



# HADDONFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT

... news from the Board of Education

## FROM the SUPERINTENDENT

Greetings, and welcome to the first District Newsletter!

It's been an exceptional unofficial first half of the school year. As part of our ongoing efforts to improve the quality and frequency of district communications, we are initiating a monthly newsletter. We plan to include news from the Board of Education as well as one story from each of our five schools. Continue to use our new school website to look for individual school news.



I encourage you to reach out to the district's communications specialist, Polly Mitchell ([pmitchell@haddonfield.k12.nj.us](mailto:pmitchell@haddonfield.k12.nj.us)), with suggestions and comments. And, as always, I'd love to hear from you as well.

Enjoy winter break, and I look forward to the second half of the school year to be as exciting as the first.

- Larry Mussoline, Ph.D.

## BOARD NEWS

### BOARD OPENING

**On Friday, December 14, the Haddonfield Board of Education (BOE) announced an opening created by the resignation of Mary Fagan.** Applicants should send a resume and letter of interest to Steve Burns, Board Secretary at [sburns@haddonfield.k12.nj.us](mailto:sburns@haddonfield.k12.nj.us) or to One Lincoln Avenue, Haddonfield, N.J. 08033. Applications will be accepted through Monday, January 7. Interviews will begin that week.

### LATEST NEWS on the CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Members of the school community and the community at large have been patiently waiting for the conclusion of the construction project currently winding down throughout the school district. Board member Susan Kutner, chair of the Facilities/Referendum Committee, and Stephen Burns, Business Administrator and Board Secretary, provided the following information.

- We anticipate that the project will be substantially complete at the end of January.
- The contractor will likely be performing "punch-list work" in late January and February.
- Although required by law to select the lowest construction bid, Dandrea Construction proved to be an excellent contractor with high quality workmanship.
- The most visible changes are at HMHS:
  - AC in all classrooms
  - new science and practical arts labs
  - a new cafeteria with an improved kitchen and serving area
  - faculty center
  - dance/small performing arts studio

What's next? Now that the buildings are stabilized, we will be conducting a long-term assessment of our facilities needs in terms of capital maintenance, program delivery, security, and capacity. Members of the BOE are proud to say that the work completed this far and planned for the future exemplifies our commitment to facilities maintenance and will preserve the community's investment.

## SCHOOL NEWS

### TATEM FIFTH-GRADERS enjoy BOOK TASTING

Fifth-graders at Tatem Elementary experienced their first "book tasting" in November. Students from all three fifth-grade classrooms (Harding, Bushey and MacGregor) enjoyed entering the Starbucks-styled room and exploring the enormous number of non-fiction books available to them. The book tasting is a creative method to introduce a unit on non-fiction literature titled "Non-Fiction:Tackling Complexity."

Students have since moved on to reading parts of several books together, addressing differences in style and tone. In addition to the instructional aspect of this unit on non-fiction, students gained an appreciation of this genre and selected books to read on their own.



### LIZZY HADDON SECOND GRADE CHEWED GUM to RAISED MONEY

From teacher Molly Grimenstein:

"My second-graders are pen pals with a class in northern California. We recently found out that the family of the teacher of our pen pal class was completely devastated by the fires. Her parents and her sister's family lost everything. The tragedy was made worse by the fact that the teacher's father was undergoing chemotherapy.

"When my students and our teaching team (Murphy, Ohl and Grimenstein) found out about these great losses, we decided to find a way to raise money for these families. The plan was this: any second-grade student who wanted to chew gum in school for an entire day could do so, if he or she brought in a donation for our California friends. Some students brought in \$1, some brought \$20 or \$40. At the end of the day, our second-grade classrooms had raised \$455! The money was sent to two GoFundMe pages for the families.

"I am so proud that our second-graders learned the lesson that even children can make a huge impact on the lives of others."

### CENTRAL WELCOMES SURPRISE VISITOR from SOUTH SUDAN

Over the past several months, we've read a lot about Garang Buk Buk Piol and his special relationship with Haddonfield School District. The story of this native of South Sudan and his search for an education in the United States has included visits by a group of HMHS students and their teacher to Emory University, where Garang is enrolled, and fund-raising efforts throughout the community.

What you may not know is that Garang's connections to HSD are growing. At a recent football game, he made a special connection with Billy, a third-grader at Central Elementary.

On his last trip to Haddonfield for a fund-raising dinner, Garang made a side trip to surprise Billy and his classmates.

