

The Panther Press

Your Source for News from Point Pleasant Borough Schools

VOLUME
16
Number 2

PPBHS Room 206 to Appear on NJEA's Classroom Close-up

Since its 2013 inception, Point Pleasant Borough High School's Panther Assisted Learning Software, or PALS, has garnered a great deal of attention among the media and education organizations. Under the PALS initiative, students in high school teacher Nick Gattuso's software engineering classes work alongside students in the school's Multiply Disabled/Transition class to develop assistive learning applications customized to the disabled students' unique needs.

During the four years that the applications have been in development, PALS has received extensive coverage in various media outlets, including The Ocean Star, the Patch and the Asbury Park Press as well as in district newsletters and publications. The program was also recently honored by the New Jersey School Boards Association with the organization's 2016 Innovations in Special Education Award, which recognizes exemplary programs for special education students. PALS was one of just 10 New Jersey schools selected to receive the award.

PALS has also attracted the attention of "Classroom Close-up," a broadcast magazine program that focuses on innovative education in New Jersey's public schools. The 14-time Emmy-winning show is a co-production of the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) and NJTV. Now taping its twenty-third season, "Classroom Close-up, NJ" features innovative programs happening in public school classrooms. Each half-hour program shows how caring school professionals inspire and motivate students.

On Oct. 18 the show filmed a segment entitled "Panther Assisted Learning Software," featuring Mr. Gattuso and his students discussing and demonstrating the PALS suite of apps.

"The PALS apps have immeasurably enhanced instruction in our Multiply Disabled/Transition classrooms not only by helping to provide new pathways for our students with special needs to achieve their potential but also by facilitating the increased interaction between our students with multiple disabilities and their non-disabled peers," said district Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services Rita Miller. "We are thrilled that PALS has captured the attention of the "Classroom Close-up" crew and look forward to sharing this incredible program with their audience.

"Classroom Close-up, NJ" airs on NJTV every Sunday at 7:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Comcast channel 23. This PALS segment is scheduled to air on Feb. 19 and Mar. 26, 2017.



Ocean Road's 5th Grade Character Crew delivers food to the FoodBank of Monmouth & Ocean

In This Issue:

District Receives Over \$70k in Grants: **Page 1**

Teachers Honored for Excellence: **Page 1**

PPBHS Featured on Classroom Close-up: **Page 1**

2016 Professional Development: **Page 3**

Heroin: A Critical Parent & Teen Forum: **Page 4**

Superintendent's Perspectives: **Page 4**

District receives more than \$70k from various grant programs

A combination of innovation and dedication blended with good old-fashioned hard work has proven to be the winning formula for the Point Pleasant Borough School District with regard to district schools' pursuit of grant funding opportunities. Since the start of the 2016-2017 school year, district schools have cumulatively received over \$70,000 from various granting agencies and organizations, reflecting a district-wide commitment to providing students with the best possible educational experience while remaining fiscally responsible and accountable to taxpayers.

"Each year, school and district administration work with the Board of Education to craft a district budget that balances the multitude of funding restrictions with the seemingly competing priority of providing a thorough and efficient education to the children of Point Pleasant Borough," said Superintendent of Schools Vincent S. Smith. "The budget allocates every dollar for a very specific purpose; so, when our outstanding educators – who have earned a reputation for creativity and innovation – propose a project, program or initiative for which budget funds are not available, they are encouraged to pursue funding through available grant opportunities.

"As Superintendent, I feel it is my responsibility to both our students and the Borough's taxpayers to investigate every available outside funding opportunity that can be used to help support continued excellence and innovation in our schools, regardless of budgetary constraints," he said.

And judging by district schools' frequent receipt of grant funds,

it's a responsibility that is shared and valued district-wide.

Ocean Road Elementary School: Investors Bank Grant

Research has shown that physical activity when learning can help increase student engagement and improve mental focus, which is why more and more schools are investigating the benefits of standing desks.

Standing desks are raised desks that offer students the option of standing, sitting on a stool or leaning against the desk. Studies have shown that standing desks improve students' concentration, engagement, and range of motion while reducing sedentary behavior – critical benefits for students with special needs.

"It's extremely difficult for children to sit still for hours each day," said Ocean Road Elementary School Special Education Teacher Suzanne Deegan. "And for students with ADHD or other conditions, it's near impossible."

After noticing some of her students' tendency to fidget and move around during lessons, Mrs. Deegan conducted an informal study of the impact of movement on learning, during which she observed several students who preferred to stand while using a clipboard.

"Over time I noticed that these students were not only more focused on learning but that they actually learned better when they were standing," she said.

Continued on Page 2

District educators honored for teaching excellence

Multiple studies have shown that among school-related factors that contribute most significantly to student achievement, nothing matters more than teachers. As the architects of their students' educational experience, teachers help lay the foundation for a lifetime of learning, setting the tone for what, where, when, how and why their students learn while also inspiring a sense of intellectual curiosity and a love of learning in their students. Through their influence, teachers have the capacity to make their students' lives – and by extension the world – better.

