



# Boyertown

FALL 2015

# ESSENTIALS

To enable all students to succeed in a changing world!

BOYERTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Welcome to Boyertown Essentials



I hope you enjoy reading the first issue of our new newsletter, "Boyertown Essentials." The goal of this publication is to inform our stakeholders about the great things happening in the

Boyertown Area School District. I am proud to serve as the superintendent of schools for the Boyertown Area School District. We are fortunate to have talented students, a dedicated staff and a supportive community working together to make the district a great place to live, work and learn. You will see the contributions of many of these individuals featured in these articles, and in future issues.

Additional information is available on our district website, [www.boyertownasd.org](http://www.boyertownasd.org), and on our new Facebook page (search for "Boyertown Area School District"). Our focus is to hear the "voice" of our students, staff and residents to help us continue to provide strong programs for our students. Our website provides direction on ways you can share your input for us to consider. My wife, daughter and I are very active at community and district events; if you see me in the community, please say hello.

Please enjoy our first newsletter. I look forward to sharing the great things that are happening in the Boyertown Area School District with you in each issue.

## Boyertown Welcomes Students, Parents and Faculty

Before the doors of the schools officially opened on Monday, August 31, students and teachers were back on the various campuses of the Boyertown Area School District preparing for the 2015-2016 academic year.

At the seven elementary schools, kindergarten students and their parents and guardians were given a sneak peek of their new school and classroom. While the parents and guardians were given an overview of the school, including how pickup/drop-off and the district's breakfast and lunch program work, their kindergarten students became acclimated and comfortable with their teachers, classrooms and peers. The students worked on fun activities, enjoyed a snack, and took a ride on the school bus in preparation for their first day of school.

Over at the high school, students who play fall sports, and members of the marching band and color guard, have spent their days on the fields preparing for the upcoming seasons. From football, field hockey and soccer players learning new plays to the band members working to hit all the right notes, Boyertown Area Senior High School students

have been preparing for this year for weeks.

And throughout the district, teachers have been busy getting their classrooms ready for that all-important first impression and the start of another successful year.



*Photos (top to bottom): Kindergarteners at Gilbertsville Elementary School became acquainted with their classroom; The drum line didn't miss a beat during practice; The boys' soccer team ran drills to start summer practices; The color guard took it from the top.*



Postal Patron



## DISTRICT DIRECTORY

Boyertown Area School District  
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David A. Szablowski, Chief Financial Officer  
Dr. Melissa L. Woodard, Chief Academic Officer  
Dr. Greg M. Miller, Chief Student Achievement Officer  
Stephen Katch, Chief Human Resources Officer

### Boyertown Area Senior High School

120 North Monroe Street, Boyertown, PA 19512  
610-369-7435  
Dr. Brett A. Cooper, Principal  
Dr. E. Wayne Foley, Assistant Principal  
Andrew T. Maoury, Assistant Principal  
Kelly B. Mason, Assistant Principal

### Junior High School, East Center

2020 Big Road, Gilbertsville, PA 19525  
610-754-9550  
Andrew C. Ruppert, Principal  
Stephanie A. Petri, Assistant Principal

### Junior High School, West Center

380 South Madison Street, Boyertown, PA 19512  
610-369-7471  
Gregory S. Galtere, Principal  
James J. Towers, Assistant Principal

### Boyertown Elementary School

641 East Second Street, Boyertown, PA 19512  
610-369-7462  
Craig R. Kehl, Principal

### Colebrookdale Elementary School

1001 Montgomery Avenue, Boyertown, PA 19512  
610-369-7427  
Michael R. Stoudt, Principal

### Earl Elementary School

22 Schoolhouse Road, Boyertown, PA 19512  
610-369-7504  
Dr. Craig K. Zerr, Principal

### Gilbertsville Elementary School

36 Congo Road, Gilbertsville, PA 19525  
610-369-7485  
Stephanie L. Landis, Principal

### New Hanover-Upper Frederick Elementary School

2547 Big Road, Frederick, PA 19435  
610-754-9580  
Brian J. Rohn, Principal

### Pine Forge Elementary School

8 Glendale Road, Boyertown, PA 19512  
610-323-7609  
Laura A. Heineck, Principal

### Washington Elementary School

1406 Route 100, Barto, PA 19504  
610-754-9589  
Christopher J. Iacobelli, Principal

The Boyertown Area School District Newsletter is published by the Boyertown Area School District.

