementary principal Mrs. Susan McArdle.

STEM Lounge Fosters Learning

President Barack Obama once said, "Science is more than a school subject, it's an approach to the world." As the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) grow, so do STEM education opportunities. With Kennett High School's growing and rigorous STEM curriculum, Mr. Toby Chu decided to open his classroom to make a space for STEM students to meet and work on projects. With a few couches and a lot of learning, a corner of Mr. Chu's classroom has become the STEM Lounge.

The creation of this space began in 2017, when Mr. Chu recognized that many of the STEM class projects required out-of-class work using software that was only found on laptops in his classroom. Seeing that students couldn't do the work at the library or another computer lounge, Mr. Chu set some up some couches in the corner of his room.

The STEM Lounge has a relaxed, college-like atmosphere, which was Mr. Chu's goal from the beginning. "All colleges have a study area outside of classrooms," he says. "This will let students know what they can expect after graduation."

The students also appreciate having an alternative atmosphere to a traditional classroom. Twelfth grade student Ashley Pesce says, "I really enjoy the comfortable couches after sitting at a desk all day."

Twelfth grade student Lauren Pizzini agrees, saying, "It's a good corner where you can get work done."

While students who enroll in STEM courses typically pursue a STEM major and hope to make a career in the field, even students with other career aspirations find value in the classes. Neither Ashley nor Lauren intends to pursue a STEM career, but both enjoyed the class.

"It's a great program where you're learning brand new things," says Lauren. Ashley also encourages other female students to take the class.

Currently, Kennett High School offers four STEM classes: Intro to Engineering Design, Principles of Engineering, Civil Engineering, and Aerospace Engineering. Mr. Chu hopes to add a digital electronics class and implement more technology. "We have 3D printers at the ready, and we want to keep our STEM curriculum as cutting-edge as possible."



Although this space has only been available since September 2017, it has quickly become popular among the students. Along with enjoying the more relaxed atmosphere, they recognize their teacher's sacrifice. "Mr. Chu always takes time out to help us when we're in the lounge," says twelfth grade student Wes Sammons. "He'll even eat lunch here instead of the faculty lounge. It's really the perfect touch to Kennett High School."

Comfortable Seating Promotes Reading

As long as schools have existed, the standard seating arrangement has been a chair and a desk. A classroom usually has 20 to 30 identical desks and chairs set up in rows or even in a half circle for class discussions, but that's beginning to change. Contemporary classrooms have started looking more like Starbucks cafés thanks to a new educational movement of student-focused classrooms and flexible seating. More classrooms are opting for a comfortable learning environment, including Mrs. Katherine Roten's reading intervention classroom at Kennett Middle School.

Mrs. Roten's classroom is filled with stability balls, low tables with floor cushions, high top tables with stools, and cozy lounge chairs. She gently scents the room with an essential oil diffuser and plays ambient acoustic guitar music as the students walk into the classroom. Every student can choose where to sit. "I even have students who choose to sit at a traditional desk," says Mrs. Roten.

Flexible seating is more common at the elementary level, which is where Mrs. Roten first had the idea; she previously taught at New Garden Elementary School. Upon arriving at the middle school six years ago, Mrs. Roten experimented with a few flexible seating options bringing in some of her own furniture from home. When she saw the students' positive response, she decided to apply for a grant from the Kennett Education Foundation to provide even more options for her classroom.

"I really wanted to make this classroom a place where students want to be, not just have to be," says Mrs. Roten. She also emphasizes the importance of at-home reading. "I'm hoping that by making an environment that feels like home, they can take those skills and transition them to their home."

Beginning in the 2016–2017 school year, Mrs. Roten

worked with a group of students to choose what kind of seating to have. They measured the room and determined what furniture would fit best. Mrs. Roten then applied for the grant over the summer and received \$1,500. In the fall, her new group of students voted with this question in mind: "Where would be the best place for you to learn?" Parents also had a vote, with their students' learning styles in mind, on parent-teacher night.

When the furniture arrived, students rotated their seats for a month so they could figure out where they learned best.

"The kids are so great when it comes to choosing their seats," says Mrs. Roten. "They don't fight because they all truly know where it is they learn best. They're very self-reliant."

Even with flexible seating, there is still structure in the classroom. Mrs. Roten has high expectations of her students, and there are consequences if a seating arrangement leaves a student unfocused. In such cases, a student will receive a warning and may have to move to a traditional desk, although Mrs. Roten has only had to discipline her students in that way a few times.