Unfortunately, teachers rarely receive the recognition and praise they deserve for the vital role they serve in the development of an advanced, well-educated society.

"The most common response given when people are asked why they pursue the teaching profession is to make a difference in the lives of others," said Superintendent of Schools Vincent S. Smith. "Though I'd venture to guess that few are in it for the glory or praise, the transformative and enriching impact teachers have on their students' lives makes them worthy of both, which is why the Point Pleasant Borough School District so strongly believes that teachers' efforts should be regularly recognized and applauded."

Fortunately, at the Point Pleasant Borough School District, where teaching excellence is the norm, recognition happens frequently.

"Our district's teachers regularly capture the attention of various local recognition programs and have also been honored – with increasing frequency – by numerous regional and national programs," said Superintendent Smith.

According to the Superintendent, the list of district educators that have been recognized for exemplary teaching practice continues to grow.

"Since September," he said, "district

teachers have won the New Jersey Exemplary Elementary Educator Award and the Rutgers University School of Engineering's Dean's Award for Service."

A district teacher was also recognized as a New Jersey Science Teachers Association Simmons Scholar for her work helping to prepare for the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards [NGSS].

2016 New Jersey Exemplary Elementary Educator Award

The lengthy, rigorous and confidential path to the selection of New Jersey's 2016 Exemplary Elementary Educator Award proved worth the wait with the announcement that Nellie Bennett Elementary School Fifth Grade Teacher Beth Kobesky and Ocean Road Elementary School Kindergarten Teacher Maureen DePolo were chosen as its recipients.

The goal of the New Jersey Exemplary Elementary Educator Award is to identify and honor educators who are valued by their school and community and who have exhibited an inspiring presence, and a clear vision for quality teaching and learning.

The process began during the 2015-16 school year, when Nellie Bennett Principal James Karaba and Ocean Road Principal Sheila Buck nominated Mrs. Kobesky and Mrs. DePolo, respectively. The thorough nomination process required the principals submit the teachers' resumes and pictures along with several letters of recommendation and the completed applications – challenging tasks given that the entire process had to be kept confidential.

Continued on Page 3

Point Pleasant Schools
2100 Panther Path
Point Pleasant, NJ 08742

POSTAL PATRON
POINT PLEASANT, NJ 08742

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
LAKEWOOD, NJ 08701
PERMIT #89

Grants (continued from page 1)



Ocean Road Teacher Suzanne Deegan receives Investors' Foundation Grant

These observations inspired her to formally request budget funds to accommodate the purchase of standing desks for her classroom; however, budget constraints limited the purchase to just two desks.

With the goal of having a classroom full of standing desks, Mrs. Deegan looked toward local grant opportunities to fund the purchase of the remaining desks, eventually turning to the Investors Foundation, the charitable arm of Investors Bank. Working with the high school's Gerard Marrone, she submitted a proposal, requesting \$5,000 to purchase an additional 16 desks.

She was notified over the summer that her application was approved.

"Thanks to the Investors Foundation my students will now have the choice whether they want to sit or stand," Mrs. Deegan said. "These increased options will help them feel more in control and empowered to learn."

"When you consider brain functions is at its peak when the body is active and stimulated, standing desks make perfect physiological sense," said Superintendent Smith. "I'm eager to see the impact the addition of the standing desks have on learning among our students. The district shares my gratitude to the Investors Foundation for helping us better meet the needs of our students."

Nellie F. Bennett Elementary School: BASF Grant & FirstEnergy Grant

Since 2008, Nellie F. Bennett Elementary School Fifth Grade Teacher Beth Kobesky has developed a knack for writing – and winning – various grants. Working alone and with colleagues, Mrs. Kobesky has been directly responsible for or involved in the receipt of over \$22,000 in grant funds to support Nellie Bennett's educational programs and endeavors. Over the past eight years, she has been the recipient of Target's Field Trip Grant an astounding eight times, helping to offset the costs for the fifth grade's annual Sandy Hook field trip. In 2009, she received \$4,800 from the Lowe's Toolbox for Education Grant Program, which provided the funding to establish an outdoor classroom at one of Nellie's underutilized courtyards. The following year, Mrs. Kobesky was part of a grant writing committee comprised of fellow teachers and representatives from Jenkinson's Aquarium that applied for and received a \$3,382 Barnegat Bay National Estuary Grant, which was used to pilot the Aquarium's conservation-themed focus program, *Learning Today for a Cleaner Barnegat Bay*. The program, which teaches the importance of preserving the Barnegat Bay watershed, remains one of the Aquarium's more popular educational outreaches. Also in 2010, Mrs. Kobesky worked with her fellow members of the Nellie Bennett Green Team, receiving \$2,500 from the OceanFirst Foundation's Go Green School Grant Program, the funds from which were used to implement the Growing Responsible Environmentally Educated Nellie Students, or GREENS, initiative, teaching students the value of composting.

