

BERGENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

District Newsletter

December 2014

FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

By Dr. Michael Kuchar, Superintendent of Schools



It is with a grateful heart that I write to wish you and your families a joyous holiday season. In Bergenfield, we are blessed to share many unique cultures and traditions, united by common elements, such as enjoying special foods and spending time with family and friends. Gift-giving is a part of many holiday traditions and, for most, an enjoyable exchange and fun experience. However, this can also be quite stressful, as the advertising world now begins putting pressure on us around Halloween, forcing us to find and purchase the perfect gifts.

As an educator, what comes to my mind when I think of giving the perfect gifts are not those we purchase or give only once a year, but those that are bestowed throughout the year and, hopefully, throughout a lifetime. As I reflect on this topic, my heart fills with pride as I consider what remarkable gifts our students have presented to those most in need—their community service. I believe it was President Ronald Regan who once said, “We can’t help everyone, but everyone can help someone.” Our students in grades K-12 are proving this statement to be true as they partake in activities designed to brighten our world. Regardless of interests or affiliations, our students are applying their knowledge and skills to help others through community service.

Each year, our students are filled with excitement as they visit patients in hospitals; perform for our heroes and veterans; sing for residents of nursing homes; collect food for the needy; assist victims of fires and tragedy; give coats, hats, and mittens to provide warmth; and bring teddy bears to children with terminal

illnesses. On a daily basis in our schools, students also give to each other through outstanding peer mentoring activities, buddy programs, and by partnering with students with autism.

As with other gifts at holiday time, often the person who receives the most reward in this special exchange is the one doing the giving. According to the University of Michigan, community service can “increase students’ personal, interpersonal, and social development; increase motivation, student engagement, and school attendance; and lead to new perspectives and more positive lifestyle choices and behavior.” Also, students who engage in service-learning are more likely to treat each other kindly, help each other, and care about doing their best. They increase their sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy, and, most significantly, feel that they can make a difference. By the way, community service also translated into increases in academics, such as reading and math, and performance on standardized tests as well. What a win-win situation!

Community service is not just for students, however. If you find yourself feeling like your life might be missing that special something, or that shopping is stretching the limits of your finances—consider how you might find a way to give of yourself to others. There is no gift more rewarding than seeing yourself through the eyes of someone very grateful for your presence. Nothing is more valuable than the gift of yourself and your time—a gift that someone in need is surely waiting for.

Wishing you and your family a happy, healthy holiday and New Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Michael Kuchar RD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "RD" clearly visible at the end.

Dr. Michael Kuchar

What’s New in Curriculum

Dear Community,

Instruction and learning have been bolstered as a result of the addition of two instructional technology coaches to the staff this year. The coaches are working directly with teachers in the classrooms, assisting with tasks such as maximizing the use of Smartboards and utilizing laptops to prepare students for the PARCC assessments. Students have been taking practice assessments and learning key test taking skills, such as dragging, selection, and answer elimination.

Professional development opportunities have expanded to include afterschool workshops that develop skills on educational software for differentiated instruction. Workshop topics include utilizing our Virtual Library and using netTrekker software to support instruction utilizing read aloud, readability levels, dictionaries, and translation tools.

Recently, parents of our elementary students have received the new version of a Common Core-aligned report card on December 11th. The revised format provides parents with a comprehensive understanding of the progress their child is making towards mastery of Common Core Standards in the areas of reading, writing, and math in preparation for the upcoming PARCC assessments. Students are expected to meet the standards listed by the end of the school year.

Lastly, we have just introduced a new teaching style called Flipped Classroom to a group of teachers. This concept involves teachers assigning pre-recorded lessons for homework and using the entire in-class period to help students with concepts they don’t understand. We will keep you posted as this begins to unfold.

Have a happy and healthy Holiday Season!

Mary Anne DeVivio

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum

AROUND THE DISTRICT

BHS Clubs Show Their Generosity During the Holiday Season



The Bergenfield Action Team has had a busy holiday season thus far. From November 12–25, the team captains led a canned food drive throughout Bergenfield High School. Kudos to Mrs. Budhai's English class for collecting the most items. The non-perishable foods collected in the drive were transported to the Bergenfield

Food Pantry at Borough Hall.

