



JACKSON SCHOOL NEWS

School District Information for the Jackson Community

October 2008

2008-2009

A year of curricular exploration...

The beginning of a school year is always an exciting time – one of expectation, eagerness and enthusiasm. With new curricular initiatives already underway – and the promise of more on the horizon – the Jackson School District is looking forward to carrying that spirit of renewal throughout the entire school year... and beyond.

“Last year we worked hard to refine our curriculum in important areas and this year we are moving forward again, looking to explore small learning communities,” said Superintendent of Schools Thomas Gialanella. “We will be exploring new areas that will help us give our students the best chance of success in the real world.”

An underlying theme of many new

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~ Superintendent Thomas Gialanella

and developing initiatives is to prepare students for college or work, keeping in mind they will be competing in an ever-changing technological and global economy. This is an idea that has been embraced by the state through Gov. Corzine’s endorsement of the American Diploma Project, and is also

in line with the state’s commitment to the Secondary Education Redesign Initiative. Both of those agendas center on aligning high school standards and assessments with the knowledge

and skills required for success after high school and offering programs to facilitate that success.

“We need to provide challenging and meaningful opportunities for our students to learn in ways that will ben-



Students in grades K-5 started the school year with new “leveled readers,” the last phase of the district’s social studies curriculum adoption.

efit them in the outside world,” said Deputy Superintendent of Schools LuAnne Meinders. “Not the world as we thought it was going to look like even five years ago, but the world as it is now, and as we predict it may be in the future.”

But while the district may be thinking “globally,” it realizes the importance of preserving the nurturing atmosphere of

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READ 180



Teacher Colleen McGillicuddy works with students at McAuliffe Middle School using Read 180 tools and techniques.

New Program Grabs Readers and Results

It may only be a month into the school year, but McAuliffe Middle School teacher Colleen McGillicuddy doesn’t need any more time to know when kids are “getting something.”

“They want to read more, they are always going through the lending library looking for something they want to read next,” said McGillicuddy, who has been a teacher for three years. “It’s working out very well.”

McGillicuddy is working with students using the Read 180 Program, an intensive reading intervention program being piloted this year at McAuliffe Middle School, Jackson Memorial High School and Switlik and Holman Elementary Schools.

A key to the program, McGillicuddy said, is that students move through varied activities during the class period, going from whole group instruction, to instructional software, to small group instruction and then to modeled and independent reading.

“They are always moving around, they get to use the computer software – which is individualized for them – and they just love doing different things,” she said.

The district chose the program because it directly addresses individual needs through differentiated instruction, adaptive and instructional software and high-interest literature. It will be phased in yearly to all schools.

(Curriculum, continued)

small learning communities. Thought of a “schools-within-schools,” they are typically small, focused, autonomous programs that supplement a student’s regular curriculum.

The district will be embarking on a partnership with the National Academy Foundation (NAF) to offer the National Academy of Finance to our students. NAF academies are small, career-themed learning communities made up of student cohorts, local business partners, and educators.

“Essentially, they become an intensive learning group that gathers expertise in the classroom, in the community and through the NAF’s advanced curriculum,” Meinders said.

The National Academy of Finance prepares students for post-secondary education and careers through a theme-based, contextualized curriculum approach. Academic learning experiences are combined with hands-on work experience to help students develop the thinking and problem-solving skills so critical to post-secondary education and career success.

In the area of literacy, the implementation of the Read 180 Program represents not only the district’s commitment to strengthening the literacy skills of at-risk students but also its confidence in research-based methods that can provide data-driven instruction.

The program uses student perform-

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BUZZWORD: Curriculum Mapping

Collecting and recording curriculum-related data to identify core skills and content taught, processes employed and assessments used. The completed curriculum map then becomes a tool that helps teachers keep track of what has been taught and plan what should be taught.

ONE OF OUR OWN**Author! Author! Elms Staffer Publishes Novel**

Students hoping to be authors someday need look no further than the front office of Elms Elementary School for some inspiration. Rebecca Sieglitz, a secretary at the school, is also a published author.

Writing as “Becci Lee,” Sieglitz had her first novel, “Dragon Lord,” published this summer.

“I’ve always been a fan of dragons and Camelot and I got the idea for Dragon Lord while riding Dueling Dragons on vacation,” she said.