Along with improved learning, Mrs. Roten has also noticed behavioral problems dropping significantly in her classroom. She finds that flexible seating creates a bond of mutual respect between the teacher and student. The students have the agency to choose where they want to learn; and Mrs. Roten respects that choice, so the students then respect her authority. Middle school students go through a lot, and giving them choices about where to sit and who to sit by makes them more comfortable."



Students like the flexible seating options available to them in Mrs. Roten's class.

Mrs. Roten's students echo her sentiments. Sixth grade student Yasdomy Bavtista says being in this classroom helps her get comfortable and improves her reading.

"This room is brighter, and it makes it better to do our work," adds sixth grade student Litzy Zavala.

Discovering where they learn and work best is an indispensable skill as students move into high school and post-school life. For any skeptics, Mrs. Roten extends an invitation to visit her class.

Students at Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center Celebrate Kindness

Kindergarten is a time of great growth—not only academically but in all aspects of development as students begin learning values like honesty and sharing. Among these values is kindness, and the students at Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center spent a whole week learning about and practicing this invaluable trait.

From January 22 to 26, the school celebrated kindness through books and activities that culminated in an exciting end-of-week rally filled with dancing. The weeklong kindness event was a part of the Great Kindness Challenge, a positive and proactive bullying prevention initiative for pre-K to twelfth grade schools.

Students began the week with the book *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* by Carol McCloud. The book explains the importance and impact of kind actions using the metaphor of an invisible bucket that contains all your good thoughts and feelings. When your bucket is full, you're happy, but when it's not, you're sad. The only way to fill a bucket is to have someone else fill it by doing an act of kindness. Using this framework, the students of Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center set out to become bucket fillers.

Throughout the week, the students performed several acts of kindness, including drawing posters for classrooms in other schools that encourage those students to be kind. They also recognized each other's good deeds and filled out "bucket filler" slips with a description of what they did.

During the wrap-up rally, principal Mrs. April Reynolds held up a thick stack of bucket filler slips and declared how proud she was of her students. The students also shared what they had learned about kindness during the week.

Kindergarten student Melanie Herara said, "Being kind is important."

Her friend, Faith Pazini, added, "If you don't be kind to others, others won't be kind to you."

"It's a really great way for us to come together as a school," says school counselor Mrs. Kourtney Phillips. "I do a lot of character education, but to have a unified effort with all teachers and students is amazing."



Celebrating 100 Days of School at New Garden Elementary School

Counting is an essential building block of mathematics, and counting to 100 is a major milestone for elementary aged students. That number occupies their mind as the biggest thing to exist, at least until they learn about a million, or better yet, infinity. Still, the first 100 days of school holds special significance for elementary students, and the first grade at New Garden Elementary celebrated in a very special way.

On February 6, the students dressed like 100-year-olds. With their hair sprayed gray and wearing oversized spectacles, they celebrated 100 days of being smarter and showed off how much they had learned. They wrote 100 words they had learned to read and write, created a class chain of things they learned in 100 days, and

practiced counting to 100 with necklaces made from Froot Loops cereal.

The day ended with a celebratory snack-- a pretzel rod and two donuts to make the number 100 along with a juice toast to all that the students had accomplished and the hard work ahead of them.

"It was a wonderful day to celebrate all the learning and fun that happens in first grade at New Garden Elementary school," says teacher Mrs. Lisa McCoy.



Celebrating Dr. Seuss & Read Across America Week

The Kennett Consolidated School District joined thousands of schools across the country to celebrate the National Education Association's 21st Annual Read Across America celebration. Read Across America began in 1998 to celebrate the legacy of Dr. Seuss by encouraging children to read. Since its creation, educators, parents, and students have embraced it and helped to turn it into one of the largest celebrations in the world. Once again, the District's elementary schools joined in on the festivities from February 26 through March 2.

Bancroft Elementary School students and faculty enjoyed events like Mystery Reader Day, where teachers made surprise visits to reading classes to share a story, and Books and Blankets Day, where students and staff brought cozy blankets and snuggled up while reading a book. They capped off the week with Accelerated Reader Day, part of the Read the Most from Coast to Coast challenge, where students took Accelerated Reader tests to evaluate their reading aptitude.

Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center also joined in on the fun, filling its week with reading activities. Students were treated to both Mystery Readers and Kennett High School students as guests and expressed their creativity in several ways—from pajamas to crazy socks to silly clothing, the students and staff at Mary D. Lang know how to make reading fun.



Mary D. Lang Kindergarten Center students pose for a wacky photo with school counselor Mrs. Kourtney Phillips.

New Garden Elementary students and staff celebrated reading all week. Every day used a different book theme, including the Dr. Seuss books *I Am Not Going to Get Up Today* and *Fox in Socks*. They were also treated to a visit from Ms. Frizzle and the Magic School Bus! Mrs. Lauretta Clay, bus driver and New Garden Elementary parent, took students on her own "magic school bus"

and shared a story.

Read Across America is a fun way for students to improve their reading comprehension skills. 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."

Finance Club Visits the Floor of the New York Stock Exchange

The Kennett High School Finance Club was founded in the fall of 2016 by students who wanted to form an organization that fed their growing interest in investing and emphasized not only education but philanthropy.

"We aim to learn as much as possible about the market by actively investing and simulating authentic stock market conditions. Our ultimate mission is to then donate all of our profits back to the community," says club president Michael Crognale.

Since the club's inception, membership has increased to approximately 40 students. Last fall they set themselves the very lofty goal of visiting the New York Stock Exchange. However, it was far more difficult to gain access to the floor of the Stock Exchange than they had anticipated.

Fortunately, Mr. Vincent Crognale stepped in to help. Mr. Crognale is the father of Finance Club president Michael Crognale and also First Vice President of Wealth Management and Branch Manager at Janney Montgomery Scott. Mr. Crognale made the students' goal a reality by using his contacts to arrange the visit.

So, on January 24, 2018, 22 members of the club, along with Mr. Crognale and Mr. Shawn Duffy, Finance Club advisor and social studies teacher, traveled to New York City where they were treated to nearly two hours on the trading floor. They also ate lunch on Stone Street and took pictures with the "Fearless Girl" and "Charging Bull" statues. Later in the afternoon, they visited the 9/11 Memorial and the new World Trade Center and returned home that evening tired but inspired.

"Not only did Mr. Crognale make it possible for Kennett



students to enjoy a truly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, his firm paid for our transportation. All of us are extremely grateful for his generosity," says Mr. Duffy.

Students Embrace Unusual Class Pets

Class pets are usually something small and fluffy, like a hamster or a rabbit. However, in classrooms across the country, students are becoming acquainted with local species of trout. These fish are more than class pets—they're an interdisciplinary learning experience.

On October 31, 2017, Mrs. Anne Bailey's class received 236 trout eggs as a part of Pennsylvania's Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program. The goal of the TIC program is to introduce cold water conservation to Pennsylvania schools by raising brook trout, a native cold water species, from eggs to fingerlings. The program fosters awareness of cold water conservation in grades 3 through 12 and encourages participation in cold water resource projects and recreation programs. It is funded by the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Council.

"When they arrived, some of the eggs had already hatched, and that was a surprise," says fourth grade student Andrew McConn. The students were immediately enamored with their unorthodox class pets. They watched as the eggs hatched and learned about the trout life cycle. For instance, young trout don't swim right away; they sink to the bottom and eat a yolk sac before swimming up to the water's surface.

"We even had a two-headed trout who survived for two months," says Mrs. Bailey. That peculiar fish was named Wonder and was a favorite among the students.

This project wasn't limited to Mrs. Bailey's classroom; the entire fourth grade was involved. Different classrooms came to observe the fish, ask questions, and learn more about their environment and life cycle.

The project easily integrated into all areas of curriculum. "We've talked about camouflage, adaption, conservation, and Pennsylvania's natural resources," says Mrs. Bailey. "Students have even written poems about the fish."

This has also been a hands-on learning experience, especially when monitoring the fishes' environment. The students have to recreate the conditions of a cold water stream and make sure the ratio of "good" and "bad" bacteria is suitable. "It's fun to learn the science when testing the water," says fourth grade student Ava Schlosser.

"Having a hands-on experience means so much more to kids than just reading from a book," adds Mrs. Bailey.

Along with all the excitement and learning, there is a little sadness. Trout have a low survival rate. Only 5

percent of eggs laid ever reach adulthood, which means the students had to face the passing of some of their fish. The passing of a beloved animal, even a class pet, can be difficult for elementary students, but the fourth grade students at Greenwood Elementary School had a different reaction.