Mrs. Kobesky's grant pursuits were again successful when earlier this year she received not one but two awards totaling \$5,750 to fund a water study project entitled "What's in the Water." Working with District Supervisor or Math & Science Jennifer Riback, Mrs. Kobesky submitted proposals to chemical company BASF's Science Education Grant Program and FirstEnergy's STEM Grant Program seeking a total of \$5,385 to fund the purchase of water quality testing kits.

"We were awarded \$5,000 from the BASF Science Grant Program and an additional \$750 from FirstEnergy to cover the cost of the water quality testing kits and associated materials as well as the cost of transportation to accommodate all Nellie Bennett fifth grade classes," she said. "The purpose of the project is to research and sample water from local sources to learn about contaminants, which aligns with the study of global water distribution that our fifth graders learn about as part of their Earth Science Unit."

According to Mrs. Kobesky the project will begin in April 2017, coinciding with the start of the Earth Science Unit. Lessons will begin with a visit from one of Jenkinson's Aquarium's marine biologists who will demonstrate sampling techniques before the students travel to nearby water sources to conduct their own experiments, analyzing data and reporting their findings.

"Through these experiments, students will gain valuable

hands-on experience with researching, collecting and analyzing data while drawing meaningful connections between the role of water and contaminants in matter cycles," said Ms. Riback.

Memorial Middle School & Point Pleasant Borough High School: OceanFirst Grants

The Point Pleasant School District relies on the community's support to maintain its tradition of excellence. Though the district recognizes and appreciates the contributions of all its community partners, the OceanFirst Foundation continues to stand out for their consistently generous support of district programs and endeavors. Since 2008, the Foundation has contributed \$85,000 in the form of various grants awarded to district schools.

In 2008, the Foundation provided a total of \$35,000 to fund improvements to the media centers at Nellie Bennett and Memorial Middle School. Two years later it was \$5,000 for the same schools to fund projects promoting environmental responsibility. In 2012, the Foundation awarded a \$15,000 Model Classroom Grant to middle school Science Teacher Tracy Ferm, making her vision of creating an innovative, multi-sensory, science classroom a reality. Two years later in 2014, they awarded another \$10,000 to high school Teacher Dave Johnson to help transform his classroom into a state-of-the-art, technology-driven, business education learning lab. The OceanFirst Foundation recently announced the 15 winners of the 2016 Model Classroom Grant cycle, among them, Memorial Middle School and Point Pleasant Borough High School.

OceanFirst Foundation Executive Director Kathy Durante, OceanFirst Bank Senior Vice President Nina Anuario and Assistant Vice President Frank Scarpone attended the Board of Education's November Business Meeting where they presented two \$10,000 Model Classroom Grants to applicants, middle school Science Teacher Amanda Marinaro and high school Art Teacher Kelly Mitreuter. The grants will be used to fund two unique and innovative projects at the two schools.

At Memorial Middle School, the grant will fund an innovative Mrs. Marinaro's project entitled A littleBit® of Technology.

"A littleBit® of Technology is centered on the integration of the latest technological tools into the Physical Science classroom, facilitating a fluid learning environment where students are constantly engaged in hands-on projects that have connections to real life problems," Mrs. Marinaro said.

This will be accomplished, according to Mrs. Marinaro, with the purchase of a quantity of Chromebook computers and a classroom set of littleBits® electronics, electronic building blocks that simplify complex technology.

"Technology is a portal that allows students to always learn something new and relevant, while allowing us to reach beyond the school walls without stepping foot outside of the classroom," she said. "The new technologies afforded by the Model Classroom Grant will enhance instruction by facilitating a more student-centered learning environment that inspires increased engagement and active learning among our students. The littleBits® put the power of electronics in our students' hands while the Chromebooks put an entire world of resources at their fingertips."

The high school's Model Classroom Grant will be used to update the classroom that is home to the Digital Photography and AV Technology elective classes. The popular classes annually serve approximately 250 students from all grade levels.

"Prior to our receipt of this grant, students were using the same camera and software for each project," said Kelly Mitreuter, who worked on the grant proposal with AV Tech Teacher Pete Casalino. "This was not ideal as it inhibited differentiation. Our vision was to promote differentiation by providing students with various material options, thereby empowering them to make active choices while promoting experimentation in their decisions of which tools to use to produce high quality artwork and videos."

Thanks to the Model Classroom Grant, students now have access to a variety of camera lenses, which can be used with a new timer remote controller, a large format printer, and software, all of which were made possible by the grant funds.

"The software allows Mr. Casalino and me the opportunity to mirror students' computer screens on a large projection screen, facilitating real-time collaboration between students and teacher," she said. "This unprecedented sharing capability will allow us to better monitor students' work and provide opportunities to give students instant feedback, which is essential for differentiation."

Nellie F. Bennett Elementary School & HS Media Center donations

In addition to the more traditional grant programs, the district also benefits from close partnerships with its district- and school-based organizations, whose generous support has recently facilitated a number of large scale projects.

This summer, the district completed renovations to Point Pleasant Borough High School's Media Center, transforming it into a dynamic, tech-infused 21st century resource center in an effort that was funded by the Point Pleasant Foundation for Excellence in Education.