For questions or comments regarding this publication, please contact Kristine Parkes at [Communications@Boyertownasd.org](mailto:Communications@Boyertownasd.org).

# Alumnae Spotlight: Shining Behind the Scenes

Although the arts were her lifeblood growing up, Laura Frecon, class of 1995, admits she once was the one who discouraged herself from a career in the arts.

“Although I was involved in the arts from a young age, I decided to hang up my arts hat at the University of Pittsburgh, and as a freshman, I was a biology major with a theater minor. ... I was going to go into environmental studies,” Ms. Frecon explained.

It was during her sophomore year that it occurred to her she was pursuing the wrong major. She explains that she was doing a work-study program at the University of Pittsburgh Costume Shop when she realized that her passion was the costume shop, not biology.

“When I called my mother to tell her I wanted to change my major, she told me that she wasn’t surprised in the least,” Ms. Frecon remembered. “My parents were so supportive of my decision.”

She graduated with a joint B.A. in theater and business from the University of Pittsburgh and went on to receive her master’s in fine arts from the New School University/Actors Studio Drama School. As an undergrad, she studied abroad in London for a year and completed internships at the Royal National Theatre and Camden People’s Theatre.

Ms. Frecon has designed costumes for film, television, theater, print, fashion, dance and opera. Her works range from period silhouettes to contemporary fashion. She has worked with costume designers Mary Vogt, Janie Bryant, Audrey Fisher and Judy Ruskin-Howell.

She is a member of the Costume Designers Guild, Local 892 of the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees, in Los Angeles as well as the United Scenic Artists, Local 829, in New York.

When asked what she likes most about her job, Ms. Frecon is quick to reply, “I love that no day is ever the same, nor can it ever be predicted. Every day is a challenge, but I get to be creative and solve problems every day.”



*Costume designer, Laura Frecon, has fond memories of her time at Boyertown Area Senior High School.*

She also gets to work with amazing people in incredible places. This year she has been to Hawaii, Vietnam and New Orleans.

Ms. Frecon loved her time at Boyertown Area Senior High School: “I thrived on being a part of everything at junior and senior high school.”

Ms. Frecon played softball and field hockey. She served as secretary of her class, helped to plan dances and the prom, and performed with the show choir and in plays.

She fondly remembers her junior high school show choir teacher, Mr. Dan Kershetsky. “I was in show choir when I was in seventh grade. I was shy, and he helped me to overcome my shyness.”

Ms. Frecon’s most noted film credits include *McFarland USA*, *Grudge Match*, *Broken Horses*, *Men in Black 3*, *Dinner for Schmucks* and *Loaded*. Her noted television credits include *Mad Men* (season 4), for which her team received an Emmy Nomination for Best Period Costume Design as well as a Costume Designers Guild Award Nomination. She also worked on the HBO hit show *True Blood* (seasons 5-7).

If you know of a Boyertown Area Senior High alumna or alumnus who would be a good candidate for a spotlight article, please email [Communications@boyertownasd.org](mailto:Communications@boyertownasd.org).



Find news, announcements and event information on Facebook. Like us by searching Boyertown Area School District or clicking the Facebook icon on the district’s website.

# Boyertown Represented At Technology Innovators Summit

The Boyertown Area School District is proud to announce that three educators attended the PA Association for Educational Communications and Technology (PAECT) Keystone Technology Innovators Summit held at Shippensburg University this summer. Dr. Tina Schrode-Fries, teacher for gifted students at Boyertown Elementary School, Mrs. Jacqueline Laurence, third-grade teacher at Gilbertsville Elementary School, and Mrs. Rebecca Hester, lead teacher for technology integration/tech coach, attended as Keystones, class of 2015.

Annually, each school principal in Pennsylvania is invited to nominate a teacher for Keystone recognition. Nominees then apply to attend the summit. Only 100 teachers from across the state of Pennsylvania are invited to attend the summit. Dr. Schrode-Fries, Mrs. Laurence and Mrs. Hester were selected through a competitive portfolio-based application process, demonstrating their passion for education and technology. Keystones are creative, innovative teachers who embrace best practices in technology integration and advocate for the use of technology as a transformative tool to nurture student intellect, innovation and imagination.

The summit is a week-long event where attendees spend time working in cohorts, attending pedagogical and technology-

driven workshops, and building their personal learning networks. Additional highlights from the summit include keynote speakers, Edcamp ([www.edcamp.org](http://www.edcamp.org)), unconference sessions (less formal than conferences and driven by participants), and a hands-on STEAM event where participants engaged in 3-D printing, coding and robotics. STEAM is a movement championed by Rhode Island School of Design that adds art and design to the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) equation. The summit is organized by the Pennsylvania Association for Educational Technology and Communications, which boasts a membership of over 450 educators from across Pennsylvania.

