



Boyertown

WINTER 2018

ESSENTIALS

To enable all students to succeed in a changing world.

BOYERTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Message from Acting Superintendent



David P. Krem,
Acting Superintendent

It is often said that change is the only constant. From how we work and play to our culture and values, change affects our daily lives. As your acting superintendent, I am evidence of change in the Boyertown Area School District.

To prepare our students for this changing world, the Boyertown Area School District must be open to change. Yet, I have learned that the District has often been criticized for not changing fast enough or for not making the 'correct' changes. However, I believe that if you take a closer look at the District, and public schools, you will discover more effective teaching practices, greater responsiveness to individual student needs, and adaptation to a rapidly changing society in which preparing students to use technology and information is vital.

School districts across the Commonwealth continue to face the same challenges as in previous years – the Pennsylvania pension crisis, disproportionate financial investment for school districts, and a lack of meaningful charter school reform. These challenges are compounded by the uncertainty coming from Washington, D.C.

However, these are the challenges and uncertainties that the current administration, the Board of School Directors, staff, and community must work with in developing the District's 2018-2019 fiscal year budget. Amidst this change and flux, as a team, we rely on the District's core values as we work to stay focused:

- Base Decisions on Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of the Data
- Effective Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements
- Academic and Curricular Goals
- Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment
- Staff Selection, Leadership, and Professional Development

Developed through the District's 2015 strategic planning process, the core values are the guiding principles that form the foundation on which all decisions based. In our ever-changing world, our core values are constant. The District's core values are not the strategies we use to accomplish the success metrics identified in the strategic plan, rather our core values are the underpinning of the District's work.

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Middle School Students Explore Egyptian Tombs and Colonial America

Interdisciplinary study, a practice found frequently in higher education where teaching and learning is focused on connecting new knowledge with previous knowledge, has become more popular at the K-12 level. The faculty at Middle School East have taken this concept and expanded their Cross-Curricular Days program, giving students learning experiences that will last a lifetime.

In the first trimester, the faculty coordinated two schoolwide cross-curricular days, kicking off with ancient Egypt and following up with a day focused on colonial America. This is the first year the four major subjects have coordinated for a cross-curricular day; social studies and English language arts (ELA) have coordinated in previous years.

Ancient Egypt Cross-Curricular Day

Throughout the month of October, students worked on projects related to ancient Egyptian culture.

In Mr. Sean Burks' seventh grade social studies class, students used laptops to collaborate on a newspaper about ancient Egyptian history. Story topics included the pyramids, mythology, and how the pharaohs governed ancient society.

"The students' articles have to answer a few essential questions, but it's not just about the content they're learning," Mr. Burks explains. "They're learning how to collaborate while using technology, teamwork skills, how to set goals, and how to meet deadlines." The students used Google Slides software, which is especially effective because it allows all the students to work at the same time rather than having students crowd around a single computer.



Cydney Kiedaisch, seventh grade, enjoyed visiting the Egyptian tomb as part of the grade level cross-curricular day.

In ELA, students created artifacts based on research and stories they read together. Using online software, they learned how to write their own names in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, which adorned name tags hanging around their necks.

Science and math were also included in the festivities, where students studied the mummification process

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Colebrookdale Elementary School Earns High Progress Award

This fall, Colebrookdale Elementary School was recognized by the Division of Federal Programs as a Reward: High Progress school for the 2016-2017 school year.

Colebrookdale Elementary School is the only school in Berks county to be recognized as a Reward: High Progress school for the 2016-2017 school year. The school was specifically recognized for its' outcomes in closing the achievement gap between students.

To be eligible for Reward High Progress designation, a school must meet all four Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs), which include test participation, graduation rate, closing the achievement gap for all students and closing the achievement gap for historically underperforming students, along with consideration of a school's growth in the areas of math and English language arts based on Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS). This award denotes that Colebrookdale Elementary School's students are in the top 5% of growth of all Title I schools on the PSSA

Math and Reading assessments in the State of Pennsylvania.

"This recognition is a testament to dedication and commitment of Colebrookdale Elementary School's faculty, staff, and students," said Mr. Michael Stoudt, school principal. "This award is for everyone and I could not be prouder of their efforts."



Title I is a 100% federally funded supplemental educational program that provides financial assistance to local educational agencies to improve learning opportunities. Title I programs are designed to help children meet the state content and performance standards in reading, language arts, and mathematics.

To reward the faculty and staff's hard work, Mr. Stoudt and Mrs. Jennifer Joyce, lead teacher for Colebrookdale Elementary School, celebrated by wheeling around a cart decked out with a chocolate fountain and several treats for dipping, along with coffee and other beverages. Ms. Destiny Bigler, a first-year art teacher, was pleasantly surprised at this token of appreciation when leading her students into the hallway, "I'm so happy to be at this school, everyone is welcoming, and I feel recognized as a teacher."