"Since 2014, the Foundation has provided the media center with a total of \$37,300 to fund various improvements and upgrades," said high school Media Specialist Kimberly Manser.

Mrs. Manser said the Foundation contributed \$7,300 during the 2014-15 school year to fund upgrades to the media center's computers. In 2016, the Foundation donated another \$30,000 to fund a complete media center makeover, which included the purchase and installation of comfortable seating for leisure reading, a multimedia collaboration center, individual desks for quiet study, and informational areas for research needs as well as mobile charging stations.

"The goal was to create a space that cultivated collaboration, supported active exploration and encouraged discovery while inspiring authentic, hands-on learning in a comfortable yet professional environment," she said.

Judging by students' positive reactions to and their increased usage of the new media center, that goal was achieved, she said, "Media center usage has increased substantially, in fact, in order to better accommodate students' usage, we've expanded the hours of operation, opening 40 minutes before the start of the school day and remaining open until 3:20 p.m – almost an hour after the end of the school day!"

"I'm confident that the media center upgrades will have a profound and lasting impact on learning at Point Pleasant High School and I can just as confidently state that this would not have been possible without the Point Pleasant Foundation for Excellence in Education," she said. "Thanks to their generosity, our students will have access to a dynamic and engaging multipurpose Media Center that meets their evolving educational, technological and social needs."

Point Pleasant Schools' four parent-teacher organizations [PTO] are vital district partners who support various critical programs and endeavors within their affiliated schools. From assemblies to class trips to parties, events and scholarships, the district's PTOs support and enhance the educational and co-curricular experience of Point Pleasant students and their families. Though evidence of the PTOs support can be observed district-wide it is perhaps currently most visible at Nellie Bennett Elementary School, specifically at the school's playground, where the PTO recently completed a large renovation effort.

"The Nellie Bennett PTO generously donated roughly \$44,000 to fund necessary playground upgrades," said Nellie F. Bennett Principal James Karaba.

Principal Karaba said the donation covered the cost to purchase and install a rock wall, balance beam, monkey bars and new swings including a handicap-accessible unit.

"Our playground equipment was definitely due for an upgrade," he said. "It was a challenging situation though because building new play structures is a significant – and costly – undertaking. Fortunately, there seems to be no challenge that is too great where the Nellie PTO is concerned. They responded with their characteristic enthusiasm, launching an aggressive fundraising campaign that included giveback nights and a gift auction among other efforts. The speed with which we were able to meet the fundraising goals is a testament to the commitment and dedication not only of our PTO but also that of the entire Nellie family who supported this effort and who continue to support every endeavor to enhance the Nellie educational experience."

"A successful partnership between school and community strengthens our ability to provide a quality education for our students," said Superintendent Smith. "We're so grateful to all of our district and community partners for their commitment to enriching the learning experience and ensuring every educational advantage for the children of Point Pleasant Borough and for supporting sustained innovation in our schools."



OceanFirst Foundation representatives present 2016 Model Classroom Grants to Kelly Mitreuter & Amanda Marinaro

Teachers become the students at district professional development day

Although no students were present, school was in session on Oct. 7 for the Point Pleasant Borough School District's teaching staff who were taking part in varied educational workshops offered during one of the district's designated professional development days.

The early-year professional development day builds upon concepts the teachers have learned during summer workshops as well as at Panther Academy, the district's two-day intensive professional development program held annually before the start of school. The courses also serve as the prerequisite for additional workshops offered later in the school year and the following summer.

During the October program, teachers received approximately six hours of specialized training in specific programs, tools and techniques relevant to the subjects and grades they teach.

At the elementary level, teachers spent the day taking the second of a two-part course on Writer's Workshop, after a summer foundational course offered an introduction to the interdisciplinary writing technique, which was implemented this year at the elementary level.

"Writer's Workshop builds students' fluency through immersion in the writing process, the goal of which is to foster lifelong writing skills," said District Supervisor of English Language Arts & Social Studies Heather Karagias.

The program, according to Ms. Karagias, acts as a complement to Reader's Workshop, the district's comprehensive K-5 Reading Language Arts program, now in its second full year of implementation.

"Both Reader's and Writer's Workshop employ multiple strategies that help students become thoughtful, critical readers and writers who are effective communicators, both in spoken and written word," she said.

While their elementary counterparts were learning about the structures that support daily writing habits, Point Pleasant Borough's middle and high school teachers were busy expanding their professional knowledge and skills in their choice of 15 specialized technology-themed workshops that focused on specific technological tools and programs to enhance instruction and improve teacher efficiency.

Among the courses offered were, Preparation for Google Certification; Site Reading Factory for Music; iMovie; Pear Deck; Genesis Rubrics; Genesis Lesson Planner; iReady; Achieve3000; Newsela; and Kahoot/Plickers.

"The course content was developed for our teachers, by our teachers," said Director of Curriculum & Instruction Dr.

Susan Ladd, Ed.D. "Surveys were administered to our grade 6-12 teachers inquiring into the specific topics that they wanted addressed by the district's professional development program. The overwhelming consensus was they wanted to improve their technological skills and access more of the countless technological resources available to educators."

