

# Superintendent's Update

Karen L. Bilbao, Superintendent of Schools

## HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN BEGINS

### Jim Stefankiewicz Hired as New Assistant Superintendent



*Jim Stefankiewicz will be joining Middletown in November as the new Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.*

We are very happy to have hired Jim Stefankiewicz, the innovative and talented principal of Red Bank Regional High School as our new Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. Jim's expertise and experience mirror exactly what we need for the major redesign of our high school program. During his four years at RBR, Mr. Stefankiewicz spearheaded a Freshman Academy which demystifies a large high school for incoming freshmen by creating three smaller

communities which share the same core subjects, teachers and guidance counselor. Shared staff planning time assures that no freshman fall between the cracks. He wrote, won and managed a \$1.2 million federal Small Learning Communities Grant (one of only two school districts in New Jersey and 38 in the nation) to apply the smaller communities concept to the other three class levels. Mr. Stefankiewicz has presented these two programs to national conferences on behalf of the United States Department of Education.

Mr. Stefankiewicz also implemented block scheduling at RBR this year which is ideal for project based learning, a key component in the small learning community academies. During Mr. Stefankiewicz's tenure, RBR also introduced and recently expanded the nationally recognized college preparation AVID program. That program aims at mentoring and inspiring the "student in

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### Professional Learning Communities Established

As the district turns its focus to re-designing its high schools, this summer Dr. Patricia Cartier (Principal of North) and Dr. Anthony Shallop (who will officially become High School South's Principal in January) were sent for special training at Harvard University. Dr. Shallop also visited exemplary high schools in Washington D.C. to identify the best practices needed to create a new design for Middletown's High Schools. Additionally, over 100 teachers have received training during the spring and summer months for *High School Redesign*.

The purpose or vision of the new design would be to make education more relevant and interesting to high school students and actively engage them in the learning process. Educational research reveals that these ingredients correlate to improved student academic performance and success.

Dr. Shallop, who visited several top-rated schools in the nation, reported that the staff in those schools spent more time working in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) which was a key element for *High School Redesign* in those schools--providing continual professional development time for staff.

Dr. Shallop comments, "In analyzing these top schools, I came to realize that there is nothing they have that Middletown doesn't have or can't duplicate. We can be among the best high schools in this country. We just need to redesign our high schools and set our vision."

Middletown began the implementation of PLCs holding its first PLC activity day on September 30. During PLC time, staff meet to accomplish several things including (1) collaborating with teachers within departments to articulate the curriculum across grade levels (2) networking with teachers across departments to

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## LIONS CLUB / DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS KINDERGARTEN AND PRE-SCHOOLERS

The Lions Club of Middletown has partnered with the Middletown School District to offer vision screening for our kindergarteners and pre-schoolers free of charge. The Lions' volunteers, accompanied by district nurse Eileen Gavin, will visit all 12 Middletown elementary schools during three weeks in October to administer vision screenings to kindergarteners whose parents have granted permission. At this writing, nearly 600 kindergarteners will be screened. The Lions' volunteers will return to screen the pre-school students during the winter months.

Sight preservation and restoration has long been a major initiative of the Lions Club International. The Lions Foundation has procured expensive eye photo-screening automatic refractors (which resemble a hand-held video camera) and trained its volunteers in its simple operation. The refractor, (the Suresight Vision Screener) which engages a young child's eye focus through lights and sounds, gives instant readings of the child's eye checking for eye disorders including farsightedness, nearsightedness, astigmatism, amblyopia (lazy eye) and anisometropia (unequal refractive power.) The readings are then sent to the South Jersey Eye Center for evaluation. Parents will be notified by the Eye Center should their child require additional medical follow-up.

Eileen Gavin comments on the program, "The generous volunteers of the Lions Club are providing a great service to our district. The vision refractor enables us to properly screen very young children who may not be verbal or cooperative to alternate visual screening methods. Additionally, a state grant, which funded our cost for an eye doctor to help conduct the screenings, was eliminated this year. If not for the Lion's Club's help, we might not have been able to run this program."



