

# JACKSON SCHOOL NEWS

School District Information for the Jackson Community

March 2009



Switlik Elementary School students Samantha McCarthy, 8, and Susan Lane, 10, raise their hands to talk about using a dictionary. They were among the 700 third graders who received dictionaries donated by the Rotary Club of Jackson.

## INSIDE:

- Students find creative ways to stand out
- Hundreds come out for Museum Night art show
- Students offer design services to gain real-world experience

## State Report Card Showcases Academic Success *District translates data into key evaluative tool*

In the recently released New Jersey School District Report Card, there are volumes of data about our students' proficiency on standardized tests, as well as a comparison of how our schools compare to similar districts throughout the state.

While this information is a certainly a useful snapshot of one year's worth of student performance, here in the Jackson School District we also use it for a broader purpose – to track how our classes of students are learning as they progress throughout their entire educational careers.

Unlike the school report card, which

compares the performance of one group of students on a test to another entirely different group of students taking an entirely different test, this tracking – referred to as growth model data -- offers a picture of how that same

group of students is progressing through each of their assessments.

"Growth model data is a comparison of apples to apples, a look at how the same students are doing year after year. The state is mandating this kind of longitudinal data collection now, but we are proud to have been using it since 2004."

~ Superintendent Thomas Gialanella

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For example, in the growth model chart on the second page of this newsletter, the red column shows the proficiency levels in math of the general education students in the Class of 2009.

"We can see that these students increased their proficiency from 76.3 when they were fourth graders, to 84.1

*(Continued, Page 2)*

## HOW YOU CAN STAY CONNECTED:

### JSD uses technology for cost-effective communications

The Jackson School District uses various tools to connect with our parents, students and community.

We hope you will avail yourself of some of the ways we are using technology to improve and enhance the home-school connection. For example, recently, we have:

- Launched newly designed websites. You can begin your tour at [www.jacksonsd.org](http://www.jacksonsd.org);
- Developed a new e-mail subscription system to distribute information. This method is cost-effective and provides us with another layer of notification for district and school news. When you provide your information, you can tailor what kind of subject matter you are interested in, e.g. school-specific notices when available, Board of Education updates when warranted. Visit our website for details.
- We continue to work with Cablevision to finalize the installation of our district television station - JacksonTV.

**SEE PAGE 3  
FOR WHAT WE  
HAVE IN OUR  
COMMUNICATIONS  
TOOLBOX**

### Class of 2009 College Acceptances Include:

- Harvard University
- Cornell University
- Johns Hopkins University
- U.S. Naval Academy
- Penn State University
- Penn State - College of Engineering
- Lehigh University

### (Curriculum, continued)

when they were eighth graders to 87.4 their senior year,” Gialanella said. “These progressive statistics allow us to make data-driven decision on whether the tools and techniques we are using in the classroom are working.”

In addition to using technology as an evaluative tool, the district is committed to using it as a curricular tool. Among the programs that has shown great success is Study Island, an instructional and diagnostic tool that help students master state standards and prepare for state tests.

“One of the best features of the program is that it allows students to learn at their own pace,” said Deputy Superintendent of Schools Lu Anne Meinders. “It also has dynamic content that keeps them engaged.”

This web-based program also pro-

#### Our graduation requirements are more rigorous than the state mandates. We require students to:

- Complete a total of 130 credits to graduate, 20 more than the state requires
- Complete a second year of world language
- Complete a computer-related course
- Choose additional electives

#### We offer the most Advanced Placement courses in Ocean County:

Biology	Lang. & Comp.
Calculus AB	Music Theory
Calculus BC	Physics
Chemistry	Psychology
Comp. Science A	Spanish
Comp. Science AB	Statistics
English Lit.	Studio Art
Gov't. & Politics	Psychology
French	U.S. History

vides immediate feedback and built-in remediation. If a student answers a question incorrectly, they are presented with an explanation of the correct response. When they need extra help, the program automatically prompts them to work on level-appropriate material for that topic.

“This program also contains an important feedback component for teachers through a real-time report card,” Gialanella said. “Teachers can privately access these results for an individual student or for a class and can use the data to fine tune their lessons if needed.”

To view the NJ State Report Card, click on the LINKS button at [www.jacksonsd.org](http://www.jacksonsd.org)

### Report Card Highlights

**Jackson Memorial High School ranks first in Ocean County in the total number of students scoring “3 or higher” on Advanced Placement tests.**

This score qualifies a student for advanced placement in college and college credit.

“This is a testament to our teachers and to the rigor and relevance of a curricula that has been re-aligned with the College Board guidelines,” said Deputy Superintendent of Schools Lu Anne Meinders. “It also translates into a direct cost-savings for parents who are burdened by college tuition because students can accumulate college credit.”

