

Superintendent's Update

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MIDDLETOWN
TOWNSHIP
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



FALL PLAYS



High School South's play, *God's Favorite*, was directed by new English teacher, Jennifer Lauren Scott and featured student direction by two seniors, Casie Fitzgerald and Craig Doyle. The play was performed on November 1st, 2nd and 3rd, with an understudy performance on October 31st.

The High School North Play, *Lend Me a Tenor*, is a comedy in two acts directed by Patrice Thornton, an English teacher at High School North. Performances will be held on November 29th, 30th and Saturday, December 1st.

It is always a joy for me to experience our students' performances in the Fall and Spring plays. There is tremendous effort on their part in the set design alone. The students can be seen rehearsing for weeks prior to the productions and their performances never disappoint. I hope to see the plays well attended this season.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE TOWNSHIP

The School District has a representative that sits on the Middletown Public Library Advisory Board and goes to the monthly meetings. This year, Ms. Kathy Sidoti, Principal of Leonardo School, is the School district Representative. Her role is to keep the Library Board aware of School District needs and initiatives. One example is our LEADS initiative in the middle schools, which has significantly increased the number of novels that middle school students will read each year. Ms. Susan O'Neil, Director of the Middletown Public Library, has announced that the Middletown Public Library will devote \$25,000 of its resources to purchasing the novels that are in the LEADS curriculum units, as well as related novels if there is a series, so that students can read more of the novels that are in their curriculum units. This donation fits perfectly into the LEADS concept, where teachers have a number of novels from which they can choose for each unit and there is a range of ability levels reflected

in the choice, from easy to average to challenging. The Public Library supplements will allow students to select additional readings beyond those they are required to read in school. On behalf of the Board of Education and our students and staff, I would like to thank the Library for supporting our LEADS initiative.

USING ASSESSMENT DATA TO INFORM INSTRUCTION

For the first time, District Administrators are able to electronically obtain and organize state assessment data for individual students into configurations that can be transmitted to teachers according to their schedules in the secondary schools. How does this data analysis help to inform instruction? Here's an example: A 7th grade History teacher, who has six sections of History with an average of 25 students in each section, previously had to go to the Guidance Office and look up the Individual Student Reports for every student on her roster (an average of 150 students) in order to know how those students performed on the most recent state test. At best, this teacher could only look for the data on her struggling students.

Now with "Ed-Analyzer" the data analysis function of NJ SMART, our electronic statewide student information system, a class list of students with their NJ SMART ID numbers allows us to generate a spreadsheet of the students' test scores with detailed sub-cluster analysis. This information at our teachers' fingertips will allow them to make informed decisions about skills students need to learn and will help teachers identify students who need to be further challenged as well as supported with interventions.

As parents, there should be comfort in knowing your children's time spent on state assessments is now producing information that will help their own learning. Previously, the test data served primarily to inform you of the progress your children were making and to inform the NJ State Department of Education and the public of how well the district was performing as a whole.

LEARNIA

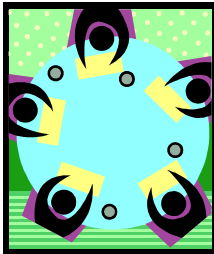
Our district has the opportunity to participate in this exciting project by invitation of the NJ State Department of Education, sponsored by Mr. Fred Carrigg, our District Director of Humanities K-12, this year. The LEARNIA project allows students to periodically take sample assessment items on-line to see how they perform on those items and to determine the skills that student needs if the student does not perform successfully. These assessment items also serve to provide our teachers direct information about

the content and skills that will be assessed on the upcoming state tests.

Middletown is fortunate to be able to be a part of this exciting project. The goals of the project are for an initial cohort of more than 30 middle school teachers to learn the technology and then teach their students to perform the on-line assessments. Our district will have the opportunity to communicate with other districts participating in the LEARNIA project.

**Free Photography Exhibit Comes to the Middletown Arts Center
"Looking West—A New Direction in Fine Art Photography"**
November 9—December 2, 2007
9:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.—Monday-Wednesday
9:00 a.m.—9:00 p.m.—Thursday & Friday
9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.—Saturday

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRESS



With all the talk over the past year about instructional change, what can students and parents actually expect to see happening in our classrooms? The paradigm shift that the district is embracing moves us toward instructional groupings and away from desks in rows with the teacher positioned at the front or back of the classroom. The shift to groupings is not intended for the entire lesson, as the lesson should also include whole group instruction as well as “wrap-up” or closing summation with a quick look at where the next lesson will lead. The groupings at the heart of the lesson is the evidence of real change that we expect to see taking place in more and more classrooms this year. The center of the change is happening in the middle schools, where the Connected Math and LEADS initiatives have really taken off.