On Friday, December 7, Garang stopped by Mrs. Hessert's classroom for their Morning Meeting. The students were thrilled to see Garang and to learn how to say "hello" in his native language of Dinka. Mrs. Hessert's class has taught greetings in other languages this year as one facet of culturally responsive teaching. Garang talked about his country, took questions from the students, and finally taught the students to say goodbye. Interesting fact: Garang does not know his birthday! He knows the year in which he was born, but does not know the day of his birth. Every day is his birthday!



### HMS "PARENT PARTNERSHIP" and "DIPLOMATS FOR DIVERSITY" RAISE AWARENESS

When Tracy Ann Motozzo arrived at the Middle School as principal in September 2017, she was searching for a way to get to know the parents and for the parents to get to know her.

Using a structure she observed at a previous school, she invited all parents to a meeting of the Parent Partnership in January. Seven or eight parents attended. Motozzo and the parents used their time at that first meeting to simply talk and socialize.

"Remember that parents from three different elementary schools converge at the Middle School," she said. "Socializing together can be the first step in building a community."

In February, the group met again to brainstorm topics such as academics, extracurriculars, social issues and more. From this meeting came the primary topic: inclusivity.

At the same time, Middle School counselor Danielle McKelvey saw a need for a student group that could improve the way students relate to one another. She called this group of 12 students "Diplomats for Diversity." The enthusiastic students created a "bead activity" called "How Diverse is your Universe?" They led the Parent Partners through the activity, wherein participants could take a bead if they have a friend of a different religion, or if they have traveled outside the United States, for example. The students later ran the activity for staff, and will include students in the near future.

This fall, about 18 parents attended the November meeting of Parent Partnership. MS parents Tina and Robert Berman commented that "the Parent Partnership has been a great outlet to voice concerns, give input and witness the implementation of change."



PHOTO CREDIT: Brynne Springer '19 and Dahlia DeVivo '19

### SHOREBIRDS PROGRAM: LEARNING SCIENCE by PRACTICING SCIENCE

Nineteen years ago, Ron Smith came to the HMHS as a science teacher. He taught Environmental Science to one class of 13 students that year, along with other science classes.

Today he has four sections of AP Environmental Science and heads a program that offers legitimate experience to 135 students, simultaneously providing essential data to the New Jersey Audubon Society (NJAS).

In the early 2000s, the NJAS initiated a program designed to "train and deploy citizen scientists" to help NJAS gather statistics about shorebirds. Because they simply do not have enough staff to do it themselves, they reached out to the public. When Smith learned about this program, he signed on and completed training so that he could bring this opportunity to his students.

For 14 years, Smith has led groups of HMHS environmental science students (usually 10 trips per year) to the North Brigantine Natural Area, part of the largest, unbroken tract of undeveloped coastline in New Jersey. On each trip, the group spends between 3½ and 5 hours observing and counting shorebirds.

Of course, Smith's students first have to learn what a shorebird is.

"I always explain, 'Not all shorebirds are found at the shore, and not all birds found at the shore are shorebirds,'" Smith said. "For example, gulls are not shorebirds."

After spending time learning to identify the birds, the students are ready for the trip.

"We generally see 8 to 10 species of shorebirds in one day," Smith said. "And in addition to identifying and counting birds, our students document 'disturbances,' such as a vehicle or a dog that causes the birds to flush."

Smith estimates that his students have counted nearly 300,000 shorebirds over the years. The data is reported to the NJAS and ultimately to the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

"I have always believed that you learn science by practicing science," Smith said. "My students contribute to bird studies, learn to collect and present data, write up labs on this data, learn to estimate populations and understand the factors that affect bird communities."

In fact, his students have witnessed and have contributed to the classification of the Red Knot (medium sized shorebird) as "endangered" on the federal list.

"Haddonfield students are one of the only student groups working with the NJAS, so I am especially proud of their work," Smith said.

Smith's passion has rubbed off on at least one HMHS graduate. Anna Tucker, class of 2006, took AP Environment as a high school junior. She started participating in the shorebird studies in the summer of 2005, and loved feeling that she was "doing real science." What she learned on the shorebird trips shaped the direction of her educational journey.

Tucker holds a B.S. in biology from Loyola University Maryland, an M.S. in biology from Virginia Commonwealth University, and will soon have a Ph.D. in Wildlife Sciences from Auburn University. Tucker's doctoral dissertation covers the population dynamics of the shorebirds that use beaches like Brigantine during spring migration.

"In addition to influencing me personally, Ron Smith has created a lasting legacy through his students, who learn to understand something new through hands-on scientific experience and who will hopefully come to love and protect our environment as a result."

Note: Faculty member Melanie LeDoux teaches environmental science, marine science and biology. Along with Ron Smith, she emphasizes "citizen science" and local field studies in her curriculum.