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Schaghticoke Middle School
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Sarah Noble Intermediate School
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Mrs. Emily Gervasio, Ass't. Principal
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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

Volume 5, Issue 5

November 2014

Transition Year Update

The district continues to move forward with transition planning for the 2015-2016 school year. A timeline of transition activities was prepared at the beginning of this school year and posted on the district website. Administrators have been following through on the work needed to start checking off several of the items.

TRANSITION YEAR

Updated enrollment figures for October 1st of this year were provided to Consultants Milone and MacBroom, Inc. Using the data, the consultants completed their review of district enrollment projections and developed anticipated school boundaries working with this year's verified numbers.

On November 18th, Mrs. Rebecca Auger and Mr. Tim Baird, from Milone and MacBroom, presented their findings to the Board of Education. Their review of enrollment projections showed that both this year and last year, projections were slightly higher than the actual enrollment for grades K-8. Mrs. Auger said the district is currently operating our elementary, interme-

diated and middle schools at 50-75% utilization, with utilization being calculated based on serving needs of students.

Under the consolidation plan, Mrs. Auger said the review shows that all schools will have sufficient capacity for current enrollments. Schaghticoke Middle School will be initially tight, but will gain space over time. Under the refined reconfiguration plan, the entirety of Hill and Plain district will remain in Hill and Plain and the entirety of the Northville district will remain in Northville. The John Pettibone district will be split in the downtown area along the river.

Mrs. Auger presented maps showing the redistricting boundaries and building maps based on the restructuring which show projected classroom usage for 2015-2016. The Board of Education will review the materials and discuss approval of the final boundaries at its regular meeting on December 9th.

Internally, the Technology department has completed its review of technology needs and developed a relocation plan for K-12 based on the planned reconfiguration. Our

Facilities department has begun the needed building inventories. Superintendent of Schools JeanAnn Paddyfote and Human Resources Director Ellamae Baldelli have been meeting with K-6 staff to survey their preferences as to what is most important for them personally in the transition: to teach at a specific grade level; to teach in a specific school; or to teach with a specific colleague. That information, along with contractually agreed upon obligations, will be utilized to assist with the most advantageous reassignment of staff following the reconfiguration.

At the November meeting, the Board also approved contracting with consultants Arum and Associates, LLC, who have an extensive background in assisting school districts with special projects and working with community groups during a period of change. The consultants will be conducting focus groups with staff and parents affected by the closure and grade reconfiguration and working with Central Office Administration on special projects relating to the transition. One of their main priorities will be gathering and communicating information to all stakeholders.

Check the district website periodically under the [Transition Year button](#) for additional updates throughout the year.



REMINDER:

The next

Sit Down with the Superintendent

will be held on January 14th from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.
(Snow date February 4, 2015)

Educational Access TV



Regular viewers of Educational Access TV have gotten used to turning on Cable Channel 17 to find out about school events and to watch taped Board of Education meetings and episodes of *Green Wave TV*, programming by the New Milford High School Video Production class. That viewership hit a bump in the road recently when the local cable company went to an all digital format and Channel 17 had adjustment issues...

We are happy to report that the issues have since been resolved and Educational Access TV can now be viewed on Cable Channel 194. A [current schedule of programs](#) can be found on the district website.

In the coming months, we will periodically be adding broadcasts of special school events such as parent informational meetings, the recent Veterans Day assemblies, and the NMHS Talent Show as well as other happenings throughout the year.

Updates to the Channel 194 schedule will be posted as they occur.



Elementary Students Participate in Cross Country Meet



This fall marked the second annual Maureen Haas Elementary School Cross Country Meet. The event is open to all New Milford elementary school boys and girls in grades PK-6 and takes place at New Milford High School. Physical Education teacher Anthony Nocera says the idea came up during a professional development day in the spring of 2013. The event was planned over the following summer and early fall and the inaugural event was held in October of 2013.

According to Mr. Nocera, “Maureen Haas was a paraprofessional at Hill and Plain for many years. She passed away a few years ago after a battle with breast cancer. She did our morning announcements on a daily basis and always included some sort of exercise or healthy fact during this time. She wrote to the NFL and got us involved in their *Fuel Up to Play 60* program which attempts to get children active for at least 60 minutes each day. She included that in her announcements as well. When we started the race it just seemed perfect to name it after her. She would have enjoyed seeing hundreds of kids exercising at this event.”