*Pictured (left to right) with New Monmouth School Nurse Eileen Gavin are Lions Club volunteers Craig Finegan, Jim Guerrieri, Vice President, and Rick LaBarbera, eye screening chairman who is holding the Suresight Vision automatic refractor used for screening eye vision.*

## DRUG AND ALCOHOL SURVEY RESULTS PRESENTATION

at  
Board of Education Workshop Meeting,  
Wednesday, October 14, 7:30 pm, High School North Library, Tindall Road

*New Assistant Superintendent continued*

the middle” to achieve to their highest potential. Key to most of RBR’s success is significant and continuous staff development which Mr. Stefankiewicz planned and supervised.

Mr. Stefankiewicz began his educational career as a social studies teacher at the Union County Magnet High School for Mathematics, Science and Technology in Scotch Plains, New Jersey where he was named Teacher of the Year and received the New Jersey Best Practice Award in Social Studies. He ascended to Principal in 2003. Under his leadership at Union County, the school was recognized as a New Jersey Governor School of Excellence, a New Jersey Star School and NCLB (No Child Left Behind)—Blue Ribbon School.

Jim Stefankiewicz graduated from Temple University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in the area of Communications. He holds a Masters of Science in Teaching from Rowan University and a Masters in Educational Administration from Kean University. He is currently a doctoral candidate at Kean University. Mr. Stefankiewicz lives in West Allenhurst, NJ, with his wife and young son.

Mr. Stefankiewicz comments, “Over the past eleven years, I have had the fortune of working with many wonderful educators and students. Their inspiration and assistance have enabled me to achieve many of my professional dreams. I recognize great potential in the Middletown School community and I look forward to this new challenge to help develop and foster new dreams for the students of Middletown.”

*Professional Learning Communities continued*



*High School South’s Dr. Shallop and High School North Principal Patrica Cartier together planned monthly PLCs for their schools continual staff development which should increase the success of Middletown’s high school re-design.*

develop interdisciplinary unit plans, including project based learning. For example, English and history teachers develop shared lesson plans where students study the literature of a specific period in history while math and science teachers collaborate on problems where math is utilized in the study of science. (3) Teachers will have the opportunity to study student data, including IEP requirements, to assure that the needs of students are being met for all levels of learners.

To create the continual staff development time, the district has decided to employ a monthly 90-minute extended first period (from 7:36 to 9:06 am) where staff-supervised special programming will take place. All students, except seniors (who will have the option of starting class at 9:06 am during the PLC days) will report to their first period classroom where they will have attendance taken. Freshmen will then be sent to specified classrooms for the Freshman Transition Project, which will be led by Senior Class Peer Leaders, who have been trained in the program. The program will aid the freshman transition from middle school to high school. Sophomores will meet in the auditorium for assemblies, which will cover a range of pertinent topics and may feature guest speakers, while juniors will meet in the gymnasium or the commons or cafeteria for special programming. The junior programming could include sports or

community service projects, class election speeches and presentations from local businesses as well as SAT preparation. The high school administration will develop these programs in concert with the Sophomore and Junior Student Councils to maximize buy-in, and thus the interests of the students. Seniors, who are not participating in the Peer-Leader program with the freshmen, are welcome to join the junior class for their programming or will have the opportunity to come to school 90 minutes later as they do during the HSPA testing period for juniors.

Following one hour of programming, the students will be directed back to their first period class where a second attendance will be taken. High school administrators and security staff will supervise to assure that all students remain in the school for the first 90 minutes. Staff supervision will be provided by a different high school department each month, ensuring that each department will have 8 to 9 of these Professional Learning Community experiences during the school year.



*High School South Juniors Megan Foran and Ana LanFranchi spearheaded a junior class walk which raised over \$1,000 for Autism Speaks during the September PLC and junior class activity.*



## Don’t Miss The Return of the Haunted Woods

Saturday, October 17, Tindall Park (across from HS North)

Happy Trails begin at 4 pm; Scary Trails begin at sunset till 9 pm

Sponsored by the Middletown High School North Senior Class

**HAPPY HALLOWEEN**