The goals of the summit are to inspire attendees to return to their school districts with heightened enthusiasm for technology-supported learning and to embrace the ideas of developing, connecting, leading and advocating. Dr. Schrode-Fries, Mrs. Laurence and Mrs. Hester are excited to share their knowledge and passion with their colleagues within the Boyertown Area School District!



*(left- right: Dr. Tina Schrode-Fries, Grades 4-6 Elementary Teacher of the Gifted, Mrs. Jackie Laurence, Grade 3 Teacher at Gilbertsville Elementary, and Mrs. Rebecca Hester, K-12 Technology Coach and Lead Teacher for Tech Integration represented Boyertown at the Technology Innovators Summit.*

## Partnership Provides Students With Work Experience

Since 2012, the Boyertown Area Senior High School has participated in the Goodwill's Summer Work Experience and Assessment Program (SWEAP). The program provides students in special education programs between the ages of 16-18 with a real work experience. Goodwill funds the program through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and private grants.

"Students who participate in this summer work experience learn and improve basic work skills, develop mature work attitudes and behaviors, learn safety in the workplace, experience the real demands of community employment, and get a head start on future employment," explained Mrs. Natalie Warren, work-study internship coordinator.

This summer, six students worked approximately 20 hours a week for a six-week period. Goodwill oversaw the program at Boyertown Area Senior High School and Junior High East with help from of a work-site supervisor. The students helped the custodial staff with their summer maintenance. They learned how to use equipment and how to lift properly, and they



*SWEAP participants (back row, from left) Trevor Shelly, Ali Hilbert, Dalton Houck, Samuel Snyder, (front row, from left) Reed Frame and Tailyor Kuser took a break from their summer job.*

helped with tasks to prepare the schools for the first day of classes.

As Mrs. Warren explained, it is often more difficult for the students participating in SWEAP

to obtain a summer job. "For many of the students, this was their first paying job," Ms. Warren said. "The entire experience, from completing an application and interviewing to opening a bank account, will benefit them long after high school."

# Boyertown: Under Construction

In August 2012, an architectural firm specializing in the design of public school projects in Pennsylvania completed a detailed districtwide feasibility study for the Boyertown Area School District. The goal was to determine what renovations were required to modernize the district's buildings to enable them to serve the needs of students.

However, in order to fully understand the current construction project, it is helpful to look back over the history of the School District.

Fourteen years ago, 60 percent of the student population of the Boyertown Area School District resided in Berks County and 40 percent resided in Montgomery County. In 2005, the District began to see a housing boom in Montgomery County and subsequently formed an Ad-Hoc committee to discuss attendance lines. The Ad-Hoc committee worked with community members and township officials to expand gray areas.

"Gray areas were identified as locations where housing developments were most likely to be located," explained Mr. David Szablowski, the District's chief financial officer. "Families moving into these gray areas would be administratively assigned to which elementary school they would send their children taking into consideration the current population in each school."

With Gilbertsville and New Hanover Upper Frederick being the only elementary schools in Montgomery County, the goal of the gray areas was to help manage class size.

The gray areas helped until about 2009 when the District decided that it needed to redraw attendance lines. In 2015, the county residence of the student population has flipped with close to 60% of our students residing in Montgomery County and 40% in Berks.

And today, according to Montgomery Township officials, there are thousands of homes on the books to be built in the next decade. Over the past five years, these townships within the Boyertown Area School District have averaged 100 new homes per year.

"These numbers were putting, and continue to put, a strain on the schools that are in Montgomery County or are located near the county line," Mr. Szablowski said. "Our two largest elementary schools are in Montgomery County, and they each have approximately 800 students."

Before the start of the 2015-2016 school year, modular classrooms were installed at Gilbertsville Elementary School. The modular classrooms will provide much needed space for music programs so that two classrooms in the main building can be repurposed as instructional space.

The feasibility study provided the school board and administration with five options for how to address the projected student population growth on the Montgomery County side of the district. The District selected the option, which includes realigning the grade structure for all schools in the District:

- The seven existing elementary schools

would have grades realigned from the current K-6 to K-5. This will provide the elementary schools with much needed space.

- The two existing junior high schools housing grades 7 through 9 would convert to a middle school grade structure of grades 6 through 8. The Boyertown Area School District is the only school district in Berks County to still have the junior high school model.



