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 Mr. Eric Williams, Asst. Principal



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 Mrs. Kerri Adakonis, Asst. Principal  
 Mrs. Jennifer Chmielewski, Asst. Principal  
 Mrs. Barbara Nanassy, Asst. Principal  
 Dr. Len Tomasello, Transition Admin.



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Mrs. Susan Murray, Principal  
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# Spotlight on New Milford Schools

Volume 7, Issue 10

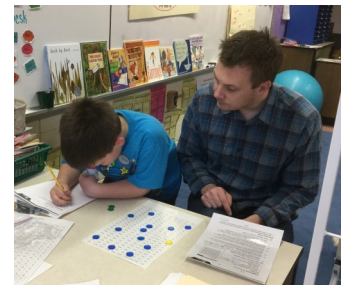
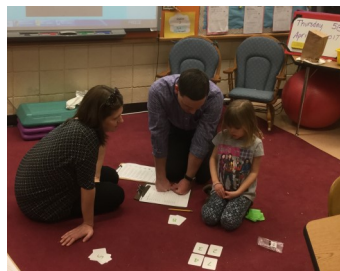
April 2017

## Student Led Conferences



New Milford Public Schools held parent teacher conferences this spring for all grades. For some parents at the K-5 level, the format was a little different from what they have traditionally experienced as this time their children, not the teacher, took the lead. In the student led conference format, students guide their parents through various spots throughout the classroom and into the hallway to tell them about their learning in each academic area, share their work and group projects, engage them in activities such as one of the grade level math games, and discuss their reflections about their strengths and goals for academic work and behavior.

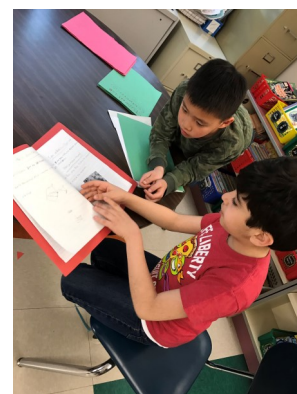
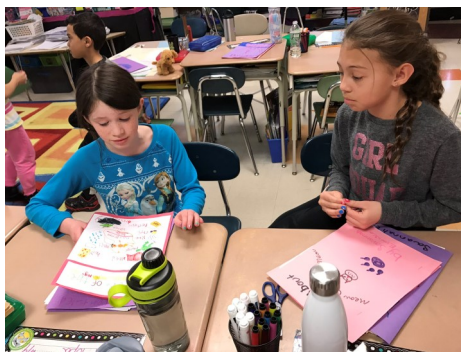
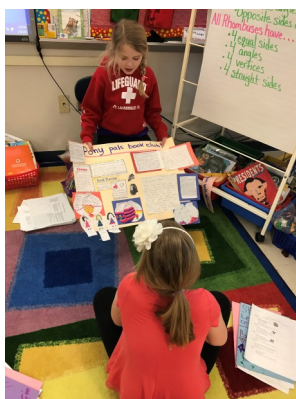
Principal Susan Murray says NES second grade teachers have been using the student led conference format for about six years. If a parent prefers a private individual conference, however, that also can be arranged. "Student led conferences are optional. Teachers are present to facilitate the conferences, coaching and cueing students as needed. Teachers also are available for parent questions, but it is truly the student who conducts the conference. Student led conferences also provide parents with the opportunity to experience their children's curriculum - viewing the posted learning resources, projects, and computer programs. I've seen parents and students compete to solve a three digit addition problem, and the students finished first each time without using a pencil because they used the efficient mental math strategies they learned in class."



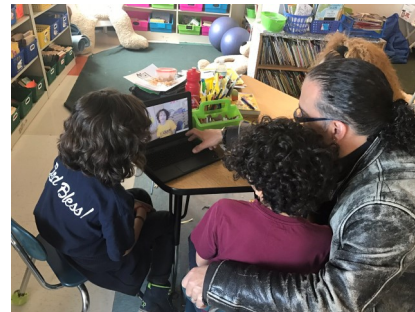
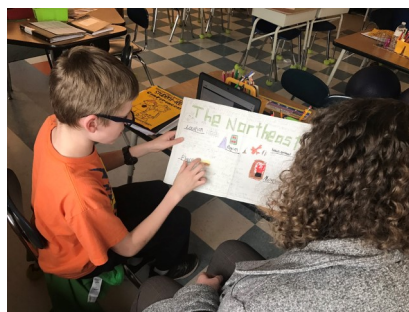
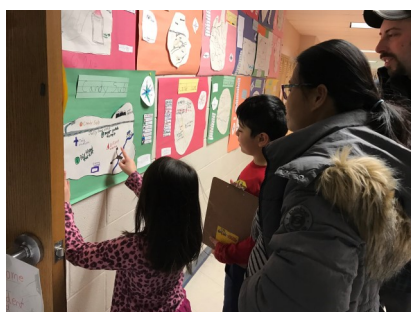
SNIS Grade 4 teacher Mrs. Cindy Bonnell agrees that the student led conference has many benefits. "This type of conferencing is popular in many schools. It has several benefits, including boosting a child's self-esteem and educational ownership by allowing children to highlight their learning with the parent as the audience. Every child has ample time to prepare for the conference and this builds excitement and anticipation to share his/her learning with their parents,