Upon the discovery of their first fallen friend, Mrs. Bailey asked her class what they should do. One student suggested burying the fish in the courtyard to improve the soil. With the rest of the class in full agreement, that's exactly what they did. They have continued to do this with every fallen trout.

"They handled the deaths really well. Their first thoughts were, 'What good can come from this?'" says Mrs. Bailey.

Even with a few fallen friends, Mrs. Bailey feels confident about the trout's release. For the experiment to be considered successful, the class would have to release 10 to 12 fingerlings; as of February, they have 30 remaining fingerlings. The release will happen in the spring, sometime in April or May, at White Clay Creek in Chester County, a stream chosen by the PA Fish and Boat Council.

Passionate Writers Come Together at Kennett Middle School

Beat Generation writer Jack Kerouac once said, "I was amazed by the fact that I was not the only writer living, not the only youth with a million hungers and not one of them appeasable." Finding kinship over a common activity like writing can bring immense comfort, as eighth grade students at Kennett Middle School have found.

In the fall of 2017, eighth grade English language arts teacher Ms. Kathryn Hahn gave a letter to her students that described her history with reading and writing, as she does every year. The students responded with their own letters about their experiences with reading and writing.

"I was overwhelmed by the number of students who expressed that writing was a passion of theirs," says Ms. Hahn. "I'm lucky to get two, but I had 15 students saying this."

Ms. Hahn saw an opportunity. She proposed a student writing group where she wasn't going to lead or organize, just facilitate what the students wanted to do.

The students wasted no time establishing their writing club and began meeting at lunch on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. They set goals, started writing pieces, developed a hierarchy of editing for various forms—poetry, short story, nonfiction—and put together a website to showcase their work. The club has become a place where students can demonstrate leadership and organization. Eighth grade student and founding member Ashley Brown says, "I like that everyone has a vote—everyone's voice is heard."

The website was built by club member and eighth

grade student Nika Farivar using the Weebly website-building platform. "We wanted to make our writing accessible to everyone," says Nika. This is her second year in the District, so she joined the club to meet new people and to write more often. She likes writing poetry and fantasy pieces and enjoys reading fantasy and science fiction.

While the club is limited to eighth grade students, it also hosts writing contests open to all students. As of January, the club has held two contests: "Fright to Write," a Halloween spooky short story contest, and "Writing Wonderland," for winter-themed poetry, songs, and raps. Club members read all the entries and vote on the winners who are recognized on the school announcements and have their winning pieces published on the website.

"We're still working on spreading the word about the website," says eighth grade student Alex Barron. Alex is a founding member of the club, and several other members call her its "unofficial president." She acts as editor and helps with decisions when necessary but mostly enjoys coming to club meetings to work on her poetry. She says she would really like to see members submit a piece every quarter but ultimately wants people



who enjoy writing to find a time and place to write in the club. Along with poetry, Alex also enjoys writing short stories and reading a variety of young-adult fiction.

At the core of it, the writing club is just fun, as member and eighth grade student Michael McNamara puts it. "The opportunity to write has been really useful to me and to everyone else," says Michael, who enjoys all kinds of literature and writes whatever pops into his head.

To explore the Writing Club's projects, visit its website at kwcquarterly.weebly.com.

Reading with Community Members

Reading is often viewed as a solitary activity, but sharing the joy of a book with someone—especially a child—is one of the great joys in life. That joy was abundant for both community volunteers and students in an event organized by Bancroft Elementary School in conjunction with Partners in Outreach.

The goal of Partners in Outreach, a nonprofit organization based in Chester County, is "to foster relationships, facilitate partnerships, and provide opportunities to service others with love, integrity, and humility." The group runs a few well organized campaigns each year, connecting communities in need with those who can give. Campaigns include providing outfits, camp supplies, and books to individuals and to a variety of organizations in the area. Mrs. Maryanne Parsons, the group's founder and president, first learned of opportunities to connect with Bancroft Elementary

School by assisting with several giving campaigns, including a coat drive and a "Blessings in a Backpack" drive.

Bancroft Elementary School had a school-wide book fair in the previous school year with which Mrs. Parsons lent a hand. "Bancroft is a fabulous school, and we were so impressed with the faculty, staff, and students! There was such kindness and warmth extended to us and certainly a feeling of gratitude was expressed from everyone," said Mrs. Parsons.