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

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Alumni Spotlight: Brigadier General Brent J. Feick (Ret.)

U.S. Air Force Brigadier General Brent J. Feick (Ret.) has fond memories of growing up in the Boyertown Area School District. A member of the class of 1973 Brig Gen Feick was focused on wrestling, academics, and his girlfriend, Carol Snyder, who later became his wife.

“Our wrestling coach was Roy Cubbler,” Brig Gen Feick remembers. “He was an outstanding coach and mentor.” Our team stayed together from 9th grade through 12th which taught me the value of comradery.

Brig Gen Feick grew up in Gilbertsville where, until he got his first car, a Volkswagen, his transportation was a horse. He remembers the community’s great team spirit for local sports and remembers Boyertown Area Senior High’s library fondly.

“It was a good library,” he says. “It was also a place to study and listen to music. I remember putting on the big headphones and listening to 33s.”

After graduation, Brig Gen Feick went on to study Aviation Administration at Miami-Dade College. After two years he joined the United States Air Force.

“I’ve always been fascinated by flying machines, from the Wright Brothers to present-day fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft,” says Brig Gen Feick, who worked with aircraft services supporting Continental Airlines, then Braniff Airlines, and later United Airlines after graduating from high school.

His first active-duty assignment was at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma. Eighteen months later, he transferred into the Pennsylvania Air National Guard in Willow Grove, 50 miles from his hometown. As a drill-status Guardsman, Brig Gen Feick used the GI Bill to earn a bachelor’s degree in education at Pennsylvania State University.

In 1982, Brig Gen Feick moved his family (wife and two daughters) to Colorado for a full-time position in logistics at Buckley Air National Guard Base and was commissioned as a 2LT two years later. He was a resource manager and Assistant United States Property and Fiscal Officer (USP&FO). In 1986 he was selected to serve at Oregon’s 173 Fighter Wing as an Assistant USP&FO in Klamath Falls until 1995 when he accepted an active-duty position in Manpower at Andrews AFB, MD.

When the 9/11 attacks occurred, Brig Gen Feick was assigned in Crystal City, across from the Pentagon. He was conducting a logistics manpower study at a flying wing in Tennessee, and remembers jumping in his car and driving to the Pentagon. He arrived at 7 that evening—and the Pentagon was still on fire. After 9/11, he went from working full-time in logistics to serving as chief of plans for Homeland Security and Homeland Defense at Headquarters Air Force, the Pentagon, in Arlington, Virginia. He later served on the Joint Staff at



Alaska National Guard Maj. Gen. Laurie Hummel, the adjutant general, presents a certificate of appreciation from the chief master sergeant of the Air Force to Brig Gen Brent Feick, outgoing director of joint staff for the Alaska National Guard, during a retirement ceremony at the National Guard armory on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, April 1, 2017.

the National Guard Bureau, then went back to the Pentagon in 2010.

In 2012, Brig Gen Feick served on active duty supporting National Guard Bureau operations as lead for the Quadrennial Defense Review, where he defended resources and operational missions for the National Guard on behalf of its 470,000 airmen and soldiers. From this position, he served as the chief of staff for the West Virginia National Guard, assisting the adjutant general with training and resourcing.

With four decades of service, under his belt, Brig Gen Feick finished his career as Alaska’s director of joint staff. He led the joint staff with the vision and guidance needed to successfully establish plans and concepts for operations during emergency responses for extreme cold-weather events, Gale force Arctic winds, fall sea storms, wildland firefighting, floods, aircraft recovery, search and rescue, and major earthquake responses.

Brig Gen Feick is now working part-time as a defense contractor. As a grandfather to two active grandchildren, this part-time position gives him the opportunity to be in the stands during many softball, basketball, wrestling, and baseball games. He is also enjoying the time at home with Carol and traveling with her to see historic and beautiful sites in the U.S and abroad. He has also started running again; an activity that he wasn’t able to pursue as fully as he would have liked while he was working full-time.

On behalf of the Boyertown Area School District, we thank Retired Brig Gen Feick for his service to our country, and for making our community proud.

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Middle School Cross-Curricular Days

and carbon dating, respectively.

The grand finale was a visit to an Egyptian “tomb”: Middle School East’s planetarium, decorated with students’ projects. Students could see their classmates’ projects and make connections between what they learned in their different classes.

Colonial America Cross-Curricular Day

On November 20, students were treated to another cross-curricular day that focused on Colonial America. This was a contained day of activities ranging from colonial dancing to demonstrations of authentic muskets.