The question then became on which of the myriad technological resources the district would focus.

"We selected a number of tools that the district presently uses like Achieve3000 and Newsela, which provide differentiated reading and writing instruction, strengthening students' literacy skills," Dr. Ladd said. "We also designed courses that maximized the district's existing partnership with programs like Genesis, our online student management system, harnessing available tools like their lesson planner and grading rubrics."

The district also sought to further encourage teachers' pursuit of certification through the Google Certified Educator Program.

"The Google Certified Educator program is designed for educators who wish to demonstrate proficiency in using Google for Education tools," she said. "Teachers that pursue certification must complete numerous hours of independent coursework that provides an in-depth look at Google's many supplemental learning tools and how to effectively apply them to classroom learning."

The program offers two levels of certifications, indicating an educator's mastery of Google for Education's tools, which are only earned through a rigorous cycle of training and practice that culminates in an increasingly complex performance-based exam.

"The district currently has 16 Level I and two Level II Google Certified Educators," she added. "Though we are very proud of the teachers who have already earned their certification and for their commitment to 21st century teaching and learning, we would like to see that number increase."

According to Dr. Ladd, the remaining courses offered training on programs and tools that are currently being used, successfully in some district classrooms.

"The iMovie, Pear Deck, iReady and Kahoots/Plickers workshops introduced these powerful and effective tools to a new group of teachers," she said.

At the iMovie workshop, attendees learned the basics on shooting and editing videos to incorporate into classroom



Teachers attend tech-themed session at district professional development day

lessons. During the Pear Deck session, teachers were trained on how to use the interactive presentation tool to actively engage their students. iReady took a closer look at the reading assessment tool and learning how best to use the program's data to increase students' reading skills. And Kahoot/Plickers taught teachers to use the two tools to gauge student understanding.

"Offering 15 distinct professional development workshops – not including the elementary Writer's Workshop program – during one day, though somewhat challenging logistically, made the most sense to maximize teachers' learning opportunities and to ensure they were learning what was most personally relevant and interesting," Dr. Ladd said.

Fortunately, the district didn't have to look far for the workshops' instructors, having tapped district teachers to lead the sessions.

"We are fortunate to have a staff full of outstanding educators, many of whom are proficient on some of the most current and innovative technological tools," she said. "Plus, as district teachers they are intimately familiar with our educational philosophy and vision and are therefore, uniquely qualified to educate their peers."

"This collaboration means more district educators become proficient with these tools, which they can then turnkey, adding what they've learned and continuing to share best practices with their peers, resulting in a unified digital learning experience across the district and unparalleled articulation between grades and schools," she added.

Teachers (continued from page 1)

"Both Mrs. Kobesky and Mrs. DePolo were chosen to receive this award based on the impact they have on their students, their colleagues and the community," said Superintendent Smith. According to the superintendent, the Award honors teachers who demonstrate exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school; outstanding educational accomplishments beyond the classroom; and contributions to education that are largely unheralded yet worthy of the spotlight.

"Be it their inspiring presence in their classrooms; their strong knowledge base and teaching skills; or their clear vision for quality teaching and learning, it is abundantly clear that Mrs. Kobesky and Mrs. DePolo have had an immeasurable impact on their students, colleagues and our entire school community," he said.

NJSTA Simmons Scholar

The New Jersey Department of Education in 2014 adopted the Next Generation Science Standards [NGSS] as part of a multi-state effort to implement new education standards that are rich in content and practice and arranged in a coherent manner across disciplines and grades to provide all students an internationally benchmarked science education. September 2016 marked the start of New Jersey's first year of NGSS implementation for grades 6-12. The standards will be implemented in grades K-5 beginning September 2017.

"The NGSS have presented a significant conceptual shift in the way science is taught and learned," said District Supervisor of Math & Science Jennifer Riback. "Historically, elementary science education has been textbook driven and vocabulary heavy, sometimes supplemented with cut-and-paste poster projects. NGSS fundamentally changes science education to more closely resemble the way scientists work and think. The philosophy behind the new standards is that by engaging in real world scientific and engineering practices, students will deepen their understanding of scientific ideas. Under NGSS, students engage in hands-on experimentation, using critical thinking skills to design investigations that answer questions about the world around them."

Though she expects the new standards to increase scientific literacy, maximize student engagement and improve learning outcomes, Ms. Riback admits the transition to NGSS represented a steep learning curve for the district's teachers.

"Because NGSS requires such vastly different instructional practices, aligning instruction to the new standards has required a great deal of planning and effort," she said. "To prepare for the implementation, district science teachers have attended extensive professional development.

"I really commend our teachers for proactively working to

ensure the transition to the new standards in grades 6-12 has been as seamless as possible," she said. "I expect a similar smooth implementation of NGSS for kindergarten through grade five, which takes place in September 2017."