and provides children with a way to more actively participate in their own learning. Together, the parent and child share work and discuss progress. Children articulate their strengths, weaknesses and goals to their parents.”

SNIS Grade 3 teacher Mrs. Megan Lago says that the student led conference has an added bonus. “In the room, there are generally two to four conferences going on at the same time - this allows the conference to last about 30 minutes. Although the student is the primary source of information, the teacher is nearby to answer questions or assist as needed. If needed, parents also have the option for a one-on-one conference with the teacher in addition to the student led conference.”



There is a lot of “front-loading” that goes into the student led conference as teachers work with students to review the conference checklist. NES Grade 2 teacher Mrs. Connie Williams believes that the success of the student led conference is in the preparation. “In advance of the conference, students select their work and projects to be highlighted and reflect on their learning, academic strengths and weaknesses, goal setting, work habits and peer relationships. After teacher modeling and before the conference, they develop a plan and rehearse by practicing with a classmate who serves as the ‘parent’. As students rehearse, they become familiar with the checklist and are better able to articulate their thinking; these try-outs set students up for success when they share their work and communicate their thoughts with parents during the conference. The rehearsal step gives students confidence, which leads to eager and highly motivated students who enthusiastically show off their new learning. Parents are encouraged to ask questions and offer comments throughout the conference, just as they would with a teacher during a traditional conference. As a result, the dialogue between students and parents is valuable and meaningful. It is rewarding, as a teacher, to see and hear the positive interactions between parents and their children.”



Mrs. Murray says parents are asked for their feedback following the student led conferences, and she is happy to report that, “The vast majority have said it’s wonderful to hear their children talk so excitedly about school and what they are learning.”



## Raising Awareness of Autism



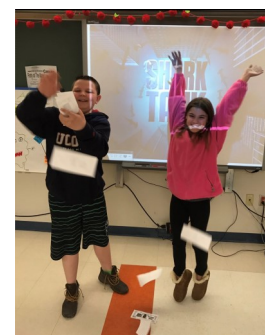
April is World Autism Month and April 2nd has been designated by the United Nations as World Autism Awareness Day. The United States autism advocacy organization Autism Speaks sponsors the Light It Up Blue campaign, designed to visually raise awareness of autism. Participants are encouraged to wear blue on April 2nd and thousands of iconic landmarks and buildings join homes and communities around the world to “light it up blue” in support of people living with autism. Autism-friendly events and educational activities take place all month to increase understanding and acceptance and further support people with autism.



This year April 2nd was a Sunday, so New Milford Public Schools celebrated autism awareness by having a “Light It Up Blue” day on Tuesday April 4th. From our youngest students and staff in the elementary school to our oldest students and staff at New Milford High School we wore blue to support awareness. The NMHS club Best Buddies, led by Gina Paradiso, a high school student, and faculty advisors Kibby Ginn, Kathy Roman, and Jody Altenhof, offered an evening event in conjunction with Scott Coulter of The Children’s Movement Center. The event focused on bringing together mainstream and special education students for an evening of fun. In addition, all New Milford Public School buildings will be lighted with blue accents for the entire month of April.

## SNIS 5th Graders Take On Shark Tank

The popular television show Shark Tank features aspiring entrepreneur contestants as they make business presentations to a panel of “shark” investors, who then choose whether or not to invest in the idea. When more than one of the sharks decide they want a piece of the action, a bidding war can erupt, driving up the price of the investment. This premise was the inspiration for a recent SNIS Health lesson where 5th grade students participated in a “Shark Tank” simulation of their own.