*Cub Gymnasium Lobby stair steel.*

- Junior High West will receive alterations in order to accommodate sixth grade. This building has not received major work in nearly 20 years, and as noted in the feasibility study, significant upgrades are necessary to achieve parity with Junior High East, the other school slated to receive the balance of the sixth grade students. In accordance with the District's original timeline, this is scheduled to be the next major District construction project pending School Board approval.
- Recognizing the importance of gathering input from members of the Boyertown Area School District Community, Board President Steve Elsier has formed an Ad-Hoc Enrollment Study Committee to assess the District needs at the elementary level. This committee is charged with gathering input from the public, reviewing relevant research, and making recommendations to the Boyertown Area School District Board of School Directors for consideration.



*Lower parking lot and Bears Stadium curbing.*

The Boyertown Area Senior High (BASH) Construction Project will add 25,000 new square feet to the building, including a new gym and five new art classrooms. The existing Cub Gym will be transformed into a music suite, and a new athletic entrance will be created at the north end of the building. The original three-story building referred to as the (1920's - 1930's) building is receiving a renovation to ensure that it



*New gymnasium steel roof deck is complete.*

- Ninth grade would be moved into the high school, which would be renovated to house grades 9 through 12. In the fall of 2017, the high school will begin a transition to a career academy curriculum.
- The grade alignment, which is slated to begin with the 2017-2018 academic year, will be covered in depth in future newsletters.

In order to accomplish this grade realignment, several construction projects will be completed over the course of the next two years:

- Boyertown Area Senior High is receiving alterations and additions. Construction is currently on budget and on schedule for completion in August of 2017.

complies with current code requirements and, when complete, will house the Ninth Grade Academy.

Additionally, the entire building is receiving a new four-pipe HVAC system, which will create improved efficiency and flexibility in operations.

"This is an exciting time for Boyertown," Superintendent Dr. Richard Faidley commented. "What makes it even more exciting is the knowledge that we have been able to utilize existing buildings and have repurposed existing facilities when possible at a much lower cost than new construction, and that every child will benefit from the BASH Renovation Project."

# Introducing Your Foundation For Boyertown Education

After years in the making, a separate, nonprofit foundation has been established for the Boyertown Area School District to raise additional funds that will go right back into the classrooms of the school district.

The Foundation for Boyertown Education is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to providing a source of financial support to fund innovative educational programs and extracurricular initiatives for the students of the Boyertown Area School District by securing tax-deductible donations.

Donations are used to support specific programs including, but not limited to, programs in art and music; extracurricular activities

and after-school programs; science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs; technology integration and intervention and enrichment programs.

During the 2014-2015 school year, the Foundation raised in excess of \$51,500. With these funds, the Foundation was able to provide tools and instruction not previously available to students. For example:

- Thirty-two Dual Control Starter Robotics Kits were purchased with funds raised through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program. These kits will provide students with a variety of mechanical options to solve a multitude of problems.

- The Foundation received gifts in honor of Mr. Paul Moyer, an area homebuilder who passed away in January. With these contributions, the Foundation purchased a sawstop table saw with state-of-the-art safety features for the BASH tech and engineering programs.
- The Foundation secured a grant from the Boyertown Area Charitable Program of Berks County Community Foundation to offer junior high and high school students Weller Center presentations about the dangers of prescription drug and heroin use.

“Maintaining the district’s tradition of educational excellence is the No.

1 goal of the Foundation, commented Mrs. Carissa Bobenchik, executive director of the Foundation for Boyertown Education. “Public schools face significant budgetary challenges, which can make it difficult for the school board to maintain a full range of quality programs. Serving as a conduit to accept and administer monetary charitable gifts, the Foundation exists to provide a permanent source of financial support.”

To learn more and to keep up-to-date with activities and events, follow the Foundation on Facebook (search Foundation for Boyertown Education) or visit the website at [www.foundationbe.org](http://www.foundationbe.org).

## BASH Students Compete at National Conference

After first qualifying at the state-level skill and leadership competition in March, Boyertown Area Senior High junior Gabriella Gallina earned the opportunity to compete at the HOSA-Future Health Professionals National Leadership Conference held in Anaheim, California, from June 24-27, 2015. This year’s conference brought together over 6,000 future health care professionals from across the country to compete in 54 events at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

Gabriella attends the Berks Career & Technology Center, where she is

taking classes in the dental occupations program.

