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Spotlight on New Milford Schools

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How I Spent My Summer Vacation

For many years, returning to school in the Fall meant completing an essay on "How I Spent My Summer Vacation". Now you can choose to share your adventures on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or YouTube. For our summer issue, we thought we'd get in on the action and share just a few summer stories from NMPS students and staff.

Building Leadership Skills in Chicago

Each year, New Milford High School selects one sophomore student to receive the [HOBY](#) award. The selected student joins other CT award recipients who work on developing their own personal leadership skills while learning how to make a positive impact in their community. Senior Gregory Winkelstern received the award in his sophomore year and found the experience so rewarding that he has continued his participation at the national level. This summer Greg attended the HOBY Advanced Leadership Academy (ALA) in Chicago.



Greg says, "After a year as Vice President of the CT Alumni Association, month after month of various service work, and volunteering at HOBY's CT State Seminar in 2017, I was eager for more. I attended the ALA as the official representative of Connecticut. I'm proud to say that Connecticut sent the most people to this year's conference out of all fifty states! This included four project managers (students like myself) and four strong adult volunteers. The conference is all about change and designed to help me create and plan my own service project. In addition to service project workshops, the days were packed with various other reinforcing activities such as TED talks, live guest speakers, strength and weakness evaluation, teamwork and communication activities, and a ton of encouragement for the future. It was a really positive experience."

Taking a Course at UConn

Earlier this month, SNIS Grade 4 teacher and Ecology Club advisor Mr. Justin Mack participated in UConn's Natural Resource Conservation Academy's (NRCA) Conservation Training Partnerships (CTP) program. This program pairs adult conservation volunteers with local high school students to study geospatial technology tools that can be applied to a

hometown conservation project. The two day workshop showed participants how to utilize geospatial tracking technology to create interactive maps, record experimental data and access research databases. The program included classroom instruction and fieldwork around the Storrs campus and in the nearby Fenton River.



The workshop also provided time for partnerships to develop their own conservation project to pursue afterward. Justin's student partner has a strong connection to Candlewood Lake and their project will explore septic runoff issues around the lake over the next few months. Justin had a great experience and hopes to see more New Milford teachers and students apply to participate in the future.

Heading to Summer Camp in Germany

Two NMHS students are headed to Germany in August to participate in a summer immersion camp as part of the Study Bridge (Studienbrücke) Program. The camp will take place from August 13-25, 2017, at the Goethe-Institut in Göttingen. Incoming seniors Joe Alexander and Emily Spagnuolo are looking forward to using their German language skills, while taking advantage of hands-on experience in a new culture and getting to know other students from around the world. NMHS German teacher Michael Crotta says, "The Study Bridge Program is a wonderful opportunity and amounts to a full scholarship with housing and board all the way to PhD at a German University beginning with the summer course in Germany. The opportunities are made possible by enrolling in and learning German at NMHS, in combination with solid STEM study and a demonstrated breadth of interests, particularly in the Humanities."

NMHS students pose for a picture this past April while visiting Germany as part of the German American Partnership Program (GAPP)



The Program's website provides further details. In the subsequent 2017-18 school year, the selected students receive intensive German lessons (2.5 hours of instruction per week) to continue their studies. After graduating from their local high schools, participants spend a transition year at a German high school. This exchange year in Germany is organized with support by the German American Partnership Program (GAPP) which New Milford High School has partnered with for several years. During the year, students attend 11th grade at

a German secondary school (Gymnasium) and live with a host family who will support and look after them during their stay. The goal is for participants to get to know Germany and its education system and to prepare them to study at a German university.