SNIS Health and PE teacher Ms. Deirdre Burke says, “Students, with a partner, researched various health apps that are currently on the market. The student partners then selected an app based on which they found to be the most beneficial. The next step was for students to create advertisements for their apps, as well as a sales pitch that they would make to their class and various guest ‘sharks’. Throughout their sales pitches, students highlighted the features of the app and explained how it would improve an individual’s health. Students’ creativity shone through their unique slogans, advertisements, and even dances included in their sales pitches.” At the end of class, students were able to spend three Shark Tank dollars provided by Ms. Burke in the class health “app store”. Whichever partnership sold the most “downloads” of their app, was the Shark Tank winner. Ms. Burke says the most popular apps of those featured were Endomondo and Runkeeper.

## Updates from Committee on Learning

*New Milford Public School staff continued to share their good work with the Committee on Learning at the February and March meetings.*

**February's meeting** featured a presentation from the Early Childhood Council (ECC). The Council is a collaboration of members from the community and schools. Directors and staff from area preschools and day cares, staff from Literacy Volunteers, Head Start staff, and the New Milford Public Library Children's Director Sue Ford work with New Milford Public School staff members along with the student teaching staff of the NMHS Child Development class. Council member and NMPS representative Mrs. Deb Clark said, "The mission of the ECC is to improve the transition to kindergarten for all New Milford children by ensuring that they receive developmentally appropriate literacy skills interaction before attending New Milford Public Schools. The Council is supported in this endeavor by grant assistance from the Connecticut Community Foundation. New Milford has been a recipient since 2009 and has received more than \$55,000 since that time to strengthen the link between preschool and public school teachers ensuring the success of young children as they enter kindergarten in NMPS." Mrs. Clark said the grant allows the Council to provide resources to preschool programs and present parent nights. The Council also lends support at the annual Kindergarten Orientation Night for parents of incoming kindergarteners.

**March's presentation** focused on the age group at the other end of the spectrum as NMHS Assistant Principal Eric Williams presented on Career Readiness Opportunities at NMHS. Mr. Williams said NMHS is not a vocational high school, therefore career readiness opportunities may take different forms, some requiring college, some not. Every curriculum at the high school follows CCSS (Common Core State Standards) which emphasize the career readiness skills of communication, teamwork/collaboration, problem solving, reasoning, use of data, and research skills.

Many career readiness opportunities at the high school are made possible through the Perkins grant, including the Internship Program. Students self-select for this program, meeting with an advisor, and working 100 hours per semester in a community internship of some kind. Examples of previous placements include medical, law, veterinary, and auto mechanic.

Mr. Williams said career readiness opportunities at the high school are available in a variety of disciplines: Education, through Child Development and PE Leader; Medical Careers, through Allied Health, Medical Technology, and EMT; Engineering, through Project Lead the Way; and in Video Production. The high school also offers several career technical student organizations: DECA (Distributive Education Club of America), FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) and HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) that compete at state and national conferences. Mr. Williams said other classes offer career readiness pathways too. These include Website Design, Autocad, Computer Programming, and Studio Art, among others.

Assistant Superintendent Alisha DiCorpo said, "During a recent visit by Perkins administrators, the high school received many commendations for the equipment being used in classrooms by our students and that our equipment gives students a chance to use the same tools that they will see in the real world."

***The Committee on Learning also completed its review of curriculum for this year, with summaries presented of the following course revisions:***

### **Marketing I**

NMHS Business teacher Mrs. Deborah Knipple said students are introduced to all aspects of Marketing and

are required to present an authentic project at the end of the course. Other students use their acquired knowledge to judge the presentations. Students may also compete at the state and national level through membership in DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America).

### **Marketing Work Program**

Mrs. Knipple also reported on the Marketing Work Program, which is a full year course, offered to seniors. In this case, students go out to work in the real world, are paid, and receive credit for the experience. She said this course is very helpful to those students who need to work. The experience also provides interview and communication skills and work ethic. The revision includes more required reflection and journal writing.

### **Sports & Entertainment Marketing**

The Sports & Entertainment Marketing course is new to NMHS and Mrs. Knipple said there is a great deal of student interest. In this case, students apply the concepts they have learned in Marketing I to the sports and entertainment field. An authentic project is required.

### **Middle East Studies**

NMHS Social Studies teacher Mr. Mike Abraham said this is a popular elective course during which students study the culture and dynamics of the region in depth. The course offers an introduction to conversational and written Arabic.