**Goetz Middle School ranks first and McAuliffe ranks fourth in Ocean County on the 8th grade literacy test.**

This is the first time a Jackson Middle School has ranked first in the county on any section of standardized testing.

The numbers in this chart represent the percentage of students who scored either “proficient” or “advanced proficient” in math standardized tests over the years, according to district growth model data.

The black column represents all the Jackson students tested in that grade during that year.

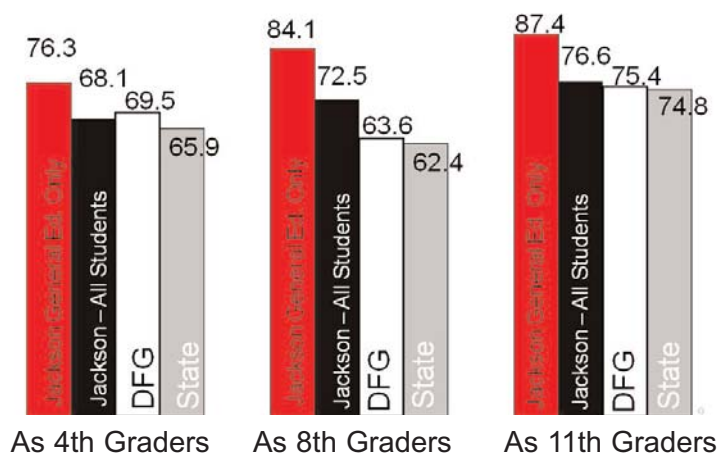
The red column shows only the Jackson general education students scores from the same tests; it extracts special education students’ scores.

The white column shows how other schools in our DFG, or district factor group, performed. The state of New Jersey uses district factor groups to compare districts with similar socioeconomic factors.

The grey column shows the average proficiency percentage for the state of New Jersey.

#### EXAMPLE: Growth Model Data ~ Class of 2009

Analyzing the progression of MATH proficiency of the same group of students over the years helps the district plan for the future.



## HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION TOOLBOX

**PLEASE NOTE:** Questions about these tools are answered exclusively through e-mail. Please include your name, your child's name, child's school, your street address & telephone number in EVERY correspondence.

### PARENTLINK

- Automated calling system that allows parents to add multiple numbers and e-mail addresses to be used in an emergency. Announcements include school closings, emergencies and school information.
- For regular announcements, the system will call only the home number on file. For emergencies, the system will utilize all the numbers parents provide after logging in to the system.
- You will receive a reminder notice with your login information in the coming weeks.
- After receiving this information, if you need assistance you can e-mail [parentlinksupport@jacksonsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:parentlinksupport@jacksonsd.k12.nj.us).

### STARBASE PORTAL

- A virtual online gradebook for parents/guardians of students grades 6-12.
- Logins are sent by mail during the year.
- If you need a new login sent to you, e-mail [portalsupport@jacksonsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:portalsupport@jacksonsd.k12.nj.us)

### E-MAIL SIGNUP

**NEW!**

- New e-mail subscription service allows you to receive information from the district via e-mail.
- This e-mail list is user-controlled, so you maintain the ability to update your contact information.
- Visit our district website to join.

## McAuliffe Inventors Prove the Future is in Good Hands



*Winning Invention:  
The Sweepster 5000 cleans  
using a remote control.*

Although they are part of a generation of students who live in a world where every modern convenience is at their disposal, students at McAuliffe Middle School are proving there is still plenty of room for creativity.

"These kids have so much technology around them, so many things to make their lives easier that sometimes it

seems like everything has already been thought of, said teacher Michael Saulnier. "We challenged that, and our students proved there are plenty of things to be invented."

The inventors fair was coordinated by teachers Saulnier and Linda Della Serra, who said they required students submit not only an invention, but also a business plan and a well-written display to promote their creation. Some even required patent searches.

"The students were so creative and we were so proud of them," Della Sera said. "This was more than just being at a table showing your work, they couldn't say enough about what they had done. It was inspiring."

The students who demonstrated the best product and backup information were sixth graders Brian Grecksch and Sean Nemeth, who are both 12.

The Sweepster 5000, as their invention is called, allows a 12-year-old boy to clean his room using a remote control.

"It also has an iPod and a phone attached to it, so you can talk on the phone and listen to music at the same time," said Brian. "That makes cleaning easier, too."

## Heart Healthy Fundraiser Takes a Cross-Curricular Approach

With the importance of character education firmly ingrained in our district's culture, it is not rare for students to take up a cause.

But the energy of a particular project at Goetz Middle School took such a hold that it became an endeavor that crossed curriculums and joined an entire school together .