Sieglitz earned her degree in English with a Concentration in Creative Writing from Montclair State University and is currently working on her Master’s degree. She spent a semester abroad in England studying literature and writing and is currently at work

on her next novel.

The book centers on Ashya, a poor girl living in south Britain who is sold to the Dragon Lord of Camelot. King Arthur’s cousin, the High Duke Rikler loves his dragons, to the constant disgruntlement of his neighbors. When Ashya chooses to stay with the duke and the dragons, she makes some very dangerous enemies, enemies who will do almost anything to teach her a lesson, but she will also have allies who will do anything to save her.

Dragon Lord is available through the website www.publishamerica.com.



Rebecca Sieglitz

TEACHER FEATURE**Compassion in Action**

It began as a simple but noble idea – Goetz Middle School Media Specialist Lisa Crate asked her students to gather books to be sent to underprivileged children in Africa.



Goetz Student Council President Taylor Szabo, left, and Lisa Crate

What it turned into was a groundswell of action by Goetz students and staff and the collection of 19,000 books over the past two years - enough to start 18 primary school libraries in Botswana. For their efforts and for breaking the record for books collected, the African Library Project just awarded their inaugural “Compassion in Action Award” to Crate and the students of Goetz Middle School.

“It’s an incredible feeling to know we have made a difference,” said Crate. “And the best part is, instead of just being proud of what they have accomplished, the students are asking – ‘What’s next? What are we doing next to help people?’ That is what Goetz is all about.”

This kind of service learning activity is an example of character education in action throughout the entire Jackson School District. The McAuliffe Middle School each year raises thousands of dollars for veterans through their annual Run for Vets, our high school students donate countless hours of effort to area causes like the Jackson Food Pantry and our elementary school students raise thousands for causes like breast cancer research and the March of Dimes.

Crate, who led the book drive, inspired students by educating them about the challenges of life in Africa. That understanding of the culture led students to want to help as much as they could. She said the effort was a success due to the collective efforts of the students, the Goetz staff and donations from Barnes and Noble and Scholastic Book Fair.

Grant Brings District Social Skills Expert

The Jackson School District is looking forward to reaping all the benefits of having a renowned social skills expert help our staff and parents better serve students with social communications disorders, such as autism.

Jed Baker, a clinical psychologist, behavioral consultant and author of award-winning books on social skills, is working with the Jackson School District to help our staff understand the difficulties of students with social-communication disorders. His recent workshop entitled "Teaching Social Skills in the School Setting" was presented as part of a \$500,000 grant the district received – the Governor's Initiative: Enhancing and Expanding In-District Program Options for Students with Disabilities.

"To have Jed Baker working with us is tremendous," said Board of Education member Sharon Dey, who chairs the board's special education committee. "Not only is he an expert in the field, but he also brings his message across to parents and staff in a way that helps people really understand how we can better help our children."

Dey was among the 120 people who attended Baker's recent workshop, during which he offered research and logic for why children sometimes behave the way they do, as well as tools and techniques to help students



deal with the anger and frustration they sometimes feel.

During his workshop, he taught our staff ways to handle challenging behavior, prevent temper outbursts and increase social skills for all students. He is also helping staff learn to motivate both verbal and non-verbal students.

The district will continue to utilize Baker's expertise as he works with staff during the 2008-2009 school

year to develop and design a social skills program tailored to the needs of the Jackson School District.

"Through workshops for parents and staff development we plan to expose as many people as we can to the information and strategies that can be useful to us," said Superintendent of Schools Thomas Gialanella. "The goal is to capitalize on the grant and on Dr. Baker's expertise to create systemic change and progress here in the Jackson School District."

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~ Superintendent
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TECH TALK

Tech Improvements on the Horizon

The Jackson School District utilizes technology everywhere - in our classrooms, in our offices, for payroll, for student data and records and even for processing lunch payments.

Although we have made investments in our technology infrastructure over the years, there is still much to be done. As with anything, though, the district must balance what we want to do with what we can afford to do – and to prioritize based on our most pressing needs.

This year the district is looking toward investing in a comprehensive security plan for all of our buildings and is currently researching the technology best suited for that purpose.

The board has asked an architect to survey our needs and come up with a proposal for that security plan, as well as improvements to our technology infrastructure. Among the goals are to increase wireless connectivity throughout the district and to make school-based improvements where necessary. Among the projects that are already planned are upgrades to the Television Studio and Graphics Lab at Jackson Memorial High School.