Mr. Ned Hector, an African-American soldier in the Revolutionary War, visited the school. Played by Mr. Noah Lewis, a Ned Hector reenactor, Mr. Hector gave students an overview of colonial life.

In art class, Mrs. Shannon Diaz and Mr. Steve Fegley led the students in creating frakturs, which were highly decorated documents such as birth and wedding certificates. “These frakturs are a part of local German heritage, making them a good connection to the curriculum,” said Mrs. Diaz.

Students were also encouraged to dress in colonial fashion. Eighth grade student Ellen Dunne was dressed in costume and enjoyed the day. “I love everything about revolutionary history, and these kinds of activities help me better understand,” she said.

Students also explored history in an interactive “lockout” game, inspired by escape rooms, where they used historical clues to solve puzzles and figure out the combination for a locker filled with treasure. This activity was headed by instructional coach Mrs. Maureen Howard, who explained how the game worked on their soft skills, like teamwork and perseverance.

In math class, under the guidance of Mrs. Caitlin Moll and Mr. Scott Hoffman, students worked on spy coding, which incorporated logic skills that they had studied in class.

Other activities of the day included colonial dancing, with eighth grade social studies teacher Mrs. Michele Magners, and a demonstration of colonial-era muskets, with Mrs. Erin Anello.

Program Links Freshman with Student Mentors

By Shannon Ludwig, BASH sophomore

Coming to a school more than twice the size of middle school, mixing with upperclassmen, and having to find a balance between challenging school work and extracurricular activities can be intimidating.

That's why the school created Link Crew, a nationwide year-long program to help freshman transition to the high school and achieve academic and social success, said Special Education teacher and Link Crew Coordinator Ms. Lisa Cymerman.

"The goal of link crew is to have upperclassman who have demonstrated leadership skills basically mentor the freshmen," she said, "kind of like the Big Brother Big Sister program a lot of cities do."

Last spring, about 100 11th and 12th graders mentors were chosen to be Link Crew leaders and went through multiple days of training in the spring and summer.

Then, a few days before school started, freshman attended an all-day orientation where they were put into groups of 8-10 with two Link Crew mentors and did icebreaker activities. That evening, Link Crew also hosted a social for them.

Link Crew leaders greet freshmen as they enter Boyertown Area Senior High.

Once school started, Link Crew leaders again met with their freshmen groups during a few morning assembly periods for more activities.

Freshman Hailey Stutzman said that her group talks and sets goals, and does fun team-building activities. They also play games.

"One time we played a game where you were with a partner and you could only use your non-dominant hand to make a paper airplane. The airplane had to make it far enough to land in a bin. It was fun," ninth grader Spencer Reynolds said.

Another activity the group did was a themed trivia battle about unfairness. One team got easy questions and the other got hard. The winning team got Skittles.

"I learned that life in school can sometimes be unfair," freshman Marlaina Garczynski said.

Link Crew also is starting to plan freshmen-only events to boost the morale of the freshmen class.

Many freshmen are having fun with the program, but they are also learning important information.

"It has helped me know what to do and know my way around the school," freshman Noelle Allonce said. "I also know that if I have any trouble I have someone to go to."

That is the purpose of the program, Link Crew Leader Senior Tess Lignelli said.

"It helps them be more comfortable."

Freshmen say that the Link Crew leaders have been helpful.

Ninth grader Connor McNeill said his leader, Doug, "is amazing. He is a legend."

Link Crew Leader senior Mikayla DeStefano said adjusting to a new school has taken some time for the students she has worked with.

"When I first met them they were very standoffish, but a few of them were very attached to me and always wanted my advice," she said. "I want them to know that I want to help them adjust and just be their mentor through the year."

District Leadership Gives Back on MLK Day

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." This quote, from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s book *Strength to Love*, demonstrates the spirit of Boyertown Area School District on the day celebrating his legacy. From January 8 through 12, all district schools, along with the Education Center, collected gently used children's books and clothing, nonperishable food items, toiletries, and baby items.

On January 15, the Leadership Team, composed of principals, assistant principals, and administrative staff, undertook the task of intaking and organizing the donations. Staff scurried in and out of the building in chilly temperatures, bringing in more and more donations. When all the items were finally inside, it was time to organize. The leadership team began dividing the donations in categories and subcategories, hoping that their teamwork will get it done in three and a half hours. With a seemingly never-ending supply of jackets, canned green beans, and diapers, the lobby of Middle School East became a symbol of Boyertown

Area School District's generosity.

This is the first year the District has undertaken a day of service. "This is a mandatory work day for us, so we figured we would use it to serve," said assistant superintendent of academics Dr. Melissa Woodward.

Most items will be donated to the Boyertown Salvation Army and the Boyertown Area Multi-Service. A selection of books and adult clothing will be donated to the Berks County State Prison and used in a program that connects incarcerated individuals with their children. The incarcerated person is recorded reading the book



and the recording and book are given to their child. The clothing will be given to those being released and re-entering society, to wear to job interviews.