The event is growing even quicker than the teachers thought it would. The first event had 295 students preregistered and others registered on race day for a final tally of 315. This year the event had 405 students preregistered

and 30 more signed up that day, for a total of 435. The 2013 race had 5 Physical Education teachers and 6 adult volunteers attend. This year’s event saw 6 Physical Education teachers, 12 adult volunteers and 3 principals in attendance. Mr. Giles Vaughan, an NMHS coach, and the New Milford High School girls and boys cross country teams volunteered their time this year too, running with the elementary students to help pace them and show them the correct direction to run.



Doing some needed stretching before the run.

Mrs. Cindy Gallagher, the HPS school nurse, was on hand at the race for any possible medical issues. She also coordinated the registration table. This year the Booster Club opened up the booster barn and sold food, drinks, coffee, breakfast and lunch for the hundreds of parents and friends in attendance.



NMPS PE teachers proud to participate.

There is no entry fee for participants. The course distance varies by grade level. Pre-kindergarteners are invited to run a ¼ mile, kindergarteners and first graders a ½ mile and grades 2-6 run a full mile. The course is primarily on grass but finishes on the high school track. The top three finishers in each race receive engraved medals. A t-shirt is given free to each student who preregisters, thanks to the generous support of local sponsors and the PTO. Each school selects a color that they want in advance so that the students can represent their home school at the race.



Ready, set, almost go!

When asked about the purpose of the event, Mr. Nocera said “The simple purpose of the event is just to get kids moving. The long answer is that this town has countless camps and programs for baseball, soccer, lacrosse, basketball, and football. But there are many kids that excel at running and there is no platform for that. So we wanted to start this race in an attempt to give these athletes a place to show off their skill. Plus in the physical education world our goal is to make kids learn about a healthy lifestyle and get them to be active for a lifetime. Most people only play competitive team sports until they are in college. Jogging is something people do their whole lives. We figured that bringing attention to it could ultimately make kids healthier.”

50 Compliments and a Reward

SNIS Grade 5 teacher Dianne Johnson sent out an interesting tweet recently about a reward system she uses in her class. In the photo accompanying the tweet, the students all looked comfy and cozy in their pjs! Mrs. Johnson says “A reward system I use in my class is 50 Chips in the Jar. Each time an individual student or the class receives a compliment for their behavior they earn a chip. I like to tie their recognition to their demonstration of our Sarah Noble Pledge where each day they pledge to be respectful, responsible, honest, or safe. We also tie it to our monthly character trait program. When the class collectively earns 50 chips, they brainstorm ideas of what they would like as their reward. The class votes and the activity that gets the most votes wins. This time it was pancakes and pajamas.” Mrs. Johnson reports that the students are well on their way to their next fifty chips and chattering about what they are going to vote for next!



Mrs. Johnson was also one of many teachers tweeting about Pink Day at SNIS. Students and staff throughout the school were proud to wear pink on October 24th in support of breast cancer awareness. Mrs. Johnson, whose class is pictured above, says they were “tickled to be wearing pink in the spirit of hope and cure!”

*All the New Milford Public Schools try to tweet regularly.
You can see their tweets on their individual school webpages or,
even better, sign up to follow them to make sure you don't miss one:*

Hill and Plain Elementary tweets @HPS_CT

John Pettibone Elementary tweets @JPS_CT

Northville Elementary tweets @NES_CT

Sarah Noble Intermediate School tweets @SNIS_CT

Schaghticoke Middle School tweets @SMS_CT

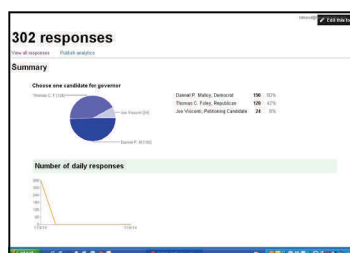
New Milford High School tweets @NMHS_CT

SMS Eighth Graders Participate in Mock Election

Eighth grade students predicted Dannel Malloy's narrow victory over Tom Foley in this year's gubernatorial campaign when they voted for Malloy in a Mock Election at SMS the day before the real election. The students were informed voters, as before voting, they all watched presentations on the candidates by Mr. Sean Mahon's 8 White Social Studies classes.