HOSA is a national student organization endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education and the Health Science Technology Education Division of the Association for Career and Technical Education. Boyertown Area Senior High senior Steven Filby serves as a vice president of PENN HOSA. He attended the conference as an officer and served as a flag bearer during the event. Steven is a student in the Berks Career & Technology Center’s health-related technology program.

## Beating the Heat with an Icy Treat

With temperatures high all week, Washington Elementary School Principal Mr. Christopher Iacobelli surprised students and teachers with a visit from the Kona Ice truck. “I thought a refreshing treat would be a great way to wind down the week,” Mr. Iacobelli said. The smiles on the students’ faces confirmed that they couldn’t agree more!



*Mrs. Monica McGrow, kindergarten teacher and Aaron Davies enjoyed an icy treat.*

## Junior High To The Y

As part of the ongoing work of the Boyertown Area School District’s Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) Task Force, students in seventh, eighth and ninth grades will be provided with FREE bus transportation to the Boyertown YMCA located at 301 West Spring Street in Boyertown on Tuesdays and Thursdays from September 15, 2015 through May 26, 2016.

As Mr. Robert Scoboria, assistant superintendent explained, one of the targeted areas of improvement that was identified through the PAYS Task Force was the availability of safe, healthy opportunities for youth. This unique collaboration between the Boyertown Area

School District, the Boyertown YMCA and the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation will provide students with team and individual sports, fitness and wellness classes, and electronic and board games.

“The district is fortunate to have wonderful community partners such as the Boyertown YMCA and the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation,” Mr. Scoboria commented.

Programming will be offered from the time students arrive at the Boyertown YMCA until 4:30 p.m. Parents are required to pick up their students at the Boyertown YMCA, as there will not be

transportation back to the schools. Transportation to the YMCA is being provided through a \$10,000 grant from the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation.

“We are pleased to provide an opportunity for BASD junior high school students to participate in physical fitness and extra-curricular activities immediately following the school day throughout the academic year,” said Foundation President Dave Kraybill. “The Boyertown YMCA offers a variety of great programs centered on health and wellness that will allow students to unwind, have some fun and get moving after working hard in the classroom.”

All participants must be current Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA members, and registration is required. Parents must accompany their students to enroll in membership and sign up for the after-school program. YMCA membership is free for seventh-grade students. Financial assistance may be available for eighth- and ninth-grade students. For questions regarding memberships and sponsorships, please call the Boyertown YMCA at 610-369-9622.

No transportation or programming will be offered on early dismissal days, holidays or bad weather days.

# The Value of Education in the Boyertown Area School District

Schools in the Boyertown Area School District opened their doors to approximately 7,000 students for the 2015-2016 school year just a few weeks ago, and already, the students, their teachers and their parents have settled into a routine that will carry them through the next 10 months. While this scenario has been played out across the state and across the county, unless they have children, most residents don't give much thought to the activities of their local school district.

However, a great deal of research demonstrates how the benefits of a quality public education extend far beyond each child's individual academic gains. While education provides children with the skills they will need as adults to find good jobs and live well, it has broader social and economic benefits for individuals, families and communities.

## Great Education at a Low Cost

Of the 18 school districts in Berks County, the Boyertown Area School District has the lowest millage rate, with the exception of the Reading School District. In Montgomery County, the Boyertown Area School District has the fifth lowest millage rate of the county's 22 school districts. Additionally, with a per-pupil spending of \$12,038, the Boyertown Area School District has the second lowest expenditure per pupil in Berks County and the lowest expenditure per pupil in Montgomery County. Yet, each of the schools' School Performance Profile ranking is among the highest in both counties.

The Pennsylvania School Performance Profile offers a Web-based resource for school districts and individual schools to communicate

performance results to various stakeholders. The scores also assist school districts and schools in aligning and focusing resources for continuous improvement.

"We are extremely proud that while we have been able to keep our per pupil spending low, our district's performance based on the School Performance Profile score is among the highest," Dr. Greg M. Miller, chief student achievement officer, stated. "In fact, we have the highest-performing elementary school and the second-highest-performing high school in Berks County."

The Boyertown Area School District is also proud that it has been able to maintain its robust music, art and extracurricular programs. Scott and Krista Hamrick's two sons, Boyertown Area Senior High School junior Grayson and Junior High East ninth-grader Asher, have attended Boyertown schools since kindergarten. Asher and Grayson play lacrosse and participate in the Technology Student Association and marching band.