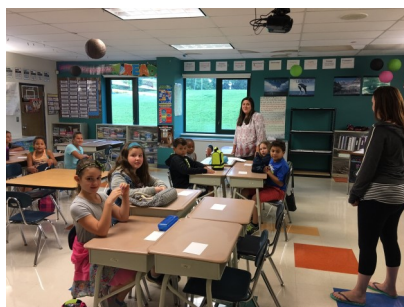
NMHS graduate Jennifer Kast, Class of 2017, attended the summer camp last year and is now getting ready for her transition year. Jenn says, “After spending a year in Germany with my host family, I will hope to stay on for a fruitful university career, majoring in Biology or Chemistry. With any luck, I'll be able to find a position at the Bundeskriminalamt working in forensic investigations. I'd also like to travel throughout Europe, especially Germany's neighbors, and possibly learn a few more languages to become familiar with other fascinating cultures. This program has been such an incredible opportunity and experience. It's brought so many new possibilities and brilliant people to my life, and I cannot recommend it enough to learners of German or those interested in pursuing an education in Germany.”

SNIS Summer Bridge Program

This week marked the start of the second annual SNIS Summer Bridge Program for Literacy and Mathematics. Assistant Superintendent Alisha DiCorpo says, “Some students require additional time to learn, or need a different approach to learning, to help them meet grade level standards as well as to sustain their learning from grade level to grade level.”

The Bridge program, running mornings from July 24 to August 10, is an important link to ensure that all students have adequate opportunities to meet the district's reading and math standards. Using student performance data on district assessments, student grades, and teacher observation, some students in grades 2-4 were invited to participate in this summer program based on their performance during the 2016-17 school year.

Ms. DiCorpo says, “This year we are excited to welcome 64 students to the program. Teachers, under the direction of Mr. Jeffrey Bronn, the Summer Bridge Administrator, have been working hard to prepare engaging lessons focused on grade level content standards for the students entering grades 3-5 who will be in attendance.”



Scheduling the program at the end of the summer was intentional as it will “jump start” and pre-teach these students closer to the beginning of their next school year, ensuring that the information is still fresh as they begin their new grades.

The Importance of Summer Reading

What are you reading this summer? More importantly, what are your children reading this summer? [HOMEROOM](#), the official blog of the U.S. Department of Education, reminds parents that summer is an important time for students to keep reading and improving their language skills.

Numerous studies indicate that students who don't read or read infrequently during their summer vacation see their reading abilities stagnate or decline. *Spotlight* reported on the dangers of this "summer slide" last July and it continues to be relevant. The effect becomes more pronounced as students get older and advance through the school system.

To avoid the "summer slide", ensure that your children are as engaged as possible in whatever they choose to read and make sure they're reading every day.

HOMEROOM offers several suggestions:

- ◆ Let your child choose what they want to read – or be read to – for 30 minutes each day. Children are much more likely to engage in material that interests them rather than materials that are forced on them.
- ◆ Use language and reading opportunities throughout the day. Talk often with your child and point out reading materials wherever possible: on menus, magazines and newspapers, signs, brochures, maps, guidebooks, smartphones, ipads, etc.
- ◆ Provide incentives for reluctant readers. For example, if your child enjoys basketball, agree to take them to the local court if they do their "daily reading."
- ◆ Make reading a social act. Establish a time during the day when all members of the family gather and read on their own, or take turns reading the same book aloud.
- ◆ Connect your reading to family outings. If you take your children to an aquarium, consider reading a book about fish or the ocean with them later that day. Going to the zoo? Think about reading a book about animals before and afterward. The outing can help place the reading into a broader context.

Make reading a lifestyle choice. Keep books all around the house to cultivate an atmosphere of reading, and set an example by reading yourself. Children need good models of reading books, magazines, or newspapers.

Looking for reading suggestions and choices? Visit the [New Milford Public Library](#) (open Saturdays too in July and August).



New Milford Board Of Education Holds Summer Retreat



Superintendent of Schools Joshua Smith and New Milford Board of Education members participated in a two day retreat on July 18 and 19 designed to foster discussion regarding Board roles, responsibilities and goal setting. CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE) Senior Staff Associate for Field Service Nick Caruso moderated.

