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New Milford High School
 860-350-6647
 Mr. Greg Shugrue, Principal

Mr. Marc Balanda, Ass't. Principal
 Mrs. Liz Curtis, Ass't. Principal
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Schaghticoke Middle School
 860-354-2204
 Mrs. Dana Ford, Principal

Mrs. Jennifer Chmielewski, Ass't. Principal
 Mrs. Suzi Greene, Ass't. Principal



Sarah Noble Intermediate School
 860-210-4020
 Dr. Len Tomasello, Principal

Mrs. Anne Bilko, Ass't. Principal
 Mrs. Joan Kick, Ass't. Principal
 Mrs. Jennifer Meyers, Ass't. Principal
 Dr. Don Naiman, Ass't. Principal



Hill & Plain Elementary School
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John Pettibone Elementary School
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Northville Elementary School
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Spotlight on New Milford Schools

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You Know It's Fall When...



The buses roll and
students return....



The NMHS band
welcomes back staff at
the annual convocation....

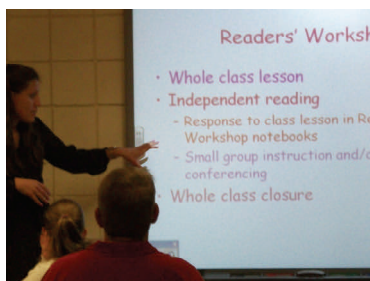


This issue of the *Spotlight* focuses on just a few of the annual rites of fall in our schools: the announcement of the New Milford Public Schools Teacher of the Year, the Open House and Curriculum Night events, and the start of college planning for our New Milford High School juniors and seniors. Also included is an article on the Common Core State Standards, a topic parents will continue to hear lots more about as the year goes on.



All of the New Milford Public Schools hosted Curriculum Nights/Open Houses for parents in September. The specific format varied from school to school.

At the elementary and intermediate level, the annual Curriculum Night is designed for administrators and teachers to meet with parents to explain grade level curricula, classroom schedules and routines, homework and behavioral expectations. Art, music, PE, library, special education, reading teachers and counseling staff were also on hand to meet parents and answer questions. Administrators also shared information on Common Core State Standards (see page 5 for more on that topic).



At Schaghticoke Middle School, where students are assigned to teams, parents started their evening in the LMC where they could browse the Book Fair if they so chose. They then followed their student's schedule as team teachers discussed a variety of topics that touched on the educational, physical and social development of the middle school student.



At Schaghticoke Middle School Open House had better have worn comfortable shoes! The evening's format had parents following both their student's A and B day schedules all in one evening. That meant navigating through teacher presentations of up to eight periods. These presentations lasted ten



minutes each with a five minute break in between. Since the presentations were all in different classrooms, parents really got a feel for how their student moves through the day. Similar to the format at the other schools, administrators also met with interested parents to discuss general school goals.



With these general introductions underway, parents can next look forward to individual parent/teacher conferences in November and December. Remember though, if you have any concerns about your child, you don't have to wait for parent/teacher conferences to voice them. All teachers have email addresses which can be accessed through the staff directories on each school's webpage or you can call the school during office hours and leave a message for the teacher.

Meet the New Milford Public Schools' Teacher of the Year for 2013-2014



Mr. Ryan Fitzsimmons
Mathematics Teacher
New Milford High School

Each year, parents, students and fellow staff members are invited to nominate a teacher for selection as New Milford's Teacher of the Year. The nominee must have taught in the district for five or more years and have demonstrated continued excellence of performance during his/her tenure. A Selection Committee then considers all the nominees based on the following guidelines:

- ◆ Demonstrated ability to inspire enthusiasm and motivation for learning in students.
- ◆ Demonstrated use of effective teaching techniques, flexibility of style, innovation, and creativity.
- ◆ Caring relationships with students.
- ◆ Demonstrated commitment to continuing professional growth and development.
- ◆ Respect and admiration of students, colleagues, parents, and administration.
- ◆ Personal philosophy and goals.
- ◆ Ability to articulate ideas clearly.
- ◆ Community involvement.

This year's honoree, New Milford High School Mathematics teacher Ryan Fitzsimmons, certainly fits the bill. A product of the New Milford Public Schools, Ryan is "home grown" talent. Upon his graduation from New Milford High School in 2000, Ryan attended Southern Connecticut State University where he received his BS in Mathematics with a minor in Physics and an MS in Elementary Education. He has been employed by the New Milford Public Schools since August 2005.

Ryan is well respected by students, parents and fellow staff members who laud him for his dedication and enthusiasm as well as his passion for teaching. To quote one of Ryan's students: "Mr. Fitz always believes in his students. No matter the difficulty of the course, he knows everyone has the potential to do better than what the students think." Ryan himself says "I want to have students find the ability they did not know existed, be challenged more than they have been before and support each other throughout the learning process." He delights in his students' small victories, whether they are a good grade on a quiz or a great observation made in class, for as Ryan says "these small victories are the ones students will remember". The best moment is when a student experiences what Ryan calls "math chills", that light bulb moment when a student struggling finally understands the concept.