That expectation is largely due to Nellie F. Bennett Elementary School Teacher Beth Kobesky's experiences attending an intensive five-day professional development workshop at the 2016 Maitland P. Simmons Memorial Summer Institute. Mrs. Kobesky was one of only 22 New Jersey elementary teachers selected by competitive application process to attend the New Jersey Science Teachers Association [NJSTA]- sponsored workshop entitled *Preparing Elementary Teachers to Implement NGSS* her participation in which earned her the title 2016 NJSTA Simmons Scholar.

"We received about 40 hours of targeted NGSS instruction focused on specific curricular tools and topics designed to engage elementary grade level students," Mrs. Kobesky said of the workshop. "We constructed content and grade-specific lessons integrating the Life, Physical, and Earth Sciences, with a focus on authentic experiences. We also learned how to effectively infuse science lessons with literacy and mathematics content, for a more comprehensive cross-curricular educational experience."

Mrs. Kobesky said she took part in a series of structured activities that included hands-on and data-focused lessons, demonstrations and field experiences suitable for the elementary classroom, like building, testing, and redesigning straw rockets; investigating seed dispersal; and building marshmallow towers.

"Throughout the workshop, we were prompted to consider how each activity could be used with our students and how each exemplified NGSS," she said.

Ms. Riback said Mrs. Kobesky's training has been instrumental in guiding other Point Pleasant elementary teachers to understand the shift to NGSS

"Mrs. Kobesky returned from the Institute equipped with the skills and knowledge to effectively turnkey her experiences with her colleagues and help lead the implementation of an NGSS-aligned elementary science curriculum," she said.

Rutgers School of Engineering Dean's Award for Service

Since 2011, Point Pleasant Borough High School math teacher John McAllen has received some of the nation's most prestigious awards for teaching excellence; among them, the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching, the Governor's Teacher of the Year Award and the Princeton University Distinguished Teacher Award. In October, Mr. McAllen added another prominent award to his trophy case with his receipt of the Rutgers University School of Engineering's Dean's Award for Service, an award that is presented annually to a

School of Engineering alumnus who, through personal commitment and dedication, has contributed to advancing the engineering profession.

John McAllen's contributions to the engineering profession span two decades and two careers. An alternate route teacher, he began his professional career as a biomedical researcher with Johnson & Johnson, where he designed and patented five surgical devices, some of which are still in use today. Though he did pursue his teaching certification concurrent to working at J&J, it wasn't until spring 2000 when a chance encounter with then Boro High School Principal John Staryak resulted in an interview and later a job offer. Mr. McAllen began his teaching career at the high school in September 2000; since then, he has inspired countless students to not only take but become passionate about Calculus.

"Over the past 16 years, John McAllen has increased both enrollment and achievement in Calculus," said building Principal Kurt Karcich. "He is responsible for helping to expand the high school's Calculus course offerings, personally developing our Advanced Placement Calculus program. Under John's tutelage, student enrollment in AP Calculus has more than quadrupled and though our total student population is small relative to other high schools, we have the largest percentage of students taking the AP Calculus exam! These achievements are a testament to Mr. McAllen's superior teaching skills and the passion he exudes as an educator."

The Dean's Award for Service was one of six awards presented to distinguished Rutgers University School of Engineering alumni at the 10th Annual Medal of Excellence Dinner held at the school on Oct. 13.

"The 2016 honorees showcase the outstanding achievements of the school's alumni and also demonstrate the diversity of careers that encompass an engineering degree," said Rutgers School of Engineering dean Thomas N. Farris. "Rutgers University engineering graduates make an important impact, sparking innovation that strengthens New Jersey's economy and shapes lives around the globe."

"As the recipient of his many awards, John McAllen has solidified his standing as one of the nation's best educators," said Superintendent of Schools Vincent S. Smith.

"Though I typically try and avoid making such grandiose statements, I can say, without pretense, that the world is a better place because of John McAllen. Be it his contributions to biomedical research or through his efforts as an educator, inspiring a love of math in nearly two decades of students, empirically speaking, I believe that his contributions have had a profound impact on the world. But of all of his impressive accomplishments thus far, I believe Mr. McAllen's greatest achievement has yet to come, and is to be revealed by the futures of his students."

Superintendent's Perspective

It's hard to imagine a better time of year in Point Pleasant Borough Schools than the weeks surrounding the holiday season. As we come into the Holidays, the first marking period has come and gone and students and staff are generally well settled and focused on achievement and the remainder of the year. There's a feeling of accomplishment and contentment that can be felt district-wide, which lends itself well to the burgeoning holiday spirit, and can be witnessed throughout the district.

The charitable endeavors heralded by our students and staff as well as the season's many events and traditions, truly makes this the most wonderful time of the year. It's one of my favorite times to visit our schools, when they seem alive with the sound of music and the holiday excitement radiates like a Griswold Holiday display. The ability to witness the wonder of the holidays through the eyes of our students is one of my most precious gifts.

This time of year is marked by winter concerts and holiday events; by food and toy drives for our neighbors in need; and by great reflection as we look back on the school year's first three months and the seemingly impossible number of achievements that have occurred over such a short time.