### **Grades 3-5 Choral Music**

SNIS Music teacher Ms. Gloria Capone said this is a full year course for mixed chorus grades 3-5. The curriculum is new and infused with the knowledge of singing. The focus for grade 3 is on proper breathing, standing properly, blended sound and behavior in a large group. Grades 4 and 5 continue the concepts of good singing, harmony, ear training and music theory. By grade 5, students should be able to read lines of music. Ms. Capone said her main goal is to instill a love of singing that students will want to continue throughout their lives. The students perform two concerts: one in December and one in May. The students also perform out in the community and Ms. Capone said she is working to have more community outreach for performances.

### **Choral Performance Grades 6-8**

Ms. Diane Taylor, SMS Music teacher, said this is a revision to the curriculum with an eye on the new national standards of music education. It is a full year, graded course that meets twice a week in the six-day rotation and once a week in smaller group sectionals. She said the goal is to make students music literate so that they understand the theory behind music and are ready for high school. They work on both vocal technique and group behavior.

### **Grades 4-5 Instrumental Music**

### **Grades 6-8 Instrumental Music**

### **Grades 9-12 Instrumental Music**

NMHS Music teacher Mr. David Szydek said the revision for these courses was done collaboratively among Mr. Fitzgerald (SNIS), Mr. Gregory (SMS) and himself. The teachers wrote the curriculum revision together in the same room, which provided a great opportunity to streamline the units so that one flows into another. At the lower grades, instrumental music consists of band and orchestra. At the high school, students may also participate in concert band and wind ensemble. All levels stress the four principles of instructional techniques, ensemble skills, music literacy and aesthetics. The revisions align with the national standards for music education.

### **Personal Finance**

Mrs. Janice Perrone, NMHS Business teacher, said this is the first year that the Personal Finance course is a graduation requirement for the entire student body and, therefore, it's a very popular course. The course focuses on budgeting. Specifically, students do extensive college and career research and evaluation work here, including how much it costs and how to finance. The class also explores salary, work environment, and living expenses for the student's chosen career path.



### Forensic Science

NMHS Science Department Chairperson Mrs. Sara Del Mastro said this course emphasizes the science behind the forensics. The central theme is that every contact leaves a trace. Students must match evidence to the original source. The course teaches inquiry skills, analytic thinking, writing analysis, and problem solving and features hands-on labs. Students are required to do a presentation on a landmark case as part of their studies.

### College Prep Chemistry Experimental Chemistry

NMHS Science teacher Ms. Ginny Landgrebe said this revision of College Prep Chemistry aligns the course with the new NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards). Students do several interesting projects including designing their own custom periodic table and building a hot air balloon. Fellow Science teacher Ms. Kristen Stolle said the Experimental Chemistry course is very similar to the College Prep course and students do many of the same projects, but the pace is slower and students here receive more math reinforcement. There is also a hands-on lab every week.

### College Prep Integrated Science

NMHS Science teacher Mrs. Danielle Ragonnet said this Grade 9 course that has been revised for the NGSS. Incorporating the new standards puts an emphasis on modeling and communicating information. The course makes strong use of science journal articles. There is also a unit on astronomy and all students visit the Observatory on site. Mrs. Ragonnet is on their Board as well.

### Anatomy & Physiology I and II

NMHS Science teacher Mrs. Karen Terhaar said these two courses together make up a full year course but they are offered independently so students can take them over the course of their junior and senior years. She said this course builds on previous courses of biology and chemistry in its study of anatomy and physiology. The revision is to align with NGSS.

**Full Curriculum Guides can be viewed on our website [here](#).**

### Project Linus

The SMS 6th grade Leo Club (a junior version of the Lion's Club) began a new initiative this school year, working with Project Linus, a national non-profit organization that provides homemade blankets to children in need. Leo Club advisor Mrs. Carol Allison says, "The Danbury regional director for Project Linus came to one of our meetings to help us learn more and to launch our enthusiasm with actual examples and a Q & A session. During our club time, we make fleece blankets for the purpose of giving them to children, ages 0-18, who are in foster care, or who are ill or suffering after a traumatic event. These blankets will go to needy children in our region, including area hospitals."



Staff members and volunteers helped teach club members the finer points of blanket creation. Fleece used for the blankets has been donated or bought with monies obtained by collecting recyclable bottles around SMS. Mrs. Allison says, "Leo Clubbers enjoy being called 'Blanketeers' and eagerly work on and/or finish blankets at every meeting. We will have a Big Blanket Send-off at our last meeting on May 15th." To learn more about Project Linus, visit their [website](#).