Physical Education teachers Dana Paneque and Susan Bruett said they wanted an inventive way to involve their entire department in comprehensive lessons on heart healthiness and nutrition. Teacher Jason Ulrich became "Captain Cardiac," bringing his message to the school using a goofy but informative approach.

Captain Cardiac found four protégés, referred to as the "Fit Four." Students Jake Harlinski, Megan McPaul, Leah Brinley and Jarica Wilson were featured on the Goetz morning news program and became superheroes in their own right among their peers.

It just kept going. Math classes calculated resting heart rates. Science classes dissected a pig heart and filmed it to be shown to other classes. Computer classes designed presentations on the functions of the heart. Literacy classes wrote stories about heart health.

The efforts resulted in a \$3,000 donation to the American Heart Association, but other results were even more valuable, Paneque and Bruett said.

"The students and staff wholeheartedly embraced the idea and just ran with it," said Bruett. "And the students even brought the message home to their parents. They really got it, and that is so rewarding."



*The Fit Four and Capt. Cardiac  
captivated the student body at  
Goetz with their message.*

## Hundreds See District-Wide Museum Night Showcase of Student Work



With drawings created by the tiniest hands, paintings and sculpture from middle school artists and the sophisticated creations of high school students, the halls of Jackson Liberty High School were transformed into a museum for one night this winter.

"It was a great showcase of artwork depicting various time periods of art history," said art teacher Jessica Ventrello, who helped coordinate the event. "It is amazing to see the entire districts' work in one place."

More than 250 pieces from every school were on display.



### Students Offer Graphics Services to Jackson Businesses in an Effort to Gain Hands-On, Real-World Experience

In an effort to expose students to real-world experience and to help them hone their design skills, graphics design teachers at both high schools are helping to connect students with area businesses who may need help.

"This gives students real experience dealing with a 'client' and also the reward of seeing their designs displayed or used in the community," said Bea Gagliano, who teaches Digital Media I at Jackson Memorial High School. "The businesses would benefit financially, but will also gain an appreciation for the talent we have in our schools."

Jackson businesses interested in having students assist them with

them with a logo design, business card design, letterhead formatting or product design can contact Gagliano or Jackson Liberty High School Teacher Ann Cole to set up a school visit and talk to the students about their needs. The students will then work on the product and present products to their "clients."

"The talent that we have here in the district is really amazing," said Cole. "It will give them real-life experience in dealing with clients who have different needs."

Bea Gagliano can be reached at [BEGagliano@jacksonsd.org](mailto:BEGagliano@jacksonsd.org).

Ann Cole can be reached at [ANCole@jacksonsd.org](mailto:ANCole@jacksonsd.org).

### S-U-C-C-E-S-S

#### Spelling Bee Highlights Commitment to Academics



*The W-I-N-N-E-R:  
Elms Elementary School  
5th Grader Jackie Du*

With the confidence and vocabulary of a person twice his age, Elms Elementary School fifth grader Jackie Du took first

place in the district's first annual Elementary Spelling Bee.

"I wasn't really nervous because my dad said if you are nervous you aren't going to have success," he said. "So I just focused."

The straight-A student also put the time in to prepare. Using spelling software and an old-fashioned dictionary, he said he would highlight 10 words on a page and practice them. Every day.

Elms Principal Dan Baginski said he was proud of the way all five Elms students did in the bee, but that the way Jackie was rattling off the words, he knew he would win.

"He was not going to be denied," Baginski said. "There was no putting them into sentences, no definitions needed. He got right down to it. He was well prepared."

The event was organized by Johnson Elementary Assistant Principal Tina Topoleski and coordinated by Switlik Supervisor Adriann Jean-Denis. It featured 31 students who qualified for the competition through individual school contests.

Superintendent of Schools Thomas Gialanella said the event, which drew hundreds of people, is an important way to raise the profile of academics-driven accomplishments in the district.

"Our primary focus is always academics," he said. "It's nice to know that a trophy for this kind of accomplishment is going to be on kids' shelves, too."

## ONE OF OUR OWN



Jackson Liberty High School Assistant Principal Daniel McDevitt will be racing in the Philadelphia Triathlon on June 28 as a member of the "Team in Training" to raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS).

"There are nearly 900,000 Americans living with leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkins Disease and myeloma and nearly 140,000 more people will be diagnosed this year," said McDevitt, who lost his high school best friend to Hodgkins Disease. "Cure rates are on the rise, thanks to research by organizations such as the LLS. But more needs to be done."

To learn more about his fundraising efforts, training and participation, visit Mr. McDevitt's page at <http://pages.teamintraining.org/snj/phiItri09/dmcdevitt>.

## School Play Also Develops "Character"

The Johnson Elementary School's production of "The Wizard of Oz" did more than entertain its audience -- it also collected several cases of goods that were donated to the Jackson Food Pantry.