Also, on November 18th, the Action Team captains joined forces with the Youth Alive Club to promote the school-wide community service project, "Operation Christmas Child." The project, facilitated by Samaritan's Purse, sends gifts to children, ages 2-14, all over the world in highly impoverished areas.

Over 165 students attended this community service event, sharing the joyous feeling of being part of something special—and they truly were! The students broke last year's school record for most gifts collected. A total of 184 shoe boxes were filled with small items, such as crayons, coloring books, small toys,

and personal items like soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes. Many boxes included personal notes that our students wrote to the children who would be receiving them.

Mrs. Buendia, Youth Alive Advisor, stated, "The best part of the event was seeing the faces of these young men and women as they wrapped or selected items to pack inside the special gift boxes. They put a small piece of themselves in each box."

Thanks to the efforts of the students and faculty involved in the event, 184 young children will be receiving a gift this Holiday Season. 'Tis the time for joy, and it certainly was evident at BHS on November 18th.

Franklin School's "Helping Hands" Give Thanks



Thanksgiving was the perfect opportunity for members of Franklin School's student outreach group, Helping Hands, to pause and express gratitude to emergency responders, crossing guards, and custodial staff members for their selfless efforts throughout the year. The

group also expressed gratitude to TD Bank Branch Manager, Bettina Fowler, and the Bergenfield Rotary Club, who have been very supportive of Franklin School's outreach efforts, both past and present.

On November 27th, Franklin School's crossing guards and custodians were invited to a festive breakfast held on their behalf. While the crossing guards dined, students thanked them for their service, especially through harsh weather conditions. They were presented with a sampling of cards made in their honor by fourth and fifth grade students. Following the breakfast, leaders of Helping Hands, accompanied by the group's moderator,

Ms. Villone, along with Ms. Vazquez, and retired faculty member, Mrs. Hoffman, traveled to the Bergenfield Police Department, Fire Departments, and Ambulance Corps to present platters of cookies and thank you cards.

Throughout the year, Helping Hands has planned several activities to lend a hand to those less fortunate and brighten the lives of those who may need it. The club has adopted the motto, "Hands are for helping, not for hurting." To date, Helping Hands has collected food for Emmanuel Church in Hackensack, collected children's books for those in need, and thanked community servants.

Students and Senior Citizens Share Day of Compassion



This November, the students of Hoover School have been learning about the character trait of compassion. The students of Mrs. Roth's third grade class have learned that people can show their compassion for others by saying some-

thing kind or doing something helpful, whether helping family members or spending time with those who may need companionship. To put their lessons into action, Mrs. Roth's third graders planned a visit to Brookside Gardens, located next to Hoover School, to spend time with the senior citizen residents. In preparation, the students gathered books to read, created Thanksgiving cards, and thought about what they might talk about with the residents.

On November 25th, the students were warmly greeted at Brookside Gardens. They sang to the residents that had

gathered as a prologue to their visit. The students were eager to find someone to read to and, before long, all 16 students were seated next to one or more seniors, who listened carefully to the students' readings. Upon finishing their books, the students challenged their reading buddies to a game of tic-tac-toe. The smiling faces of both the residents and students revealed how much everyone enjoyed the visit. As the students said goodbye to their new friends, many of them shared their desire to go back and visit again. They realized that showing compassion feels just as good as receiving it.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS



★ Hoover School student, Krit Jain, was the town-wide winner for first-grade in the Bergenfield Fire Department's Annual Fire Safety Poster Contest. During October, members of the Bergenfield Fire Department visited each elementary school to teach students about fire prevention and safety. Following the presentations, students created posters based on the theme, "Working Smoke Alarms Save Lives." As the winner of the poster contest, Krit and his parents were driven to school on a fire truck. The Jain family was accompanied by Fireman Marchick and greeted upon their arrival to school by students and faculty.