## Experiential Learning with NMHS Tiny Tides Preschool

Juniors and seniors at New Milford High School who have elected to take the Child Development course are knee deep in experiential learning right now as they gain valuable hands-on teaching experience through the course's twelve week Tiny Tides Preschool program. Here students observe and interact with children and prepare and present lessons under the supervision of teacher Mrs. Erica Keane.

This year, Mrs. Keane has two student interns assisting her as well. Mrs. Keane says, "The class is designed for students interested in becoming professionals in such fields as nursing, teaching, psychology or child care. The interns are two senior students who are taking the class for the second time, only this year they are required to take a leadership role in helping their peers and in running the class."

Intern Michaela Ferlow, who has committed to Arcadia University, says "I took our school's Child Development course because I have been considering pursuing a career in either Early Childhood Education, or Psychology, and I needed some experience to help me make that decision. This class gave me that 'classroom experience' I sought. Mrs. Keane also brought in many guest speakers to talk about career paths for those who knew they wanted to work with children, but weren't quite sure of the numerous different options that were available."

Michaela says in order to prepare for Tiny Tides Preschool she learned about creating a lesson plan, writing objectives, setting achievable goals with the CT Early Learning and Development Standards (CTELDS) in mind, doing observations, and putting them to use in a real life situation. Specifically, Mrs. Keane assigned her the *All About Me* unit of study. Says Michaela, "Our class runs the preschool program like a traditional preschool would be, starting with circle time, in which we review things like the calendar and weather, then moving into student-made centers that are created to go with the week's theme."



Fellow intern Brandi Gibson, who has committed to Southern Connecticut State University, says "I was first interested in taking the Early Childhood class that comes before Child Development when I was a sophomore and was extremely intrigued by the idea of working with actual children. I knew that I wanted to work with children in my future career, so Child Development has been a great opportunity to interact with them and observe how every child develops differently mentally and physically. The class has definitely helped steer me towards my choice in becoming a pediatric nurse. For part of my internship, I was given the unit on *Personal Hygiene*, which fits my intended major, and interest well. Mrs. Keane helped give us all of the tools we needed to create a lesson plan, as well as writing objectives, explaining why those things are important to teaching, and forming a goal for each individual child to help them meet all of the standards that should be met at their age. Our preschool is very organized and run like a traditional preschool would be, also making each child excited to come back every day."

Mrs. Keane said she is very pleased with the progress all her students are making, both high school and preschool aged. "It is such a fun class to teach. I love watching the development of students at both age levels."



## SNIS Ecology Club

With the celebration of Earth Day on April 22nd, we thought it was the perfect time to check in with Sarah Noble's Ecology Club and see what they've been up to so far this year. Club advisor and Grade 4 teacher Mr. Justin Mack tells us that the SNIS Ecology Club is one of several new after school opportunities available to Sarah Noble students this year.



"The Ecology Club is made up of thirty-five students from grades 3, 4 and 5 with a focus on protecting and understanding the environment. They began their conservation work with the Trout In the Classroom (TIC) project. The group received about 500 brown trout eggs in late November from our local Candlewood Valley Trout Unlimited chapter. Students spent the next several months caring for the trout and learning about trout biology, habitat and watersheds.



Ecology Club students participated in the national TIC Quilt Project. Students designed quilt squares around the theme of symbiosis and sent them off to other TIC programs around the country in order to receive a quilt square in return. Students were able to learn about TIC classes in Nebraska, California, Maine, Vermont, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Students also heard from Trout Unlimited's Director of Volunteer Operations, Jeff Yates. Mr. Yates brought live examples of insects that trout survive on in the river, taught us all about them, answered every question we had and showed students how tasty our trout thought those insect snacks were!



The TIC program culminated in the release of almost 100 trout into the East Aspetuck River at the Pratt Nature Center in New Milford on Earth Day. Students and families celebrated months of hard work by releasing the trout into their new home. Students were able to each release several trout on their own and watch them quickly adapt to the river."

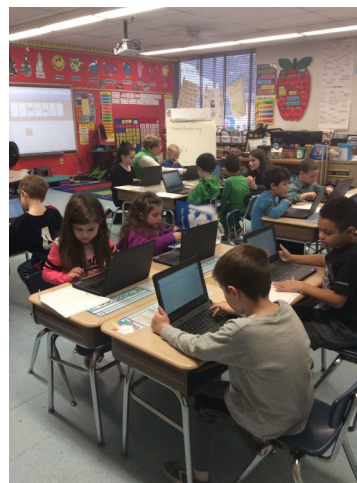


With the TIC program finished for this year, the SNIS Ecology Club will continue to explore environmental conservation topics by shifting their focus to plants and gardening for the spring.