"The Boyertown Area School District has exceeded our expectations," Mr. Hamrick said. "The district offers a spectrum of activities with great support from the teachers who bring out the best in our boys and their classmates."

## Homeowners Benefit From Quality Schools

Many studies have been conducted in the past two decades that explore the effect of school quality on housing prices in various cities across the United States. The Reinvestment Fund conducted such a study, which measured school quality in Philadelphia and its impact on the value of Philadelphia real estate. This study showed that overall school quality, as measured

by test scores, is positively related to the price of housing in that school district.

As with many other attractive neighborhood qualities, it has been observed that people value the quality of the schools they send their children to. In fact, a 2000 survey by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission found that the third most important neighborhood characteristic for buyers and sellers with children was the presence of a good school in the area. This is a trend that has been recognized across the United States. However, it is not just buyers and sellers who have children who benefit. All homeowners in a community benefit from good schools, whether or not they have children enrolled in those schools.

Professors at Cleveland State University conducted an extensive review of research dating back to 1969 that shows that school quality has a substantial impact on housing prices. These studies looked at the various methods that have been used to rank school districts over the years. In the end, the researchers determined that residents are sensitive to public information and consider it when purchasing houses, and they respond more readily to comprehensive measures of school quality, not just partial test scores.

Mr. Hamrick commented that the school district played a role when he and his wife were deciding where to buy a home. "My wife and I view living in the Boyertown Area School District as an educational investment for our boys and a financial investment as homeowners," Mr. Hamrick said.

## Partners in Education

One of the priority areas that was identified during the development of the Boyertown Area School District's Comprehensive Plan was "effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders." A subsection of this priority was to increase partnerships with the business and nonprofit community. In each issue of Boyertown Essentials, we will highlight our Partners in Education.

### Rep. Marcy Toepel

"To be able to pick up the phone and know that Rep. Toepel will make time to visit the school district is extremely valuable," Superintendent Dr. Richard Faidley commented. "I know she has to balance the needs of many groups. I appreciate that she is always available and is always present for Boyertown and for our community's events."

Rep. Toepel recently visited with Dr. Faidley where she received an update on the construction project and the district's five-year property plan. They also discussed the recent Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) scores and the value of education in the Boyertown Area School District.

While some readers may not know that Rep. Toepel lives in Gilbertsville, many readers may remember Rep. Toepel from when she served as a member of the Boyertown Area School District Board of School Directors.

Other readers may remember Rep. Toepel from her days at Boyertown Area Senior High School. She is a proud member of the class of 1976, and has fond memories of playing field hockey, basketball and lacrosse. She is also proud that her children and stepchildren benefitted and her grandchildren are benefiting from Boyertown Schools.

"I believe the state has a responsibility to support public schools," Rep. Toepel stated. "I believe we need vibrant schools where children can excel, graduate and become productive members of our community."

### The United Way of Boyertown Area

The United Way of Boyertown Area has kicked off its 2015-2016 Fall Campaign. Your support helps ensure local, non-profit agencies can continue to supply critical services to residents

in need. This past year, 17 local agencies benefited directly from your donations.

Direct donations can be sent to the United Way of Boyertown Area, P.O. Box 213, Boyertown, PA 19512, or through the website [www.UnitedWayBoyertown.org](http://www.UnitedWayBoyertown.org). You can also designate the United Way of Boyertown Area through your workplace United Way campaign.

The Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation (PAHWF) has generously offered to increase residential giving by providing a grant that matches dollar for dollar any new or increased residential donations of \$50 or more, up to a maximum of \$15,000.

PAHWF has provided several hundred thousand dollars in grant funds to the Boyertown Area School District. These funds have been used to enhance wellness activities for our students.

Please help us respond to this challenge by giving generously.

# Grant Award Supports Brain Body Connection Program

The Boyertown Area School District is excited to announce that the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation has awarded the district a \$93,600 grant to support the Brain Body Connection Program. This multifaceted program touches every student in the district, providing them with wellness initiatives and activities to help them embrace a healthy lifestyle.

Here is an overview of the Brain Body Connection Program that engages students year-round:

The Cub STEALTH Summer Program recently completed its second successful summer. This program served 60 children over two one-week sessions. Students had fun participating in fitness activities and learning about a healthy diet by making their own nutritious snacks.

The West Road Warriors running club continues to grow. This eight-week program at Junior High West provides students with the necessary tools to make healthy decisions in their lives that feature elements of fitness, nutrition, strength, flexibility and self-awareness relating to health issues. The culminating activity is a 5K race. Last year, 35 students ran the Shiver by the River 5K.