★ The students in Mrs. McGrane's first grade class at Lincoln School went to Brookside Gardens to visit with the residents the day before Thanksgiving. As a way of giving back to the community, the students performed a program of Thanksgiving songs and poems. The students wrote about the things for which they are thankful, and shared their writing with the residents. Then, the students provided a buffet of snacks for everyone to enjoy while they talked with each other about their plans for Thanksgiving. The residents of Brookside Gardens expressed their gratitude for the visit and were happy to spend time with the students. This was a wonderful experience for everyone involved, and taught the students about the power of giving to others.



★ Roy W. Brown Middle School's 2nd Annual Multi-Heritage Thanksgiving Feast was held during lunch periods on November 24th. Aramark, our district's food service provider, and the RWB administration teamed up, once again, for this school-wide celebration. While Aramark provided the staple dishes, students and staff brought in other foods to represent the many diverse backgrounds, nationalities, and cultures that make up our community. A great time was had by all during this school-wide celebration of diversity!



★ Two Bergenfield High School students have been selected for the 2015 National Association for Music Education (NAfME) All-Eastern Honors Ensembles. senior Kevin Fritz, tenor 1, and junior Jeffrey Wilson Verzosa, bass 1, are among the 810 musically talented high school students in the Eastern United States chosen for this honor. With assistance from their music teacher, Mr. Couden, these exceptional students will prepare challenging music that they will perform under the leadership of prominent conductors in this biennial event. Kevin and Jeffrey will perform with the NAfME All-Eastern Honors Mixed Chorus at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Providence, Rhode Island on April 12th in front of an audience of thousands. For program and ticket information, please visit www.nafme-eastern.org.



★ On November 14th, seventy students from Hoover School competed in the Noetic Learning Math Contest. This contest is a national elementary-level math problem solving contest held bi-annually. This fall, 19,367 young mathletes, representing 1,279 teams across the country, participated in the contest. The following students are Team Winners (a title awarded to students who earned the highest scores within their grade-level team): **2nd Grade**—*Monisha Khatri*; **3rd Grade**—*Jeremiah Magnaye*; **4th Grade**—*Amaya Baez and Megan Santos*; and **5th Grade**—*Sarthak Gandotra and Sophia Santos*. The following students received National Honorable Mention (a title awarded to the top fifty percent of participating mathletes): **2nd Grade** — *Ariana Abraham, Devananda Anoop, Haley Hernandez, Monisha Khatri, Timothy Lin, Ashley Ramirez, and Harlon Sprague*; **3rd Grade**—*Cinnie Lin, Jeremiah Magnaye, and Nitya Malhotra*; **4th Grade**—*Nashrah Ahsan, Amaya Baez, Mehak Imran, and Megan Santos*; **5th Grade**—*Meg Baoas, Kendrick Edmondson, Sarthak Gandotra, and Sophia Santos*. The contest results demonstrate our students' great problem-solving skills. Congratulations to all!

★ During the Week of Respect 2014, motivational speaker, Gian Paul Gonzalez, visited RWB to help kick off the week for all middle school students. Gian Paul's "ALL IN" presentation challenged our students to be fully committed to their school, family, and community, which includes being substance-free and creating a bully-free environment. All students received a poker chip following the presentation and a "Bergenfield Schools are ALL IN" t-shirt to remind them of this important message.

AROUND THE DISTRICT

Feathered Fundraiser



This fall, the students at Washington School took part in the second annual Turkey Trot to raise money for those in need during the holiday season. Members of the school community were asked to donate a dollar to purchase a feather for Tom the School Turkey. As donations came in, the meat thermometer rose toward this year's goal of \$325, with the promise of a special visit the day before Thanksgiving. This year, the students exceeded their goal, reaching \$330, and were dazzled with a visit from Miss Sulich in the honorary turkey costume.



Bergenfield Public Schools
would like to wish the entire
community a joyous Holiday
Season and a happy and
healthy New Year.

See you all in 2015!

A Friendly Feast



On Tuesday, November 25th, the Jefferson School Parents Association sponsored their annual Thanksgiving Feast. Students were able to enjoy a holiday meal with all the trimmings. The day was celebrated in the classroom with grade-level activities and lessons with the theme of "Giving Thanks" for all that we have in our lives. A special "thank you" goes out to all of the parent volunteers who helped plan the event, and worked throughout the day to orchestrate the feeding of the entire school in an efficient and orderly manner.

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