## Technology Use – It's Elementary

Technology has become an important piece of today's educational process where it is integrated into curriculum as a tool to promote and extend student learning. Here at New Milford Public Schools, that process begins as early as elementary school, as teachers incorporate 21st century skills into the classroom in support of academic learning goals. Students still need to become good readers and writers, but they may be learning and publishing on new platforms. Mrs. Jessica Kelly's first grade class at Hill and Plain, for example, has been integrating technology into their writing time and in their reader's workshop.

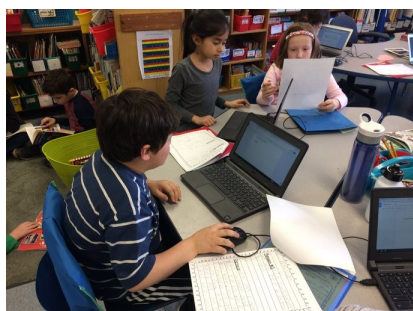


Mrs. Kelly says, "My first graders have been learning how to use google docs during writing time. During writer's workshop, my students have been working on writing their opinions. We have read a series of books by Karen Kaufman Orloff, the author of *I Wanna Iguana*. The main character Alex writes letters to his parents trying to convince them to let him have his own room. Using this author as a mentor writer, students wrote their own opinion letters to their parents, teacher or principal. They then used Chromebooks to type their letters directly into google docs instead of handwriting the letters before they type. Students were all engaged and writing the whole time."

As part of this process, students have been mastering some important skills in using google docs such as how to independently start a new piece when they are finished writing one piece; how to save and title their pieces to keep their writing organized; and what tools to use to edit and revise their writing. Mrs. Kelly says her students especially love to correct their misspelled words using spell check.

First graders are also starting to learn how to use google docs to share their work with their writing partner and their teacher. Students can read their partner's work and then comment in google docs instead of using an old-fashioned post it note. Students are excited to see comments appear. Mrs. Kelly says "One student came up to me and said, 'Mrs. Kelly last night I signed into google docs at home and I started three new pieces. I shared them with you. Did you read them yet?' Students are eager to share their writing and can't wait for me to comment (in google docs of course). In fact, I notice their writing stamina increases when using the Chromebooks."

Students are also starting to use Chromebooks for recording their own reading during reader's workshop. Per Mrs. Kelly "By recording their own reading, students can go back and listen to themselves and self-reflect on how they are growing as readers. Eventually first graders will start their own e-portfolio. A google doc is a great starting place for students to keep their writing and reading work."



Students in Mrs. Nash's Grade 2 class at HPS are pictured using google docs to type their final opinion pieces.





## Congratulations to the New Milford Public School “Stars” for the month of April!

**Anne Bilko  
Susan Brofford  
Kimberly Ginn  
Janet Roache  
Heliett Sanchez  
Paul Shim**



Special congratulations to **Susan Brofford** who will drive the Ingersoll Auto of Danbury NMPS courtesy car for the month.

Don't forget to visit the district website to [submit your staff nomination](#).



**New Milford High School  
Places on the College Board's  
7th Annual  
AP® District Honor Roll  
for Significant Gains in  
Student Access and Success**

***So proud of our  
high school staff  
and students!***

The New Milford Public Schools district is one of 14 Connecticut school districts and 433 school districts in the U.S. and Canada being honored by the College Board with placement on the 7th Annual AP® District Honor Roll. To be included on the 7th Annual Honor Roll, New Milford had to, since 2014, increase the number of students participating in AP while also increasing or maintaining the percentage of students earning AP Exam scores of 3 or higher. Reaching these goals shows that this district is successfully identifying motivated, academically prepared students who are ready for AP.

Joshua Smith, Superintendent of Schools, says “Appearing on the District Honor Roll is a credit to our teachers, students, and administrators for their work in the classroom. It is also a credit to the Board of Education and the community as they supported the addition of high interest courses and reducing barriers through subsidized exam costs.”

## NMHS Science Teachers Awarded Fellowship

NMHS Science teachers Ms. Virginia Landgrebe and Ms. Kristen Stolle have been awarded a fellowship from the non-profit foundation Fund for Teachers. They will be visiting Tasmania, Australia this summer to attend [CONASTA 66](#), the annual science education conference of the Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA). The teachers heard about the Fund for Teachers grant opportunity from NMHS English teacher Jasmina Ferizovic who was a grant recipient last year (see below).