In January, all first and third grade students at Bancroft were treated to reading time with players from the Villa Maria Academy High School basketball team. Along with reading with the community volunteers, each student got to take home his or her own hardcover book. Second grade students were treated to the same experience in February.

The event was a great success for everyone involved. The students clearly enjoyed how knowledgeable their guest readers were and asked a lot of questions, and the volunteers enthusiastically chatted about the event and their experience on the drive back at their own school.

"It's a great way for the kids to see how to give back to their communities," said Title I Intervention Specialist Mrs. Kimberly Suydam, who worked closely with Mrs. Parsons to organize the program.



2018-2019 KCSD Academic Calendar

The 2018-2019 student school year will begin on Monday, August 27, 2018, and is tentatively set to end on Thursday, June 6, 2019, dependent on the need for inclement weather make-up days. The winter holiday will run from Monday, December 24, 2018, through Tuesday, January 1, 2019, with school resuming on Wednesday, January 2, 2019. Spring break will be Monday, April 15 through Friday, April 19, 2019. Graduation is scheduled for Friday, June 7, 2019.

Inclement weather make-up days will be added to the end of the school year. There are five days designated as "local holidays" in accordance with the ruling of the Department of Education. The designated local holidays are Monday, January 21, 2019 (Martin Luther King holiday); Monday, February 18, 2019 (President's Day holiday); and Monday, April 15 through Wednesday, April 17, 2019 (spring break).

2018-2019 Kindergarten Registration

Kindergarten registration for the 2018-2019 school year began on Thursday, March 1. Parents can pick up a registration packet at the main office of the Kindergarten Center or access it on the Kennett Consolidated School District's website at kcsd.org.

Once the packet is completed, you must contact the Student Registration Office at 610-444-4235 to schedule an appointment to finalize the registration process.



Students Blossom at Multicultural Student Leadership Conference

*When no one even cared
The rose, it grew from concrete
Keepin' all these dreams
Provin' nature's laws wrong
It learned how to walk without havin' feet
It came from concrete.*

- "The Rose That Grew from Concrete," Tupac Shakur

For students of color, seeing yourself as a leader without a model that reflects your life, values, and upbringing can feel like a rose struggling to grow in concrete. That's why Kennett High School ensures that these students get the resources to blossom by investing in their development.

On January 13, five students from Kennett High School attended the Multicultural Student Leadership Conference at Lehigh University, presented by the Lehigh Valley Student Leadership Association, to gain tools they need as they blossom into young leaders.

"These students are Kennett's finest," says assistant principal Mr. Raymond Fernandez, who chose the students who attended the conference: eleventh grade students Cassandra Garcia, Kayanna Phipps, Kassandra Ayllon, and Jorge Tapia, and ninth grade student Johnette Boddy. They were among the 220 students in attendance from 20 area high schools.

The theme of the conference was Cultivating Fear: One Young Leader at a Time, and its purpose was to provide high school students of all backgrounds with life and leadership skills that help them become positive and effective student leaders. The conference featured speakers, engaging workshops, a college and career fair, discussion panels, and networking opportunities.

Upon arriving, students were mixed into six groups in which they attended the workshops together. They moved through the day attending workshops, listening to speakers, speaking to college and career representatives of all backgrounds, and connecting with other student leaders in the area.

The students were ecstatic to share their experience about the conference.

"We met awesome people, learned new things, and felt

on top of the world by the end," said Cassandra.

Keyanna shared lessons she learned from the panelists and speakers, like how to balance confidence and humility. This was her second year at the conference, and she was surprised how many different things she learned from last year.

"I was shy last year, but I really built courage and confidence to talk to more people," Keyanna said

Keyanna's top school is Cheyney University where she intends to study psychology, but she is also considering Millersville University after speaking with a recruiter at the conference. She wants to host a campus visit with the Ujima Club of which she's a member.

The students also gained new insights about what they would like to do after high school. Both Cassandra and Johnette are now considering enlisting in the National Guard. Cassandra was thrilled when she saw that the National Guard would cover tuition for her dream school, West Chester University. She hopes to become a teacher in the Kennett Consolidated School District.