School Performance Profile Helps Guide Curriculum Decisions

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has released its 2016-17 Pennsylvania School Performance Profile, a measure designed to track the academic progress of all public schools. It is a web-based resource for school districts and individual schools to communicate performance results to various stakeholders.

The School Performance Profile is designed to:

- Inform the public of the performance of each public school, comprehensive career and technical center, cyber charter, and charter school in Pennsylvania.
- Provide a building-level academic support for teachers, as part of the teacher supervision process known as the Educator Effectiveness System.
- Offer a resource for school districts to communicate and compare performance, performance indicators as related to achievement, and best practices.
- Report federal accountability status for Title I schools.
- Provide parents and taxpayers with performance measures for their school and district of residence, neighboring schools and districts, and other schools and districts across the state.

Boyertown Area Senior High is again ranked third in Berks County; Middle School West is ranked fourth in the county; and, once again, three of the District's elementary schools are in the top five in the county, with Gilbertsville Elementary School having the highest score in Berks County.

"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," says Dr. Melissa L. Woodard, Assistant Superintendent for Academics.

This year, the District is excited about the growth in Colebrookdale Elementary School's score, from 60.9 to 74.8. Dr. Woodard explains that, based on the previous year's score, supports for teachers, specifically in fourth grade English language arts, were put in place.

"While the School Performance Profile score is based on the results of one test, the PSSA, the results help administrations identify areas of weakness," Dr. Woodard comments. "We use the data responsibly. For example, at Colebrookdale we worked with instructional aides and teachers to put job-embedded professional learning in place to support fourth and fifth grade teachers as

they worked with their students on analyzing blocks of text and supporting their opinions with research. Everyone's dedication was evident in this year's School Performance Profile score."

It should be noted that this is the last year that the Commonwealth will be releasing School Performance Profile scores. After that, the progress index for schools and school districts will be based on the proposed Future Ready PA Index, which will serve as Pennsylvania's one-stop location for comprehensive information about school success. It will use a dashboard model to highlight how schools are performing and making progress on multiple indicators. Its release is scheduled for late fall 2018 for the 2017-18 academic year.

The Boyertown Area School District has a strong commitment to continuous improvement and sees releasing this information as an additional opportunity to reflect on the performance of each of our schools. Please be assured that, regardless of the format, we will integrate this information into our existing data-analysis process to ensure that we continue to improve for the benefit of all students.

BASH Students Compete in Cybersecurity Competition

As our lives become more digital, protecting our computer files from theft is as important as protecting our houses and cars from theft. This makes cybersecurity an in-demand and lucrative field for young people to enter, and Boyertown Area Senior High students are working to hone their skills. On Friday, December 8, 17 of Boyertown Area Senior High's Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) students competed in the National Youth Cyber Defense Competition. This competition places teams of high school students in the position of newly hired IT professionals tasked with managing the network of a small company. In the rounds of competition, teams are given a set of virtual images that represent operating systems and are tasked with finding cybersecurity vulnerabilities within the images and hardening the system while maintaining critical services. CyberPatriot: The National Youth Cyber Education Program, the organization sponsoring the competition, was created by the Air Force Association to inspire K-12 students toward careers in cybersecurity or other science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines.

For this competition, Boyertown Area Senior High's NJROTC unit had three teams comprised of four to five students each. The students performed in a six-hour nonstop competition. They were given three operating systems—Windows 10, Windows Office, and Linux—and tasked with performing defensive security measures. Steps to fixing each scenario included changing user passwords, deleting users, and making sure the operating systems were up to date. Every problem solved earns the team points, with the goal to earn the most points at the end.

The students were located in separate rooms, far enough that they couldn't see the other teams' screens but close enough that they could hear the sound that indicated points earned, fueling the competition. The students had several motivations for taking part in the competition, ranging from career goals to simply wanting to learn more about computers.

Alexis Moll, tenth grade student and Cadet Petty Officer First Class, aspires to work in cybersecurity. "I already had an interest in computers. I wanted to improve my skills, which will give me an edge when I'm looking for a job."



Students in Boyertown Area Senior High's NJROTC program competed in the National Youth Cyber Defense Competition.

Noah Moyer, twelfth grade student and Cadet Chief Petty Officer First Class, wants to "serve the community by learning how to defend computers."

Anna Schlecht, eleventh grade student and Cadet Petty Officer First Class, was really proud of what her classmates had accomplished so far. "This work is really important for the future, and I also find it really fun."

This isn't the NJROTC's first competition. The students competed

in October with one of the teams placing in the top 10 percent across the Commonwealth. For this competition, the students competed against 1,041 teams nationwide.