In addition to investigating what new technologies we should employ in the areas of security and communications, the district is also embarking on a Schools Interoperability Framework, or SIF, initiative to make sure all our system work together.

"We have different software and programs that do very different things for the district," said District Supervisor of Business and Education Technology Lincoln Mahabir. "We need to enable these diverse applications to interact and share data seamlessly in order to increase efficiency for critical district functions now, and in the future."

SAVE THE DATES...

THE GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT PRESENTS...

Tom Malloy - "Positive Choices"
Weds., Oct. 29 at 7 p.m.
JLHS Auditorium

Hear this actor & comedian speak frankly and powerfully on making positive choices!

JLHS vs. JMHS

Football Game

Weds., Nov. 26
6 p.m.

Jackson Memorial
High School

Did You Know?

We are looking into the financial and environmental benefits of SOLAR ENERGY. Stay tuned!

A Strategic Approach to Improving our Schools

Once again, the Jackson School District spent the summer doing much needed improvements throughout the district.

"We can't do everything at once, but we can maintain our commitment to the strategic improvement of our aging infrastructure, project by project," said Superintendent of Schools Thomas Gialanella.

The newly renovated IMC in the Johnson Elementary School (pictured at right) is just one of many improvements to the district in recent months.



In addition to the photos you see here, other improvements included windows, a new wrestling room at Jackson Memorial High School, a new chiller line at Goetz Middle School and a new fire alarm system at Rosenauer Elementary.

Below, from left: Student Alex Lynch lifts in the newly created weight room at Jackson Memorial High School... New roofs on the portable classrooms at Switlik were done this summer... and both gymnasiums at JMHS received a much-needed overhaul.



Honorable Mentions... What are our students and staff up to?

JMHS Student Eric Hamilton was selected for the All State Mixed Chorus and student Anu Mysore was selected for the All State Women's Chorus

JMHS Teacher Melissa Pennell recently received her Purple Belt in Tae Kwon Do.

JLHS student Paul Maier was selected to participate in the U.S. Army All-American Marching Band.

JLHS Student Breanna Carusso attended Girls State this summer.

JLHS Student Daniel Clayton attended the AFJROTC Aerospace Technology and Honors Camp at the University of Oklahoma this summer

JLHS Teachers Ann Hopko and Lori VanRiper were awarded a \$500 grant from the Jackson Educational Foundation to start a horticulture program at JLHS

Goetz teacher Joanne Salvitti started a Chamber Players Club for all staff, administrators, parents, community members and 7th & 8th grade students.

Goetz Teacher Marge Eisenschmied and McAuliffe Teacher Jason Diaz will be offering an instrumental program to 5th grade students through the community school.

McAuliffe Teacher Amy North and her students in the Mural Club painted two outstanding murals in the stairwells at McAuliffe.

Crawford-Rodriguez student Matthew Zeveny won the Jackson Shore Community Bank Writing contest for his story "If I Could be an Eagle."

Crawford-Rodriguez Nurse Pam Barth ran a half marathon in New York.

Elms Teachers Nick Paradise, Lori Rudenjak, Juliana Hogan and Rich Czyz will be conducting an action research project focused on the use of a multi-sensory, conceptual approach to math instruction.

Holman Teacher Sharon Alkalay received a JEF grant for her literacy project based on the children's book "Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street."

Johnson Media Assistant Karen Farrell received a JEF grant for Project FINE (Fine Arts Initiates New Levels of Education) to increase academic achievement for the entire school population.

Do you have an "Honorable Mention" to be highlighted?
Let your principal know!

Lights! Camera! Action! District to Launch TV Station

What goes on inside the classrooms of the Jackson School District?

What kind of special lessons or programs are being implemented?

What special events are taking place?

The Jackson School District is looking forward to answering these questions and more – in living color – through its new cable-access television channel, set to be launched in the coming months.

Through an agreement with Cablevision, the district will operate Channel 77 – which will now be known as Jackson Television, or “J-TV”

“This channel is a long time coming and we are thankful to Cablevision for granting us and, ultimately, the Jackson community at large, this opportunity,”

said Superintendent Thomas Gialanella. “This is a very exciting endeavor that will let the Jackson community see behind the curtain and

into our classrooms. More importantly, though, is the hands-on learning our students will experience.”