A long standing wrestling and track and field coach at New Milford High School, Ryan likens teaching to coaching. "The classroom is a team; we work together to challenge each other, raise the performance level and better each other through our interactions each day." As for the future, Ryan says his goal is "always to connect with the students, find their interests, let them know that I am there to support them and let them see my passion for math".

NMHS Students Visit College During the School Day



A representative from Stony Brook University meets with interested students.

Students take a personality and career survey which they use as one tool in their Student Success Plan (SSP), a collection of programs and services that addresses academic, personal, social, and career topics for students in grades 9-12. In the sophomore year, Naviance is used to further explore career paths. Juniors utilize the program to perform a college search and see how they match up. For seniors, Naviance is used to build a resume, apply to colleges, request letters of recommendation and look for scholarships.

Admissions officers from many colleges visit New Milford High School in the fall to talk to students about their schools. Anyone is welcome to attend these meetings (including parents). Students can view the list of colleges visiting the high school's Career Center in Naviance, a college and career planning tool to which all high school students and parents have access.

Students entering the high school as freshmen meet with guidance counselors in October for their introduction to Naviance.



Students fill out interest cards to give to the representative from University of Vermont.



The University of New Hampshire representative talks to students.

Talk about one stop shopping!

If a junior or senior has a school on their college list in Naviance and that school is visiting New Milford High School, the student automatically receives notification in Naviance indicating the date and time the representative will be visiting. If the student is interested, he or she signs up in Naviance, prints the confirmation and takes it to their period teacher who signs it giving permission to attend. With over 70 colleges already scheduled to visit, students certainly have plenty from which to choose!

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

This is a topic the *Spotlight* has covered before and one that bears repeating since all public schools in Connecticut, New Milford included, will be implementing Common Core and new Common Core-aligned assessment this year.

CCSS

Mission Statement

The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.

Since July 2010, Connecticut and 46 other states have adopted CCSS. The CT State Department of Education says the standards tell us “what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade”. They are designed to be clear and concise to ensure that parents, teachers, and students have an understanding of the expectations in reading, writing, speaking and listening, language and mathematics wherever students go to school.

There are many resources available for parents wanting to find out more about Common Core State Standards and their accompanying assessment. To view brief introductory videos on the topic go to <http://www.commoncoreworks.org>.

The National PTA website <http://www.pta.org> has grade level Parent Guides to Student Success. National PTA created the guides for grades K-8 and two for grades 9-12 (one for English language arts/literacy and one for mathematics). The Guides include: key items that children should be learning in English language arts and mathematics in each grade, once the standards are fully implemented; activities that parents can do at home to support their child's learning; and methods for helping parents build stronger relationships with their child's teacher.

Finally, the [CT State Department of Education](http://www.sde.ct.gov) is a valuable resource for parents wanting to learn more about the implementation of Common Core State Standards in our home state.



Parent Resources

Where can I learn more?



- Go to the CSDE website: www.sde.ct.gov

- Click on Common Core State Standards link

- Click on Grade-by-Grade Parent Guides



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Fall in New England can be a magic place for young and old alike. Grab the family and take a walk, ride a bike, or jump in the car to admire the pretty leaves before they fall. Stop at a [Connecticut apple orchard](#) along the way and when you get back ask your children to help you make an [apple inspired treat](#).

Remember how much fun it was to do fall themed arts and crafts as a child? Your children, young or old, will enjoy them too. Try one or two of these simple ideas as a project with your child while you are waiting for your treat to bake:

LEAF PEOPLE: Glue a leaf to a sheet of paper and draw features to make them into leaf people and animals, add a scene around them. Silliest picture gets first bite.

STAINED GLASS: Collect leaves and arrange them on a piece of wax paper. Add wax crayon shavings and apply another piece of wax paper on top. Iron the paper together until crayon shavings have melted. Let cool, trim into desired shapes and hang in windows.

If you want something more active to do while the treat is baking try this:

LEAF BLOW GAME: Have a leaf race! Blow leaves across the table with a straw. First one across is the winner.

HIDE AND SEEK: Take turns hiding the leaf somewhere in the house

PARACHUTE LEAF TOSS: Take an old sheet outdoors, fill it with some of those leaves waiting to be raked and have the children help you toss them for a leaf rainstorm.

FAMILY FUN

The mission of the New Milford Public Schools, a collaborative partnership of students, educators, family and community, is to prepare each and every student to compete and excel in an ever-changing world, embrace challenges with vigor, respect and appreciate the worth of every human being, and contribute to society by providing effective instruction and dynamic curriculum, offering a wide range of valuable experiences, and inspiring students to pursue their dreams and aspirations.