After a day of solving complex cybersecurity problems, their hard work paid off—all three teams qualified to compete at the state level. One team will be competing at the platinum level, with the two other teams competing at the silver level.

From the Foundation for Boyertown Education Digital Microscope Makes Debut at Middle School West

Because technology is constantly and rapidly changing, understanding how to use the most current technology becomes critical to students' education. Now students at Middle School West will have the opportunity to excel later in life with the addition of a digital microscope to the tools they will use in science classes. The microscope was purchased through a grant from the Foundation for Boyertown Education, and is the only digital microscope in the District.

Ms. Danielle Weyershaeuser, seventh grade science teacher at Middle School West, introduced her classroom to the school's new microscope. While it performs the same functions as a traditional microscope, it has a few key added benefits, such as the ability to project the image of what is being examined onto a screen. Also, it can be linked

to other digital devices like tablets, so students can view the images right at their desks.

After Ms. Weyershaeuser's introduction and review of the parts of the microscope, the students used the new technology to examine live cultures from yogurt using their tablets.

The microscope's connectivity means the technology reaches beyond students who are in the classroom: "This allows us to record and take pictures of what we're examining, and these resources can be given to students who weren't in class that day," said Ms. Weyershaeuser. In addition, besides providing students the most current microscope technology and ensuring they are seeing accurate images, the new microscope can aid visually impaired students who are studying cellular science.



Students in Ms. Danielle Weyershaeuser's seventh grade science class are able to view what is being seen through the new digital microscope on their tablets.

This updated equipment allows students to use the same technology that scientists are using in the field today. "We try to stress the 21st

century learning skills to students," said Ms. Weyershaeuser. "We want our students to be able to be successful once they leave us."

Elementary Students & Senior Citizens Read Together

At every age, reading books is one of the greatest ways to connect with yourself and with those around you. We remember fondly the books and stories from our childhood, as well as those who read those stories aloud to us—parents, grandparents, teachers, and friends. Memories like these are being forged with students at New Hanover Upper Frederick Elementary School through a partnership with volunteers from Frederick Living.

Beginning in 2016, Principal Mr. Brian Rohn wanted to create a volunteer program with seniors who are residents at Frederick Living. It began with a single volunteer, Fran, who began working with both kindergarten and first grade students. A former teacher herself, Fran loved

working with the students at New Hanover Upper Frederick Elementary School.

Four of Fran's 10 grandchildren attended and graduated from the Boyertown School District, and her daughter, Mrs. Connie Russell, is a teacher at Washington Elementary School. "I want to give back what I received," said Fran. "If I can make any kind of impact, I want to."

During this school year, Fran and six other volunteers from Frederick Living will continue to make an impact on the students. They visit the elementary school four days a week, and Fran is always looking for more seniors to volunteer.

The students love when the volunteers come in.

"I like reading Star Wars books! It makes reading fun," said second grade student Makayla Piazza.

This partnership not only benefits the students, but also the volunteers. Seeing a smile light up students' faces when they recognize words they didn't recognize previously means the world to Fran and the other seniors who volunteer. As Fran puts it, "a smile means so much to a senior citizen."



Volunteer Mr. Kent Slavin reads with Kaileigh Collins as part of a partnership between New Hanover Upper Frederick Elementary School and Frederick Living.

B.E.S.T. Students Improve Their School and Themselves

Boyertown Area Senior High not only has the best students—it has the B.E.S.T. students. The Boyertown Employability Skills Training, or B.E.S.T., program began in the fall of 2017 under the guidance of Special Education Transition Coordinator Mrs. Stacey Thierry.

“The program is designed to provide employment skills to our higher functioning life-skill students,” said Mrs. Thierry. The program focuses on several different skills within the school, including maintenance, library skills, shipping and receiving, large mailings, and landscaping. Between the senior high school and the two middle schools, Mrs. Thierry oversees 600 students.

Along with skills training, the transition program assists the students with preparing for life after high school, including transitional housing, side-by-side with academic classes.

The B.E.S.T. program began when Mrs. Thierry saw the high school courtyard after renovations were complete. The courtyard was closed off during the construction process and she knew the life-skills students could help restore the area to its original glory. In October, she solicited donations to clean up and improve the space, and eventually applied for a grant for supplies through the Boyertown Education Foundation. “I felt like our life-skills students had more to offer and could help improve the courtyard and make it a space for everyone,” said Mrs. Thierry.

The B.E.S.T. students, 12 total in the program, have big plans for the courtyard, including raised flowerbeds for both flowers and crops that can be used in family consumer-science classes. The students enjoy the work of improving the school. Eleventh grade student Emma Schott said she is “excited to see her classmates’ reactions when [the project] is done.” She also enjoyed painting the benches, whereas senior Conor Weisbecker was partial to one of their first tasks, raking the leaves out of the courtyard.