In three elementary schools, movement initiatives such as Action-Based Learning, Workout Reward Program and The Mileage Club have become part of the daily routine. The focus during the upcoming school year will be devoted to implementing these programs in all of the district's seven elementary schools.

The district's physical education teachers are passionate when it comes to promoting lifelong fitness habits among youth. At Junior High West, the staff is excited to begin incorporating a new traverse climbing wall to their curriculum as a way to increase fitness and support the physical, mental, social and emotional growth of each student. Using goal set-

ting, observations, self-assessment and projects, the teachers will be able to comprehensively and objectively assess each student's climbing skills and measure social, emotional and cognitive progress.

During the school year, teachers and administrators will attend the 2015 Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute as building-level teams. These teams will assess their current building-level needs in order to develop an action plan focusing on improving fitness levels and connecting physical activity to academic achievement. Additional professional development includes attendance at the Pennsylvania State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (PSAHPERD) State Convention in Valley Forge.

"The purpose of the Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute initiative is to continue to educate staff about the science behind the brain and body connection and to provide resources to implement the action plans during the school year," explained Ms. Lucie Bergeyova, K-12 health/physical education lead teacher.

The last component of the Brain Body Connection Program is the piloting of a student assistance program at Gilbertsville Elementary School.

"A student assistance program is a process for identifying and helping students who are experiencing behavior or other difficulties pos-

ing barriers to their learning and success in school," Ms. Bergeyova explained.

While the Boyertown Area School District has student assistance programs in place at the junior high and senior high levels, there is no established elementary program. Recognizing the value of earlier intervention, the district will pilot an elementary student assistance program at Gilbertsville Elementary School by providing training for several faculty members, contracting with Creative Health Services in Pottstown for a team liaison and supportive services, and making classroom coverage available for student assistance program team meetings once each week.

"We are very appreciative of the support we receive from the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation," said Superintendent Dr. Richard Faidley. "Our wellness initiatives directly impact thousands of students each year."



*Boyertown students had a blast during Club STEALTH this summer.*

## New Sign Welcomes Students and Visitors

Teachers, students, and staff were welcomed back to Earl Elementary School by a brand new school sign. A gift from the school's Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), the sign was proudly installed over the summer. Sixth grade students (from left) Madison Brown, Kyra Seyler, Cody West, Ben Fetterman, Autumn Gamler, and Jacquelyn Elmore represent Earl Elementary School's student body in saying 'thank you' to the PTO!



# Understanding the PSSA and Its Impact on the Boyertown Area School District

Throughout the recent past, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has been administering the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) to students in grades three through eight. Each year, schools across the state, including the Boyertown Area School District, receive the scores and work to analyze the data in an effort to continually improve. The Pennsylvania Department of Education has recently informed school districts across the state that the number of students scoring proficient or advanced on the new PSSA is drastically lower than last year's number. The reason they are reporting is twofold:

- The test was changed last year to reflect assessment of the new academic standards implemented in 2013 (Pennsylvania's version of the Common Core).
- In July 2015, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education approved a change in the cut scores for the PSSA. The cut scores define the difference among the PSSA achievement categories of advanced, proficient, basic and below basic.

"Based on the analysis of the preliminary data that has been released by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, our School District has lower scores than we have had in the past," commented Superintendent Dr. Richard Faidley. "However, while our scores are lower

than previous years, our scores are, as always, significantly higher than the state's averages."

The table below shows the statewide proficiency levels (according to PDE's website), as well as the Boyertown Area School District's results.

Grade	Pennsylvania Statewide Results (reported as a percentage)		Boyertown Area School District Results (reported as a percentage)	
	English/ Language Arts	Math	English/ Language Arts	Math
3	62	49	74	60
4	59	44	70	63
5	62	43	74	62
6	61	40	80	66
7	59	33	74	56
8	58	30	70	43

When reviewing the 2014-2015 PSSA results, it is important to understand that it is a completely new test, and that transitions take time. "It is not useful to directly compare students' scores on the new assessment to students' scores from previous assessments, because they are aligned to different standards," Dr. Greg M. Miller, chief student achievement officer, stated. "The 2014-2015 PSSA results are a snapshot in time and will set a new benchmark for future academic growth."