Mr. Caruso began the conversation on the first day by asking Board members what they hoped to accomplish as part of the retreat. Answers included brainstorming, a common focus for the future, sharing ways to make the district better, creating a foundation for future leadership, and an opportunity to set priorities for the district.

Discussion continued on what constitutes student success, potential barriers to that achievement, and ways in which the Board can serve all students. The Board explored answers to questions such as: What can the Board focus on for maximum impact? How can they communicate effectively and proactively both internally and with the community? As a follow up, the Board worked to identify its own strengths and areas for improvement. Consensus was that, in the future, the Board would like to see a more formal orientation process for new members and work on communication strategies and community engagement.

Day Two started with Superintendent Smith and Assistant Superintendent Alisha DiCorpo sharing data with the Board to inform discussion and develop priorities for action. The presentation started with a review of the core beliefs imbedded in the last strategic plan. Mr. Smith and Ms. DiCorpo then talked about the ways in which the district understands and responds to students. The learner is defined in three broad areas: through academics, student aspiration and student belonging. In the area of academics, the district looks at the State Accountability Index, other nationally normed assessments and district assessments. Student aspiration focuses on what happens after high school and how students are prepared for the future. In the area of student belonging, the group reviewed and discussed school climate data.

Mr. Smith then shared four proposed Theories of Action for the Board's consideration, as well as district initiatives that will support the work going forward. Board members offered suggestions on slight changes to wording. It was agreed to forward the Theories of Action to the August 1st Committee on Learning meeting so that they may be formally moved on for Board adoption at the August 15th regular meeting. Once adopted, district leaders will share the Theories of Action at the annual administrative retreat in August before rolling them out to the entire district at the back to school convocation.

The Theories of Action will then be used as guidelines when developing a new strategic plan for the district. Board Chairperson David Lawson said it is his hope to have the new strategic plan in place by next summer.

No Summer Vacation for the Facilities Department

The 2016-17 school year ended on June 23. Teachers return to start the 2017-18 school year on August 25, with August 30 the first day for students. That makes for a very short summer indeed for our hard working Facilities Department who have many annual tasks and special projects to complete before then.

Facilities Director Kevin Munrett says the first order of business for his department each summer is annual cleaning and general maintenance. "Cleaning and disinfecting of all schools has started and will continue all summer. We are completing maintenance work orders and scheduled preventative maintenance." Several annual contracted services take place during the summer too so as not to disrupt the school day. These include: cleaning all school boilers so they are ready for fall start up; pumping and cleaning all septic tanks, grease traps and chemical tanks; testing, inspecting and servicing all gym partitions; steam cleaning and tagging the kitchen hoods at all schools; testing all emergency lights and repairing or replacing as needed; inspecting all smoke, sprinkler and fire equipment; and testing and tagging all fire extinguishers and replacing as needed.



Every summer also brings a list of special projects to be completed and this summer is no different. HPS and NES are having repairs made to air conditioning units. Tree trimming and removal for safety reasons took place at HPS at the beginning of the summer. HPS will also have a new LED light pole installed to illuminate the crosswalk and new parking lot area. The SNIS multipurpose room is scheduled for replacement of an air conditioning unit. Facilities staff also worked to rebuild a storm drain at SNIS which had collapsed. At SNIS and SMS, staff replaced leaking hot water pumps. An oil tank cover was rebuilt at SMS with additional steel added for extra strength and longevity. The SMS art rooms will have lighting and countertops replaced to make the space more conducive to their purpose. At NMHS, the marching band lines in the parking lot have been repainted to make practices for the band easier to see. Wiring has started for turf field camera installation which is happening at the end of this month.

District-wide, all nurse's offices and locker rooms are being repainted with a new anti-bacterial paint product that will encapsulate and disinfect these areas. Thermal Scans and visual assessments of all roofs (except the new one at SMS) are being conducted. This will help illustrate which schools have damage to the roof systems and act as a guide to focus discussions as to which school roofs will need to be repaired/replaced down the road.