Kassandra explored different options for studying environmental science and environmental studies and connected with students interested in studying science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Jorge explored a lot of options, talking with Penn State University representatives about pre-law and with Lehigh University about forensics and ministry.

At the end of the conference, the students split up by gender to talk about gender empowerment. Jorge had an especially powerful experience during this part of the conference. The male students watched a spoken-word piece titled "Recovering Sexist" and discussed big questions such as what kind of legacy they want to leave behind.



Kennett High School Assistant Principal, Mr. Ray Fernandez (left) accompanied (from left) Brianna Fernandez, student at East High School; junior Cassandra Garcia; junior Keyanna Phipps; freshman Johnette Boddy; junior Kassandra Ayllon; and junior Jorge Tapia to the Multicultural Student Leadership Conference.

"That really stuck with me," says Jorge. "I want to be known as someone who gets involved."

Cassandra also found a lot of value at this last session. She felt like it was a place to be honest and was humbled by the students who came up to her afterward to compliment her on how she spoke her mind.

The students left inspired to display their own leadership at Kennett High School and in other areas of their lives. Cassandra was inspired to host a workshop on the stigma of mental illness in the Hispanic community, and Jorge felt empowered to lead other students in leadership-building conferences. Johnette wants to follow in her friend Keyanna's footsteps and present the keynote address at Kennett High School's own Multiculturalism and Diversity Conference that will be held on April 21.

"I recommend this experience to anyone who wants to go," says Cassandra. "I felt empowered and pulled out of my comfort zone, and I want someone else to feel the way I felt."

Academic Team Excels in Competition

Academic competitions have been a staple of colleges and high schools since 1953, and Kennett High School's Academic Team has been excelling this season in the Chester County Academic Competition.

The Chester County Academic Competition is sponsored by the Chester County Intermediate Unit and is in its 34th year of competition. Its mission is to promote lifelong learning, celebrate academic achievement, and enhance self-confidence as a member of a team by providing healthy yet challenging opportunities for high school students to develop academic, social, and personal skills.

The competitive circuit includes 24 high schools in Chester County. Each team competes in four matches, one per month, and the champion is determined not by matches won but by cumulative score. At each match,

three teams compete in three rounds. The rounds are broken into two sections: toss up, meaning any team can answer, and fanfare, where questions are directed to only one team. Topics include history, literature, math equations, and even spelling.

This year, Kennett High School has its largest overall team with 35 members, and Mr. Rob Socash, social studies teacher and team advisor, ensures that every member plays at least one round per season.

Much like student athletes, academic team members face a long season filled with practice and competition. They begin practicing during the second week of classes, have their first match in October, and don't conclude until January. If they make it to playoffs, that extends their season until March.

"This really gives students a place to shine," says Mr. Socash, "It's a space where they can be competitive other than athletics."

This year, while the final ranks are not totaled, Mr. Socash believes they're in 12th to 15th place, with twelfth grade student Ben Gaver as top performer. No matter the rank, Mr. Socash says this year's group of students is an "all-star team."

Much like an athletic team, the academic team has a very supportive camaraderie. The students come from all areas, from high academic achievers to student athletes and students involved in the performing arts.

"You need all kinds of intelligence," says Mr. Socash. "It's just not about being book smart."

Kennett Middle School Redesignated a School to Watch

Continued from page 1

Kennett Middle School's application. Both teachers also completed training to become members of the state team that evaluates other schools applying to become Schools to Watch.

"Being a member of the state team allows us to look at other schools through a different lens," Mrs. Giffi says. "It makes us appreciate Kennett Middle School even more."

Representatives from Kennett Middle School were recognized at the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education Professional Development Institute

in late February. Kennett Middle School will also be recognized with other Schools to Watch schools from across the country in Washington, DC, at the National Forum's National Schools to Watch conference on June 28 through 30, 2018.

"My hat is off to all of the stakeholders involved with our middle school," states Dr. Barry Tomasetti, superintendent of the Kennett Consolidated School District. "Together, they have developed a productive school climate where excellence and respect for others is expected from everyone."

Launched in 1999, Schools to Watch began as a national program to identify middle grade schools across the country that were meeting or exceeding 37 research based criteria developed by the National Forum. There are now 18 states across the country that have trained Schools to Watch State Teams, and more than 450 schools have been recognized across the country. Schools to Watch retains that honor for three years and then must reapply, as Kennett Middle School did.