"These kids showed talents they didn't even realize they had," said teacher Caroline White. "It was so nice to see them shine and to see them realize the talent and confidence they have inside themselves."

The production included a role for each of the 105 students who tried out (they ended up rotating in six students to play Dorothy, four scarecrows, 25 monkeys and 25 munchkins).

"I felt like I had another side, not just the side I show in the classroom," said Nick Learn, who played the Tin Man.

"Now I know I can do anything,"



*Dorothys and Dorothys and Dorothys...  
Oh My!*

said Marissa Adamczyk, who played one of the Dorothys. "Anything is possible for me now."

White said students embraced the food pantry donation opportunity as much as the play itself.

"Just like all our schools, we are committed to teaching students about service learning, about giving back," White said.

## Board of Education Budget Vote and Election is April 21

### WHAT WE HAVE DONE:

During the last six Board of Education meetings, district administrators offered 19 different "Building a Budget" presentations to help the public better understand what is being requested for the 2009-2010 school year.

### WHAT WE ARE DOING:

Following the introduction of a TENTATIVE budget on March 17, the finance committee and the board will continue to analyze and prioritize the needs for the upcoming year. The board is also receiving input from a Community Budget Committee comprised of a cross-section of residents in town.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Keep yourself informed by attending meetings, looking for the next district newsletter in April, going online and/or asking questions. Below is some of the information that is available online (some data will not be available until after March 31).

- Voter Registration Forms
- Absentee Ballot Application and Information
- Proposed Budget Figures
- "Fast Facts" about the budget
- List of Polling Places by District
- Street-by-Street List of Polling Places
- How to contact us via mail, e-mail or telephone

## IMPORTANT DATES

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Tuesday, March 31</b> | BOE Business Meeting<br>Public Hearing on Proposed School Budget  |
| <b>Tuesday, March 31</b> | Deadline for Mailed Voter Registration Forms.<br>The county must RECEIVE your form by this date.  |
| <b>Tuesday, April 14</b> | Last Day to Apply by Mail for an Absentee Ballot.<br>The county must RECEIVE your application by this date. Absentee ballots may also be requested <u>in person</u> up to 3 p.m. the day of the election. |
| <b>April 9-17</b>        | Schools Closed  |
| <b>Tuesday, April 21</b> | Annual Budget Vote and Board of Education Election<br>Polls Open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.  |

[www.jacksonsd.org](http://www.jacksonsd.org)

## **Guidance Counselors Seeking, Offering Donated Gowns for Juniors and Seniors**

Guidance counselors at both high schools have been collecting gowns, special occasion dresses and accessories for junior and senior girls who would like to “shop” (with no price tags at all) at what the counselors are calling “Belle’s Boutique.”

“Prom and formal season is right around the corner and we suspect that families are feeling an economic crunch these days,” said Rochelle Blum, a guidance counselor at Jackson Memorial High School. “We wanted to create a way for girls to privately look through close to 100 gorgeous gowns and accessories that won’t cost them a thing.”

Blum is working with fellow JMHS counselor Jean Raimondi and Diane Zingler at Jackson Liberty High School to offer the opportunity to the students. Students interested in viewing the gowns should contact their guidance counselor to make a discreet appointment. The girls have the option of keeping the dress or donating it back to be used again another year.

Anyone interested in donating gently used gowns, special occasion dresses or accessories to Belle’s Boutique can contact Blum or Raimondi at 732-833-4626 or Zingler at 732-415-7002.

The counselors are also seeking area dry cleaners who would be willing to donate cleaning services and/or clear garment bags so the gowns can be stored.

## **Honorable Mentions...**

JLHS Senior Ruby Corman was recognized with a Gold Key in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards of 2009 by the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers. Her poetry now goes on to the national competition. Past winners of this award include Truman Capote, Sylvia Plath, Joyce Carol Oates, Robert Redford and Frances Farmer.

JMHS Senior Sara Cook was critiqued for excellence in the Ocean County Teen Arts Festival.

The JLHS Step Team has taken two first place awards so far this year – one at Kingsway High School in Swedesboro and one at Rahway High School. The team is looking forward to the State Competition in April.

At Jackson Memorial High School, three teams won Shore Conference Divisional Championships - wrestling, ice hockey (a first in team history) and girls basketball (co-champions).

NJSIAA Wrestling Champions from JMHS are Zach Huxford, BJ Young (who was also awarded the Outstanding Wrestler Award), Derrick Russell, Doug Hamann and Tyler Wilton.

At Jackson Liberty High School, two teams won Shore Conference Divisional Championships: girls bowling and boys’ track. The boys track team also won the Ocean County Relays this season.

## **Jackson School District**

151 Don Connor Boulevard  
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[www.jacksonsd.org](http://www.jacksonsd.org)

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