Since 2001, Fund for Teachers, one of the nation's largest investors in teacher learning and leadership, has awarded \$27.5 million in grants to 7,400 PreK-12 teachers from across the country for self-designed fellowships to support student success, enrich their practice and strengthen their schools and communities. Unique to this grant opportunity, teachers submit projects and destinations they believe best address specific achievement gaps – theirs and/or their students, to pursue self-designed professional development on any topic they believe will enhance their teaching.



### My Fund for Teachers Fellowship by Jasmina Ferizovic, Ed.D.

Each day an untapped well of potential success wanders somewhat aimlessly into my classroom. *What if* I were able to tap this potential by knowing how to motivate all of my students? In June 2016 I joined 450 scholars at the *6th International Self-Determination Theory Conference* in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada because I wanted to unlock the secrets of motivation—why people do what they do.

The “secret” lies in meeting students’ three basic psychological needs, also known as *the ABC’s of intrinsic motivation*: autonomy, belongingness, and competence. Depending on whether or not these basic psychological needs are met, a person’s intrinsic motivation can either sky rocket or be completely crushed. My Fund for Teachers fellowship taught me that I *do* have great control in meeting or frustrating these psychological needs, and in turn motivating my students.

I have applied the basic psychological needs theory in my classroom by giving more choice, making certain that every student feels valued and liked, and offering many “mastery experience” opportunities, i.e. giving students concrete evidence of their accomplishments. For example, to meet the “A” or *autonomy* need, I encourage students to choose books they are interested in; to satisfy the “B” or *belongingness* need, I make sure to give many formal or informal recognitions and supportive feedback, and to make everyone feel included; and, to fulfill the “C” or *competence* need, I allow each student to achieve a “mastery experience” so even students who may be struggling can feel accomplished at certain things.

Fund for Teachers made it possible for me to attend the international conference on motivation. In the words of Edward Deci, the father of *Self-Determination Theory*, “Intrinsically motivated people have a better mental health, can better cope with chaos and disappointment, care more for their environment, learn with more understanding, enjoy more what they do and solve problems more creatively.”

Ms. Landgrebe says, “We chose the CONASTA 66 conference as it was during our summer and Australia schools will be in session. We’ve been working to align our curriculum and teaching with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) which stress building units around phenomena. NGSS defines natural phenomena as observable events that occur in the universe and that we can use our science knowledge to explain or predict. The goal of building knowledge in science is to develop



general ideas, based on evidence, that can explain and predict phenomena. Engineering involves designing solutions to problems that arise from phenomena, and using explanations of phenomena to design solutions. In this way, phenomena are the context for the work of both the scientist and the engineer. While this idea/concept helps keep student interest, we didn't find many examples for us to use in our studies of the NGSS. Australia, which has a high science ranking, has used this method for a while so we thought this conference would be a great resource. As an added bonus all the information is in English *and* I have always wanted to go to Australia."

While there, Ms. Landgrebe and Ms. Stolle will observe and participate in science lessons, attend professional development activities, and collaborate with the program staff and other attendees to identify and develop phenomena for use in their own classrooms. They will then visit several Australian schools to research best practices for maximizing science learning and engagement to reach all students.

Fund for Teachers grant recipients have visited more than 140 countries on all seven continents. This year, teachers designed summer learning experiences spanning six continents and ranging from STEAM to language/cultural immersion to socio-emotional learning. To see a complete list of Fellows and description of their projects visit the program's website at [fundforteachers.org](http://fundforteachers.org).

### Collaboration Leads to Cooking Tutorials

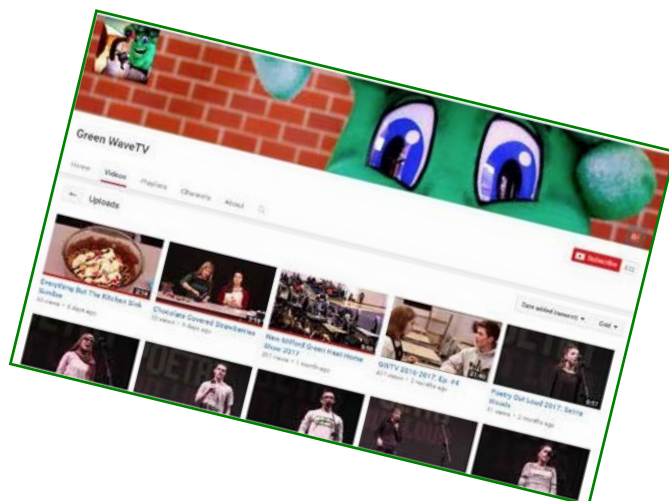
NMHS English teacher Alessandro Amenta (@AmentaNMHS) tweeted recently about a collaboration among English classes at the high school. We were curious to find out more about the ongoing project. NMHS Journalism students Luis Illescas and Brian Thomas provide the report:

Three English teachers are working to bring together Public Speaking, Video Production, and Journalism to make special "how-to" projects. Mr. Kelly Duncan is bringing his Public Speaking students to Mr. Alessandro Amenta's video production room in order to create video presentations of the process of cooking different types of foods. Video Production students were in charge of following storyboards to capture audio and video footage of the cooking instructions. Mr. Rick Casagrande's Journalism II students are documenting the process in a series of interviews with the instructors and students.

Mr. Amenta and Mr. Duncan decided to combine their two classes because this project gave students an opportunity to work together and teach each other important real world skills. The experience so far for this project has gone very well. Students were given opportunities to learn from each other, but they also learned to use practical applications such as Adobe Premiere Pro.

"It was very rewarding to see students collaborating with their peers to create something original," said Mr. Amenta. All teachers hope to continue working together in order to give students a well-rounded application of skills they are learning in their respective courses.

The instructional cooking videos are being added to [Green Wave TV's youtube page](#) and can be found under the Videos tab.



## Connecticut Invention Convention Comes to SMS

This year, a small group of SMS students was able to take advantage of an opportunity to participate in the Connecticut Invention Convention. Per the program's website:

The Connecticut Invention Convention (CIC) is an award winning, internationally recognized, 501(c)(3) educational organization started in 1983 as part of the Connecticut Educators Network for the Talented and Gifted, but today is open to all K-8 students in all schools and school groups across Connecticut. The program is designed to develop, encourage, and enhance critical thinking and creative problem solving skills through invention and entrepreneurship. Since our inception, an estimated 300,000 children, K-8, have experienced local and regional CIC invention programs. Annually the CIC serves more than 17,000 students in grades K - 8 across Connecticut from over 250+ participating Connecticut schools.



SMS Science teacher Mrs. Clare Zimmitti, who is in her second year teaching at SMS, says "My previous district required higher level students to either participate in a self-designed science experiment or invention (their choice). I wanted to provide a similar outlet for science/STEM minded students at SMS and the CIC was a great option."



Mrs. Zimmitti worked with SMS Technology teacher Ms. Karyn Skinner, sharing the co-advisor duties which started back in December with a once per week after school program. Mrs. Zimmitti says, "We had twenty students or so sign up originally, but ultimately five were able to stick out the full ten weeks in the after school program. We spent the ten weeks discussing and doing activities specifically designed around the invention process. The invention projects themselves were done outside school on the student's own time. It was a significant time commitment for the students, but fun too."

The CIC program begins at the school level with teachers arranging for local judging to determine which students will move on to the regional and perhaps state and national finals. In the case of the SMS students, Mrs. Zimmitti says three independent guest judges chose two projects to move onto the regional contest at WCSU on Saturday, April 1, 2017.



The two 6th grade students, Jacob Losito and Ryan Zimmitti, presented along with roughly 300 other inventors. Jacob's project, titled *The Incredisgwish*, was an invention to fidget with that's discreet for school to help with focus in students with ADHD. Ryan's project, titled *The CrutchUp*, was an invention to allow a crutch to stand upright so people don't have to bend down to pick them up off the floor. Per Mrs. Zimmitti, "Both students put forth excellent projects and presented well in their judging circles, but were not selected to move onto the final round."

To learn more about the Connecticut Invention Convention visit the program's [website](#).



## New Milford Public Schools

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## April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month and April 17-21 is designated as National Public School Volunteer Week

Studies show that one of the most important contributing factors to a student's educational success is the regular involvement of parents and caring adults. Public school volunteers give their time, dedication and encouragement to both students and school staff. The mutual trust developed between volunteers and school staff promotes teamwork and partnerships that support even greater student achievement.

We are grateful to the hundreds of volunteers who give their time to our students, staff and schools. Volunteers help in so many roles— as library helpers, mentors, guest speakers, PTO and other parent group members, and field trip chaperones to name just a few. The dedication of these many volunteers helps stretch school district resources to provide a variety of support, encouragement and activities that might not otherwise be possible.

**Thank you for your commitment, and for  
the time you spend volunteering each day,  
both inside and outside the classroom.  
Your dedication is an invaluable support to  
the successful education of our students.**

[#PublicSchoolVolunteerWeek](#)



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.

April brings