Assistant transition coordinator Mrs. Donna Long is thrilled with program, saying they’re the best students in the school. She said, “They’re capable, more than capable, and if you show them how to do it, they can do it.”

Working Off-Site

A unique program site is the Fun E. Farm in Gilbertsville, PA. The 62-acre farm serves as a boarding stable and rescue for horses and other animals, along with providing riding lessons and producing crops.

Students can spend part or their whole day performing tasks around the property. “We do everything—feeding horses and small animals, watering plants, putting up fences—we help out everywhere,” says twelfth grade student Alex Presti, who has been a part of the program since September.

“Being on the farm was difficult for me at first, but I’ve learned a lot, and now prefer it to the classroom,” Alex said, “I learned that horses will test you, and you have to show them you’re in



(from left) Cheyanne Shaffer, Connor Weisbecker, Emma Schott, Eric Bishop, and Rebekah Reyes are part of the team working to transform the Boyertown Area Senior High courtyard.

charge.” After high school, he hopes to work in the FBI’s behavior analysis unit.

The farm began hosting students in 2013 and Boyertown Area Senior High students began attending in 2015. Along with the daily tasks involved in maintaining a farm, the students are expected to make their own lunch, do their dishes, and maintain a journal.

“The students perform not only physical labor, but social and emotional labor as well,” says owner Renie Swartley. “They’re learning how to be independent, how to problem solve, and improve social and communication skills.” All of these skills come together when students work with the horses, as Ms. Swatley describes

it. “A horse doesn’t care about what disability you have.”

Students grow rapidly at the farm in ways that they don’t experience in other programs. Christine Salmons, a senior, also began the program in September and has made more progress in two months at the farm than in the several years she spent in other programs.

“This is really a program for all students, whether they struggle with anxiety, behavioral problems, or chronic absenteeism,” said Mrs. Thierry. “They care about the animals, and they can’t go to the farm if they don’t attend school, so it’s a good motivator for them.”

Middle School Student Pays Kindness Forward

Consistently practicing gratitude is a skill that must be learned, an emotional muscle that must be exercised to remain strong. People often forget to practice it, especially as children and young people, but seventh grade student Grace Major of Middle School West has demonstrated a deep understanding of gratitude and its steady practice.

Grace was a member of the 2016–2017 sixth grade class at Earl Elementary. She was awarded a \$100 scholarship from the Earl Elementary Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) during an award ceremony. The award recognized a combination of academic and behavioral achievement and was given to one male sixth grade student and one female sixth grade student. Grace held onto that money, thinking of how to spend it, and decided to give back to her elementary school. “Earl is an amazing school that gave me more than I could imagine,” Grace says.

Grace used her money to purchase 20 small stuffed animals to be kept in the main office so they can be offered to students who need emotional support. In a card, she instructed school staff to let any student who is upset to choose a stuffed animal that



could comfort them. “I want students who may be upset to know someone cares about them,” said Grace.

Grace, in the spirit of the holiday, presented this to Earl Elementary Acting Principal Gwendolyn Malecki right before Thanksgiving. Mrs. Malecki was overjoyed with the gift.

“This demonstrates how this community is a giving community,” said Mrs. Malecki.

In the future, Grace wants to continue to do things that inspire people.

Kindergarten Registration Now Open

The Boyertown Area School District is now accepting kindergarten registration for the 2018-2019 school year. A child is eligible for kindergarten if the child meets the age requirement of 5 years of age on or prior to September 1, 2018.

Please note that although students entering kindergarten are required to have a physical and dental examination, these exams must be completed after September 1, 2017 and no later than September 15, 2018.

Students can be registered online at www.boyertownasd.org; click on Parents/Community and then 2018-2019 School Year Kindergarten Student Registration. Please call Student Services at 610-367-6031, prompt 7 with questions.

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Message from Acting Superintendent

As part of this year’s budgeting process, the administration and the board of school directors have held budget workshops to help the community and board members understand the budgeting process and where the District stands as the budget is developed. In a world of sound-bites and alternative facts, it can be hard to distinguish fact from rumor.

I believe that social media is a valuable tool. However, when I see statistics from the Pew Research Center that 62% of adults obtain their news from social media, I am saddened. Combine that statistic with the ease in which social media can be manipulated to influence public opinion and I am disheartened. Like others, I believe that there are messages being put forth to confuse and create questions about our excellent school system.

The current administration, along with the Board of School Directors, have some hard decisions to make. I urge you, as members of our community, to focus on the positive that is the Boyertown Area School District. I ask that you question comments you read on social media. I encourage you to reach out to me, a member of my administration, or to a school board member. We want nothing more than to do right for the children of the Boyertown Area School District.