Mr. Mahon's students spent three days researching the candidates and creating their presentations. Before they started their research, they brainstormed about ways in which voters get information about candidates. They also learned about the difference between positive and negative campaign ads, and learned that Connecticut's gubernatorial race was called the most negative race in the country. Their favorite part of the introduction to the project was to watch a pair of negative campaign ads, and then to discuss what was being said in the commercials. Students were then placed in groups, and chose which topics they wanted to research.

One group in each class researched the candidates' backgrounds. Other issues the students researched included Education, Gun Control, Immigration, Taxes, the Economy and Healthcare. One group in Mr. Mahon's I Period class even researched Super-Pacs, and how they affected the election. The students presented each candidate's stand on the issues, and then noted any similarities and differences.



SMS 8th graders' Mock Election results predict this year's gubernatorial winner.

"Mr. Mahon's students did an excellent job," said Library Media Specialist David Bilmes, who helped the students with their research and organized the Mock Election. "They were frustrated, though, with how difficult it was to find information about some of their issues on the candidates' websites. After watching a full period of presentations, the 8th graders in our school were probably more informed voters than many of the people who actually voted on Election Day."



Digital Citizenship Week at SMS



The SMS Technology Class definitely tweets!

Seventh graders at Schaghticoke Middle School learn about Digital Citizenship during their one semester Technology class. In class they discuss such topics as digital footprints, privacy and security, copyright, and online relationships (including cyberbullying). In recognition of Digital Citizenship Week (October 19-25), Technology teacher Jennifer Morrison asked a few classes for a good citizenship rule they would like to “tweet”. Some of the rules they suggested were: Think Before You Post; Turn OFF location services to camera and social apps; Don’t post pics you don’t want Grandma to see; Don’t tweet everything you do or everywhere you go; and Don’t throw your info around the Internet. Additional classes will add their tweets as the semester goes forward.

Mrs. Morrison says “Parents who are interested in more information might want to check out the [Family Toolbox](#) from CommonSense Media. Two other helpful sites are [Cyberwise: No Grownup Left Behind!](#) which pledges to help busy adults keep kids safe online and [StaySafeOnline.org](#) powered by the National Cyber Security Alliance. We need to remember that there are benefits to a safe, careful online life but social media is constantly changing. There are new apps and sites cropping up daily, and we all need to stay informed.”

SMS: Global Students -- Global Perspectives

Sometimes it seems as if there are so many problems in the world that it’s impossible to solve them. But Tracy Olmsted’s 8 Red Social Studies students will tell you otherwise after they spent six weeks this fall working in small groups with students both from SMS and from schools in other countries on a project about the 5 Most Pressing Global Problems.



One of many presentations on global problems

Not only did the students have to identify which problems they thought were the most pressing, but they had to come up with solutions to those problems. The project was a learning experience for both the students and their teachers. For one thing, they had to learn how to work with students who lived in other countries, and in other time zones, and in some cases, were learning English as a second language. While most of the students they worked with were from Windsor, Ontario, some of them also worked with students from Spain, Italy, and Venezuela.

“I give Tracy Olmsted a lot of credit for participating in this project,” said Library Media Specialist David Bilmes, who learned

about the project from a Google-plus Group he belongs to, Librarians Without Borders. "I'm a firm believer in the global classroom, and this was a great way for our students to learn about issues from a global perspective, not just our own. It was also a good learning experience for them in dealing with groups, some of which worked better together than others."

Organizing this project utilizing Google Classroom and Google Presentation enabled students from around the world to access the same documents. "Mr. Bilmes' interest in enhancing technology benefited all students with the assignment, and it was thrilling to see students' global presentations come together so seamlessly," said Ms. Olmsted.

The students met with Ms. Olmsted and Mr. Bilmes once a week in the Library Media Center, and also came to the LMC during their Academic Lab periods.



The "Global" students of 8 Red Social Studies

Many of the final presentations can be viewed [online](#). Information about the project in general can be viewed [here](#).

Moving From Library Media Center to Learning Commons

This is Library Media Specialist Robin Stiles' first year at New Milford High School but she may be a familiar face to some having worked at Schaghticoke Middle School from 1997 to 2000. Mrs. Stiles is putting her over 18 years' experience as an LMS to good use as she settles in and begins to make changes, some subtle and some not so subtle, to the library.

The NMHS Library Media Center is slowly changing in culture and program to the concept of Library Learning Commons (LLC).