Mr. Munrett says "Our schools stay very busy in the summer. They are used by internal groups, Parks and Recreation, various summer camps and many others. It can be a real challenge to get everything done. I'm proud of the work our staff does to make sure everything is ready for the return of students and staff in August. We look forward to welcoming them back."

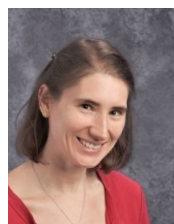
SMS Welcomes New Assistant Principal



Please join us in welcoming Ms. Jennifer Delaney as Assistant Principal at Schaghticoke Middle School. Prior to joining the SMS staff, Ms. Delaney worked as an Instructional Coach at Danbury High School focusing on Literacy and support for English Language Learners. Ms. Delaney worked with teachers to implement student interventions, deliver professional development, and support the instruction of diverse learners.

Prior to her work in Danbury, Ms. Delaney spent seven years as an Eighth Grade Reading and Language Arts teacher in the Waterbury Public Schools. During her time there, she served on several school and district committees that focused on Curriculum Development, Improving School Climate, and Positive Behavior Supports for students. Ms. Delaney's educational background includes a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and Master of Psychology: Gifted Education and Talent Development, both from the University of CT. She is currently a Doctoral student in the Instructional Leadership program at Western Connecticut State University. Ms. Delaney holds certifications as a 7-12 English teacher and Intermediate Administrator Supervisor from the State of Connecticut.

NMHS Science Teacher named State Finalist for 2017 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching



The CT state selection committee for the 2017 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) Program has chosen Mrs. Erin Lucia as a State Finalist in recognition of her outstanding contributions to science education in Connecticut. Mrs. Lucia was a state finalist in 2015 as well. Her application packet has been forwarded to the National Science Foundation for review by the national selection committee this Fall.

Mrs. Lucia presently teaches science classes at New Milford High School in AP Physics and the Project Lead the Way Program. The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) are the highest honors bestowed by the United States government specifically for K-12 mathematics and science (including computer science) teaching. Established by Congress in 1983, the PAEMST program authorizes the President to bestow up to 108 awards each year. The award recognizes those teachers who develop and implement a high-quality instructional program that is informed by content knowledge and enhances student learning. Since the program's inception, more than 4,300 teachers have been recognized for their contributions in the classroom and to their profession.

As a State Finalist, Mrs. Lucia will be recognized in the coming year at events hosted by the Connecticut State Department of Education and the CT Science Supervisors Association. When notifying Mrs. Lucia of her recognition, Dr. Harry Rosvally, Jr., Presidential Awards State Coordinator for Science, states "Please accept my personal congratulations on being selected for this highest honor. Your students, your school and the science education community are all enriched by your dedication and professionalism." We wholeheartedly agree!



New Milford Public Schools

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Facilities Director

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Mrs. Laura Olson
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Special Services Director

Ms. Roberta Pratt
Technology Director

Mrs. Sandra Sullivan
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Thoughts of Back to School??!

Yes, we still have more than a month before students return to school on August 30 but we thought we'd start turning your thoughts in the direction of a new school year with a few ideas to commemorate the event.



- ◆ Celebrate School Year's Eve: Have a family barbeque or host a small get together with friends the night before. Spend one more night looking back on fun summer days (just remember to start early so students can begin their back to school bedtime routines).
- ◆ Have a back-to-school fashion show as part of the event where your children model their first day of school outfits. As a bonus, when they take them off, they will already be laid out for the morning.
- ◆ In the morning, take that first day of school photo using a [free download](#) to mark which grade your child is entering. Try to take it in the same place each year to further measure growth.
- ◆ When the day is done, have your child fill out this short [Back to School Interview page](#). Though designed with elementary students in mind, the answers would be interesting from a soon-to-be graduating senior as well. Make sure to put them in a safe place each year, and consider pulling them all out at the graduation party.
- ◆ Parents, if your schedules permit, plan something special for yourselves to commemorate the day, maybe breakfast out or a walk in the park.

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.

July
bring
in
the
new
year