Whether in academics, athletics or the arts, our students are excelling in every area. Academically, our students are shattering records – like the astounding 49 current students and members of the Class of 2016 that have been named AP Scholars, surpassing 2014's record of 46.

Our student athletes' commitment to excel is demonstrated by our teams earning division title championships and by seniors Katie Bragen and Ally Lassen signing National Letters of Intent to continue their athletic pursuits at Rutgers University and St. Francis College respectively, both Division I schools.

Our Performing Arts Department also continues to shine with extraordinary performances and achievement. Carrying on a Boro tradition, senior Olivia Youngman was chosen – for the third time - to join a select group of New Jersey's most elite high school musicians for the Algonquin Arts Theatre's 2016 Rising Stars Concert. Miss Youngman also placed second at the All State Opera Festival and will perform with nine other Boro students at the 2017 All Shore Regional Chorus. Early next year, junior Nicole DeJacimo will perform on Carnegie Hall's legendary stage following her acceptance to the Honors Women's Choir.

District teachers are also receiving well-deserved recognition for their efforts. Earlier this year, elementary teachers Beth Kobesky and Maureen DePolo were named 2016 New Jersey Exemplary Elementary Educators while high school math teacher John McAllen added another prestigious award to his resume with his receipt of the Rutgers University School of Engineering Dean's Award for Service. Additionally, 10 district educators earned certification through Google's Certified Educator program bringing the total number of district teachers to have earned certification through the program to 16! And thanks to the efforts of members of our educational staff, district schools have cumulatively been awarded over \$70,000 in grant funds since the start of the school year, which will be used to fund innovative projects and initiatives throughout the district.

But where this year has really stood out is through the charity and spirit of giving that has been demonstrated in our schools. The year began with a district-wide effort to support Southern Louisiana's efforts to recover from the historic floods that swept the area this summer. Through a combination of donation receptacles placed at strategic locations and events, a staff 'Jeans Day' fundraiser, and donations from the district's affiliated organizations, we raised \$3,523.57 to support the Louisiana School Boards Association's Fund for Restoring Schools!

For the ninth consecutive year, all four district schools worked to make the holidays brighter for area families in need by participating in the Annual Students Change Hunger Holiday Food Drive competition, raising literal tons of food. Our schools also coordinated pajama, toy and gift, and coat drives for those in need. And Memorial Middle School celebrated their 21st year of participation in the St. Jude's Math-a-Thon, raising an incredible \$3,474.25 for the hospital, bringing their lifetime total contributions to an astonishing \$123,254.42!

As you can see, here in the Point Pleasant Borough School District, it really is the most wonderful time of the year! Thank you for your continued support.

From the Point Pleasant Borough School District family to your family, I offer our best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a safe, happy and healthy New Year!



Vincent S. Smith
Superintendent of Schools

Vincent S. Smith
Superintendent of Schools

HEROIN: A Forum for Parents & Teens set for Jan. 18

The abuse of and addiction to opioids such as heroin and prescription pain relievers has reached epidemic proportions in the United States. Opioids are a class of highly addictive, chemically similar drugs that include prescription painkillers as well as heroin and morphine, all of which act on the brain's pain receptors, producing an analgesic effect. The drugs also target the brain's reward center producing feelings of euphoria which makes them highly susceptible to misuse and abuse. Their close chemical makeup means the brain cannot differentiate between the legally prescribed opiates and their illicit counterparts, studies have suggested that this close chemical relationship is at the root of the explosion in heroin abuse as users seek to replace their painkillers once they are no longer to legally able obtain prescriptions. A recent survey of heroin users found four in five started by misusing prescription painkillers. The more than 300 million prescriptions for opioid painkillers written last year coupled with the drugs' high potential for abuse has fueled an epidemic that has reached catastrophic proportions.

Recent estimates place the number of Americans illicitly using opioids at 4 million, with 2.5 million addicted. The numbers are climbing and the consequences have been devastating. The Drug Enforcement Agency announced in 2015 that for the first-time drug overdoses surpassed motor vehicle deaths as the leading cause of accidental death in the country. More than half of the 55,403 lethal drug overdoses reported that year were caused by prescription opioids and heroin – a five-fold increase since 2002. In New Jersey, the statistics are even more alarming.

"The rate of overdose deaths attributed to heroin nationwide is 2.6 per 100,000 people," said Superintendent of Schools Vincent S. Smith. "In New Jersey, the rate is 8.3 deaths per 100,000 people that's three times the national average and doesn't even account for fatal overdoses caused by prescription opioids. Since 2010, the number of heroin-related overdose deaths in the state has more than doubled, despite the widespread use of Narcan, a first response treatment for overdose."

According to a recent Centers for Disease Control report heroin now eclipses homicide, suicide, car accidents and AIDS as a cause of death in New Jersey.

These frightening statistics coupled with a number of recent overdoses that have affected local families has inspired the Point Pleasant Borough School District to aggressively target this growing epidemic. On Wed. Jan. 18, the district will host a critical forum for parents and teens entitled Heroin: A Crisis at the Jersey Shore. The forum begins at 7:00 p.m. in Point Pleasant Borough High School's Auditorium.