To illustrate the difference between the two tests, imagine that for the past five years your

health status has been determined based on how fast you can run a mile on a flat track. This year your physician tells you that she will now determine your health status by how fast you can run a mile straight up a steep hill. It would not be surprising for your clocked time

to increase significantly. Has your health status changed in the past year? Probably not. But if your physician were to base her assessment solely on the results of your test, yes, your health status would change.

"The results of the PSSA and other standardized tests are not the sole indicator of student achievement," Dr. Faidley commented. "As educators we know that students have different strengths and flourish in different ways. The administrators, principals and teachers know that it is important to evaluate students in a holistic manner, using a variety of performance measures."

## From the Planning Stage to Implementation

Every six years, the Pennsylvania Department of Education requires school districts to submit a Comprehensive Plan, formerly called a strategic plan. As part of the Comprehensive Plan, each school district is also required to include plans for special education, teacher induction, professional education and technology; some of these are developed as separate plans and others are included as focus areas within the whole document.

The development of the Boyertown Area School District's Comprehensive Plan began more than a year ago with a series of community meetings. These meetings were led by a task force comprised of students, teachers, community members and school administrators who were trained on how to ask others for their opinions.

From the community meetings, the district's comprehensive planning team worked to formulate the plan. That effort was facilitated by Judy Phillips, CEO of the Partnership for Excellence, a North Carolina-based company with experience helping school districts develop strategic plans.

Through the planning process, five priority areas were identified:

- Positive, safe and healthy learning environment.

- Effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders.
- Learning, growth and empowerment for every student's success.
- Effective and continuous learning for all District personnel.
- Responsible and effective use of resources.

These priority areas will focus the work of the Boyertown Area School District for the next six years. For example, this publication falls under the priority area of effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders and is one of the measurable metrics of success that was identified.

Ms. Phillips returned this summer to work with groups of teachers from each of the District's schools to help them develop their school-level action plans. The goal of these meetings was

**BOYERTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Our Mission:** To enable all students to succeed in a changing world.

**Our Priority Areas:**

**Positive, Safe, and Healthy, Learning Environment**

- Ensure that students feel secure in all school environments so they are ready to learn.
- Promote health and wellness within the school and community.
- Provide facilities that meet and/or exceed health and safety needs.
- Inspire a positive school environment with mutual trust and respect.

**Effective Communication and Collaboration Among Stakeholders**

- Strengthen the home-school collaborative partnership.
- Increase partnerships with the business and nonprofit community.
- Utilize efficient written and electronic communication.
- Value student voice.

**Learning, Growth, and Empowerment for Every Student's Success**

- Improve the instructional framework to ensure learning, growth, and success.
- Increase opportunities for all students to succeed in a changing world.
- Meet individualized needs of students through personalized learning.

**Effective and Continuous Learning for All District Personnel**

- Transform professional learning focused on growth for all personnel to ensure engagement, relevance, and rigor.
- Cultivate a positive culture of instructional coaching to implement best practices.
- Strengthen educators' integrated technology skills to reach all learners.
- Be an employer of choice to attract highly qualified, diverse personnel.

**Responsible and Effective Use of Resources**

- Ensure funding for programs, services and initiatives.
- Optimize time, talent and contributions of staff, students and community members.
- Prioritize and continuously improve infrastructure (e.g. facilities, equipment, technology).

**Our Dashboard of Success Metrics:**

- Increase the percentage of students attaining a BASD diploma.
- Increase the percentage of students meeting or exceeding one year of growth in ELA, math, and science.
- Increase the percentage of students reading on grade level.
- Increase the percentage of parents attending school functions.
- Increase the percentage of students participating in Internships.
- Distribute a district newsletter to the BASD Community.
- Increase the number of student advisory focus groups.
- Decrease or eliminate financial findings, observations and violations.
- Decrease the number of building maintenance work orders.
- Increase positive feedback on survey related to building environment.
- Increase opportunities and utilization of technology resources for students.
- Increase the number of students involved in extracurricular offerings.
- Increase the percentage of students who indicate that they feel safe and secure in school.
- Decrease the percentage of students who admittedly partake in risky behaviors.
- Increase professional development opportunities targeted towards staff needs.
- Increase participation in specific professional development sessions based on instructional needs.

**Core Values:**

- Safety and Well-Being
- Acceptance and Respect
- Communication and Collaboration
- Learning and Growth

**BOYERTOWN PRIDE**

for the teachers and principals to develop an implementation plan that will work best for their schools and their students.

The Administration will submit the Comprehensive Plan to the Board of School Directors for approval in October. The District is required to submit its Comprehensive Plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education by November 30, 2015