The programs on the channel will be filmed, edited and produced by Jackson students. Under the oversight of the district’s communications department, the channel will feature

community information and programs that showcase what is happening in our classrooms.

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Cablevision is preparing to install the equipment necessary to launch the channel, which could be “live” in the next 60 to 90 days.

COMING SOON!



Jackson Television
“J-TV”

Cablevision Channel 77

All A-BOARD!

Board of Ed Again Opens Its Doors (and Its Books) to Public

As the district embraces the spirit of renewal that comes with a new school year, the Board of Education is hoping the Jackson community renews its interest in what it takes to educate more than 9,800 students.

For the second year, the board will be hosting mini-budget presentations in the months preceding the budget vote.

“We build a budget, department by department, line by line and we do it in public,” said Board of Education President Marvin Krakower.

Krakower said the open meetings, as well as increased communication efforts through more frequent district newsletters, the new television station and an updated web site being developed, are aimed at increasing confidence in our educational achievements and in our fiscal accountability.

“We want people to understand what is going on inside the classroom and inside the board room,” he said. “The more transparent we are, the easier it will be to help residents understand that we are doing our best to serve our students – and our taxpayers – at the same time.”

COTW = Committee of the Whole

Typically held one week prior to the regular business meeting of the board, it allows the board to discuss the coming agenda and to hear committee reports in advance of the next week’s vote.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday, Oct. 14	COTW & Annual Educational Forum/State of the Schools
Tuesday, Oct. 21	Business Meeting
Tuesday, Nov. 11	COTW & Budget Process Overview
Tuesday, Nov. 18	Business Meeting & Elementary School Budgets
Tuesday, Dec. 9	COTW & Middle and High School, Athletics, Guidance Budgets
Tuesday, Dec. 16	Business & Transportation, Facilities, Capital Improvement Budgets
DATE TBA	COTW & Technology, Curriculum and Instruction Budgets
Tuesday, Jan. 20	Business Meeting & Special Education, Personnel and Co-Curricular Budgets
DATE TBA	COTW & Budget Q&A
Tuesday, Feb. 17	Business Meeting
Tuesday, March 24	COTW
Tuesday, March 31	Business Meeting (typically the public hearing on proposed budget)

COTW Meetings (except Oct. 14): Admin. Offices
Business Meetings: Fine Arts Center of JMHS
All Meetings Begin at 7:30 p.m.

(Curriculum, continued)

ance data to individualize, adjust and differentiate the path of reading instruction. The district chose the program because it has proven results - after ten years of research in association with Vanderbilt University and over six years in schools nationwide, it has brought significant gains in reading proficiency for the students who need it most.

The Read 180 system trains educators to deliver effective reading, writing and vocabulary instruction to struggling readers and gives them a variety of assessment tools and reports that link to resources for differentiating instruction.

"In keeping with the value the district itself places on data-driven decision making, the Read 180 program tracks and analyzes student performance at every step," said Meinders. "Using a variety of instruments to identify students' urgent needs allows teachers to

adjust instruction accordingly. And that individualization is how we get results."

Initiatives in the implementation stage include:

- A 9th grade alternative scheduling program that modifies the typical schedule into more manageable time blocks for students who would benefit from such a schedule;

- Expanding the use of Naviance, which helps the district manage academic and post-secondary advising, communicate with students and families and analyze data;

- Response to Intervention, or RTI, which involves the district identifying students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitoring student progress, providing evidence-based interventions and adjusting the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness.

- SAT action plans, and
- Writers workshops;

Initiatives in the implementation stage include:

- Virtual High School online courses;
- Elementary "gizmo" program;
- Community Action Program, and
- School-to-Work initiatives;

Another important initiative this year will be preparing for a state-mandated pre-school program for targeted, at-risk students in the district. This is a new mandate by the state of New Jersey that must be implemented in 2009-2010. To help create Jackson's plan to execute this mandate, the district will be creating an Early Childhood Advisory Council.

"Between the programs we have, the programs we are creating and the ones we envision for the future, this is a very exciting time to be a student in the Jackson School District," said Gialanella. "As a community, we should all be proud of the ways we are preparing our students to have real success in the real world."

How are we doing? Visit the Board of Education page on the district website for our "State of the Schools" presentation, or check out the NJ School Report Card under Resources for Parents on our web site: www.jacksonsd.org

Jackson School District

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