Watchdog Dads at Colebrookdale Elementary

If you've ever wondered what a day in the life of your student is like, you may get that opportunity with the WATCH D.O.G.S. program.

WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads Of Great Students) is a nationwide initiative out of the National Center for Fathering that strives to provide positive male role models for students. Participants model that education is important and provide an extra set of eyes and ears to enhance school security and reduce bullying.

Mrs. Lisa Johnson, counselor and reading intervention specialist at Colebrookdale, took inspiration from Wilson School District and implemented the program last year. The first event was a casual pizza party where students could bring their dads or other adult figures, like grandfathers, uncles, older brothers, and stepdads.

Volunteers of the program sign up for one day of the school year to come in and help around the school, ranging from bus duty in the morning,

classroom support, doing one-on-one work with students, and, of course, hanging out with the students during lunch and recess. Volunteers also have the opportunity to spend time in the classroom with their own child to experience their school life.

On October 20, Bob Keane was the lucky dad who got to spend the day in school with his son, Zachary Keane. Bob said he was excited, interested in seeing what his son does in school all day, and that his son really wanted him to do it. Zach was looking forward to having his dad in art class, which was both of their favorite subjects. The two of them like to do woodworking on the weekends.

After a year of the program, Mrs. Johnson said the outcomes are fantastic. "Kids love it and dads get to be in the classroom. Many dads say they never knew what their kids did all day and were surprised by the amount of work. Most importantly, it sets an example for the kids that their fathers/father-figures believe education is important."



Mr. Bob Keane is one of the many men who volunteers for Colebrookdale Elementary School's WATCH D.O.G.S. program. His son, Zachary, was excited to have him in school for the day.

Third Grade Students Explore Culture with Pen Pals

In a world of text and instant messages and video calling, letter writing has become something of a lost art, yet the feeling of receiving mail remains joyous. Third grade students at Gilbertsville Elementary School practiced the craft of letter writing and gave the gift of a personal letter to new friends from France.

In the fall of 2017, Mrs. Jeannie Frecon's third grade class welcomed a new friend, Oscar, who was visiting with his father, Xavier, from France. The father of one of Mrs. Frecon's students works with Xavier, and his son was curious about what a classroom in the United States was like, so he coordinated a visit with Mrs. Frecon and Gilbertsville Principal Mrs. Stephanie Landis when Oscar and his family made a trip to the US in the fall.

The day of the visit, Oscar joined Mrs. Frecon's class for their morning meeting and part of their math

class. Although Oscar's native language is French, he studies English as a second language in school, as all French students do, so he could communicate with Mrs. Frecon's students.

"It was great having Oscar and Xavier visit our classroom," said Mrs. Frecon. Oscar described some of the differences between French and US classrooms; in France, for example, there would be multiple grades in a single room, spanning from third to fifth grade.

Oscar also didn't come empty-handed—he brought "identity cards" from all the students in his classroom that included each student's name, age, photo, and facts such as their hobbies, interests, and siblings or pets. All the cards were handwritten in English so Mrs. Frecon's students could read them.

Of course, the Gilbertsville elementary students responded. They learned about French winter

holiday customs along with a few French words. Students wrote to their counterparts, also using an identity card, and discussed what they had learned, along with their own winter holiday traditions and what the identity cards revealed that they had in common.

In line with the holiday season, the students signed their cards with Joyeux Noël, "Merry Christmas" in French. The cards were sent out the second week of December, and the French students received them right before the holidays. Xavier relayed to Mrs. Frecon's students that their French counterparts were very excited to receive the cards.

"It's great to take a moment and do things that make the kids feel special," said Mrs. Frecon. Mrs. Landis also recognized the gift of being able to connect with students from another country, saying, "It's very personal to share a writing experience with someone."

Youth Governor Speaks Before Local School Leadership

While national and state politics can be tiresome, it is always refreshing to find young people who are excited about using the legislative process to bring about change. One of those young people is Boyertown Area Senior High's Colin Black (pictured at right), the 2018 Youth Governor of Pennsylvania.

Colin was elected to this position through the Youth and Government (YAG) Model Convention, held in Harrisburg in April 2017. The YAG program allows students to emulate the political processes of the U.S. government and provides them with a platform to discuss and debate issues that directly affect their communities. Participating in the program expands students' public-speaking skills and provides them with a safe place to talk through their beliefs and opinions on pressing issues.

In January, Colin was a featured speaker at the 19th annual Board Presidents' and Superintendents'

Workshop held by the Berks County Intermediate Unit. Colin spoke about his experience as the Youth Governor, focusing on his weekend at the YAG Model Convention. He praised the energy of his fellow student delegates and assured everyone in attendance that their futures are in good hands.