NMHS students sign in at the library front desk

NMHS is moving away from the traditional library space as we knew it, designed for just individual, quiet study. The new Library Learning Commons model fosters student learning in new and creative ways, encouraging collaboration and creativity. The space is designed to be flexible and open so that students can move about to various areas to find a quiet nook to read, conduct research, work in small groups, and yes, even study on their own. According to Mrs. Stiles, "One of the guiding principles of the Library Learning Commons is to create a space that encourages inquiry and community. Incorporating student and staff usage is key."

To that end, more desks have been added to the classroom space in the library so that two

full classes can be served in the glassed in areas. A cart holding new chrome books stays put for use in the LLC. Mrs. Stiles says “We’ve started a ‘Chrome Book 101’ beginner lesson for all classes who visit the LLC classroom to make sure students take care of the equipment so it lasts longer and works well.”

Conscious of the technology most of our students are so comfortable using, students can sign up to come to the library on the school’s website by scanning the displayed QR reader with their smartphone or clicking the link provided. The form is open and available from 2:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. the next morning at which point the library staff creates a list of all those who have signed up and sends it to the study hall teachers for attendance purposes. The LLC itself fully utilizes wireless technology.

“With the abundance of digital resources available to students today, we have seen a decrease in the need to house as many print materials. This opens up our spaces for repurposing that is more meaningful to students. Our main goal is to create a warm, welcoming environment, where all spaces are used for all types of learning all the time.” says Mrs. Stiles. New seating is being added to the traditional library tables already in place. Moveable, upholstered seating is on order and will be mixed and matched in the library to make small study and reading areas for students and staff alike. Formed stackable chairs and small stools are already on hand and are arranged to create small working areas for students. New high top tables and stools promote smaller group seating and help with visibility of students from the Main Desk. They are also strategically placed near electrical outlets for students who may need to plug in their digital devices for charging.



The old Periodical Room is being cleaned out and there are many ideas being brainstormed for its use including the possibility of a student lounge area, a space for larger projects such as 3-D printing or video

recording, student presentations or a MakerSpace room.

The LLC will also host “LLC Presents” beginning in December. This will be a series of special events or performances in the LLC that will be held periodically during the school day. These events will be open to a broader audience. “The first event will be a Mock Trial performed on the main floor of the LLC by the Forensic Psychology class. Study hall students can be spectators or jurors. Younger students who observe will learn about trials, and may decide they want to take the course later on. I am hoping to enlist PTO and staff help to entice future speakers and performers so as to increase our connections with the greater New Milford community”, says Mrs. Stiles.

Mrs. Stiles says this total transition will be a cultural change that will probably take at least four years, meaning that after this year's freshmen graduate high school the transition might be complete. All the changes are designed to make sure the library remains a focal point for the school’s community of learners as they come together to work, study and collaborate.

Mrs. Stiles shares this link for more information on the development of the [Learning Commons model](#).



New Milford Public Schools

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Mr. John Calhoun
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Mr. Jay Hubelbank
 Fiscal Services & Operations Director

Mrs. Laura Olson
 Pupil Personnel & Special Services Director

Ms. Roberta Pratt
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Mrs. Sandra Sullivan
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National Day of Listening

The National Day of Listening is an unofficial day of observance sponsored by the national nonprofit organization StoryCorps. Held on the Friday after Thanksgiving Day, the event encourages Americans to set aside time to record the stories of their families, friends, and local communities.

StoryCorps is one of the largest oral history projects of its kind. Since 2003, StoryCorps has collected and archived more than 50,000 interviews from more than 80,000 participants. Each conversation is recorded and preserved at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. According to their website, StoryCorps’ mission is “to provide people of all backgrounds and beliefs with the opportunity to record, share and preserve the stories of our lives. We do this to remind one another of our shared humanity, to strengthen and build the connections between people, to teach the value of listening, and to weave into the fabric of our culture the understanding that everyone’s story matters”.

There are no restrictions on who may conduct an interview as part of the National Day of Listening or what type of interview format may be used. StoryCorps encourages anyone to make a recording using equipment that is readily available in most homes, such as computers, iPhones, and tape recorders. They even provide a [free Do-It-Yourself Instruction Guide](#) and instructions on how to start your own family archive.

Listening is a great skill to practice any day not only on the National Day of Listening. So if you are looking for a project to do with your children or extended family during upcoming holiday visits why not give it a try?

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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.