“Tiered Instruction” is the centerpiece of the LEADS initiative. The sixth grade Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science classes have made the transition to LEADS, with many pilot classes in seventh and eighth grade taking hold. The configuration of classes in groupings, usually of 4 or 5 desks, but sometimes the groupings are pairs or groups of three, is the most noticeable change in the instructional paradigm. Guided Reading occurs in these groups, where students can be found “whisper-reading”, or reading silently as they apply strategies they have just learned in the whole group instruction. Many of our classrooms have a mandated services teacher along with the general education teacher during this period of guided reading, who circulate and work with the groups. After the reading, the students respond to questions or work on an activity where they have to apply the knowledge from the reading.

Integration of technology is another important feature of the paradigm shift. Our students should be using computers as a tool for learning and research, beyond going to a computer lab to learn how to use the computer and the great variety of software now available. Teachers use technology to present information through such tools as the projection screen, the document camera and the SmartBoard.



In mathematics, the use of instructional groups to apply learning has reached the 8th grade level through the Connected Math Program begun two years ago. Class begins with “launching” the lesson or setting the stage for the group work to allow students to work together in groups to explore possible solutions to a problem or problems.

The shift in the elementary schools has begun with The Writing Workshop, which also contains the tiered model of instruction. Evidence of writing can be seen displayed on classroom bulletin boards and hung on “clothes lines” across the classrooms. Written pieces are also published in the hallways or in newsletters or other published formats. “Word Walls” are now commonplace in elementary as well as in middle school classrooms.

Our elementary reading program, Macmillan McGraw-Hill, is a great example of tiered instruction and the use of flexible groupings. The anthology text is generally read aloud by the teacher, during the whole group or shared reading experience, where the students follow along in their own text. The next phase is the guided reading, where students read texts at their level of ability. Again, this is the time when the teachers in the classroom have the best opportunity to offer support to students at all levels. "In Class Support" may be provided if there are students with disabilities in the classroom, or for students requiring academic assistance or reading intervention by a specialist.

As we continue this shift, professional development opportunities involving the delivery of instruction through flexible groupings along with other methods that are evidenced in the change process are being provided. Students at all levels (elementary, middle and high school) and in all subject areas, will benefit from using instructional groupings for part of the lesson.



**Joetta Beaver,
author of the
DRA, comes to
Middletown**

On November 30th, Middletown Schools will be visited by the author of the most widely used, formative assessment of reading, "The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)". The DRA is a reading assessment that determines a child's independent reading level, supports guided reading and lets the teacher know what are the students' needs in the area of reading. This year, the Middletown District is using the DRA to assess all Kindergarten and first grade students for possible reading problems as well as all students who fall in the Partially Proficient range on the state assessments in grades two through eight. Joetta Beaver, the author, has been a classroom teacher in Grades K-5, a Language Arts Assessment Coordinator, a Reading Recovery Teacher and an early education teacher leader. She has a BA in Elementary Education and a Masters Degree in Reading from Ohio State University. She is the primary author of the DRA K-3 and co-author of the DRA 4-8. She has presented at numerous conferences across the United States and Canada and will be in Middletown at the High School South Theatre on Friday, November 30 from 1:00—3:00 p.m. Parents are welcome to attend this presentation.



Welcome New District Administrators

Mr. David Healy, current Assistant Principal for Discipline at High School North, will replace Mr. John Russo as Assistant Superintendent for Operations/Personnel as of January, 2008. Dr. Cartier, Principal of High School North, is in process of interviewing for a potential replacement for Mr. Healy.

A warm welcome is wished for our new Principal of Lincroft Elementary School. **Mr. Luigi Laugelli** comes to us from our neighboring Long Branch District, where he served as an Elementary Teacher, Literacy Coach, Assistant Principal, Elementary Principal and most recently, District Manager of Technology. Mr. Laugelli holds a Masters Degree in School Leadership from Seton Hall University and another Masters Degree in Information Technology from Teachers College, Columbia University. We wish Mr. Laugelli great success in his new role as principal at Lincroft Elementary School.



A Fond Farewell

After 28 years of service in the District, my confidential secretary, **Mrs. Renate Mey**, will be retiring in January 2008. Mrs. Mey has served as Confidential Secretary to 10 Superintendents and the continuity and support she has provided during all those transitions has really helped the District run smoothly.

Sometimes we forget to recognize the ones who are not always in the forefront, but who have the responsibility to insure that critical things like the Board Agendas are completed, published on time and in perfect order and that deadlines are met and appointments are made and kept. These are the types of essential duties that make school districts run efficiently, for the benefit of our students. When these difficult tasks can always be accomplished with a kind word and a smile, then a school district is a better place—and this District is surely a better place for having been the workplace of a person the caliber of Mrs. Renate Mey.