School district administrators will join law enforcement officials and local health experts for a critical discussion on the growing epidemic of opioid and heroin use in our area. Guests in attendance at the forum will learn about the risk factors for drug abuse, tips on prevention, the warning signs associated with opioid use, the consequences of drug use, and the resources that are available in our area. Find out about the Point Pleasant Borough School District's educational efforts aimed at preventing illicit drug use and hear heartrending stories from families and individuals whose lives have been affected by heroin. Attendees will also have the opportunity to have their questions answered by the experts.

Panelists Include:

Vincent S. Smith *Superintendent, Point Pleasant Borough Schools*
Jim Foley *Student Assistance Counselor, Point Pleasant Borough Schools*
Joseph Coronato *Ocean County Prosecutor*
Anthony PIERRO *Asst. Ocean County Prosecutor*
Lt. Det. Adam Picca *Point Pleasant Police Dept.*
Det. Dave Scalabrini *Point Pleasant Police Dept.*
Kimberly Reilly *Ocean County Alcoholism Coordinator*
Beth Wisniewski *PPHS Class of '09, Sister of Overdose Victim*
Person in recovery

"Though our district has historically taken a proactive approach to substance abuse education in our schools, blending targeted educational programs with age-appropriate assemblies and outreaches as well as initiatives like Heroes and Cool Kids, the Student Ambassadors program and the Youth Wellness Council, all of which help promote general health and wellness among students and help them to develop good habits and positive coping strategies, I believe we can and must do more," said

The Panther Press

Volume 16, Number 2

Published twice a year by the Point Pleasant Schools Board of Education, 2100 Panther Path, Point Pleasant, NJ 08742.

The Panther Press is a newsletter written for the purpose of raising community awareness of school happenings and district initiatives. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Panther Press 2100 Panther Path, Point Pleasant, NJ 08742. Point Pleasant Schools is an equal opportunity/affirmative action organization. Copyright 2016.

Articles may be re-printed upon notifying the Panther Press Editor.

Editorial Staff

Publisher: Vincent S. Smith
Editor: Jacquelyn Goss

Point Pleasant Borough 2016 Board of Education

President: Susan Ward
Vice President: Sean Hagan
Susan Byington
Matthew Jordan
William Munn
Cheryl Salway
Larry Williams
Board Attorney: Viola Lordi, Esq.
Board Secretary: Steven Corso

Central Administration

Superintendent of Schools: Vincent S. Smith
Curriculum & Instruction Director: Susan Ladd
Pupil Personnel Services Supervisor: Rita Miller
School Business Administrator: Steven W. Corso

Mission Statement

To assure that all students are equipped with the essential skills necessary to acquire knowledge and understanding; to instill the desire to question and look for truth so that students may become critical thinkers and life-long learners; and, to assure that all students practice self-discipline, perseverance, fairness, and judicious decision making.



It is the expectation of this school district that all pupils achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at all grade levels.

HEROIN

A CRISIS AT THE JERSEY SHORE
A CRITICAL FORUM FOR PARENTS AND TEENS
*RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 12 & UP

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18
POINT PLEASANT HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

PLEASE JOIN Point Pleasant Borough School District administration, law enforcement officials and local health experts for a critical discussion on the growing epidemic of opioid and heroin use in our area; plus, hear from families and individuals whose lives have been affected by heroin.

TOPICS INCLUDE:

RISK FACTORS	PREVENTION	WARNING SIGNS
CONSEQUENCES	GETTING HELP	RESOURCES

PRESENTATION BEGINS PROMPTLY AT 7PM FOLLOWED BY Q & A

LOCAL STATISTICS

781 RIP
Number of New Jersey heroin-related deaths in 2014.

↑200%
Increase in Ocean County heroin overdoses since 2012.

2-3%
Percent of NJ high school students that have admitted to using heroin.

8.3*
New Jersey's average heroin-related deaths per 100,000 people.
*More than three times the national average

GUEST SPEAKERS

JOSEPH CORONATO
ANTHONY PIERRO
OCEAN COUNTY PROSECUTOR OFFICE

LT. DET. ADAM PICCA
DET. DAVE SCALABRINI
POINT PLEASANT BORO POLICE DEPARTMENT

KIMBERLY REILLY
OCEAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

RECOVERING USER

BETH WISNIEWSKI
PPBHS '09, SISTER OF OVERDOSE VICTIM

JIM FOLEY
PPBHS STUDENT ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR

MODERATED BY:
VINCENT S. SMITH
SUPERINTENDENT OF POINT PLEASANT SCHOOLS

--- WWW.POINTPLEASANT.K12.NJ.US ---

Superintendent Smith. "There seems to be a persistent misperception that the use of opioids and specifically heroin is not a problem in our area. Unfortunately, a number of recent incidents have proven that is not the case.

"Drug abuse is affecting more and more families here in our community," he said. "I strongly urge all parents to attend this critical forum with their children that ages 12 and up. Now is the time to discuss what we, as a community, can do to protect our children from becoming a statistic."