He also described how much the YAG program has influenced him and his future. Colin will be attending Dickinson College in the fall to study law, and said this would not be possible if he had not been a part of YAG.

"He is a very articulate speaker and his enthusiasm for this program was wonderful to see," says Boyertown Area School District's assistant superintendent, Mrs. Marybeth Torchia. "It was impressive to see him speak in front of all of the area superintendents and not waver once."

This annual workshop provides an opportunity for networking and leadership development for



superintendents and board presidents from the 18 Berks County school districts. This year's meeting focused on legislative priorities, policy updates, and advocacy efforts.

An Update on Memorial Stadium Grandstand

Memorial Stadium is a centerpiece for community events, and home to the Boyertown Area School District's music program and sports teams. In addition, the field hockey team plays night games in the stadium. Memorial Stadium also hosts such events as the Pioneer Athletic Conference Track and Field Championship Meet, the Cavalcade of Bands, the Venzke Relays, and various PIAA playoff events.

The grandstand was part of the Boyertown Area Sports Complex organized, financed, and constructed by the community in 1985 and 1986. The project included four tennis courts, six athletic fields, practice fields, and a track and football field complete with lights, visitor bleachers, and the home-side grandstand, which seats approximately 2,500 people.

When the project began, the wooden home-side bleachers were rotting. The current grandstand structure consists of load-bearing masonry walls and steel beams supporting precast concrete bleachers. The entire building façade consists of brick veneer.

Mr. Jack Lignelli of Boyertown served as chairman of the Boyertown Area Sports Complex Committee. He remembers how committed the community was to the project. Local companies—including Roth & Ellis, architerra pc, Universal Concrete, Drum Construction, and the Longacre Company—donated materials, labor, and services.

Mr. Lignelli adds that he couldn't possibly list everyone who donated their time, materials, or money to the project. "The town really came together for this project," he says. "Thousands of people were involved, whether they donated their time, resources, or both. Even the superintendent at the time would come by to help, as would students."

In 2017, during a normal inspection of the Memorial Stadium grandstand, Mr. William Gasper, the District's facilities engineer, noticed three areas of concern. One section of the wall adjacent to the football field had collapsed and was rebuilt, and the condition of the brick needs to be addressed. Water was leaking into the building through the bleachers, causing extensive damage to the interior finishes. In addition, there are concerns with the structural integrity of the masonry piers supporting the steel

beams along the walkway, where spalled and displaced bricks were observed.

In December, Barry Isett & Associates, Inc., was hired by the District to assess the general structural condition of the grandstand. They determined that the structure has experienced structurally significant deterioration and movement and is no longer able to safely support the required load. No one can use the grandstand until appropriate shoring is installed or the deficiencies are repaired.

Isett recommends reinforcing, and, in some cases, rebuilding certain building elements to adequately support the grandstand loading. Further investigation by a structural engineer will be required.

"The District administration and the Board of School Directors appreciates the history of the Boyertown Area Sports Complex and the grandstand," says acting superintendent Mr. David Krem. "Together, with the community, we will explore our options to ensure the safety of our students and supporters as well as the integrity of the structure."

High School Marching Band and Select Choir Achieve in Competitions in 2017

For many students, being a member of their high school's marching band is a memorable part of their high school career. And for the members of the Boyertown Area Senior High Marching Unit, this year was full of amazing memories.

On Saturday, October 28, the marching unit placed first in its group at the state championship, qualifying them for the national competition, which took place on Saturday, November 4. The competition, sponsored by USBands, was held at J. Birney Crum Stadium in Allentown, PA, where the band placed fifth among nine schools with a final score of 92.2.

This was a relished victory after a long and competitively successful season, in which the band's members placed first at every single show they attended and received recognition for all aspects of their show, including performance, visuals, and color guard.

"They're a great group of students—they're resilient, and work extremely hard," said Mr. Brian Langdon, director of bands at the high school. Indeed, the student musicians undertake an intense rehearsal and performance schedule that begins in the summer with band camp and continues into the school year with weekly practices, weekend competitions, and, of course, Friday night football games.

Mr. Langdon has been teaching band at Boyertown for five years, and he enjoys "seeing the students rise and attain levels of excellence they didn't realize they had."

This year the musicians also welcomed 48 new members, making the marching unit the biggest it has ever been. Even with so many new faces, the group remained a close-knit community.

"We do everything together, and we do it for each other," said twelfth grade student and head drum major Chad McKenrick. This is his third year in the high school marching unit, and his role as the drum major means he oversees and conducts the band. "I was always the kid learning from everyone else, so it was different to have people learning from me." Along with marching with the band, Chad plays trumpet and French horn, performs in concert band, sings tenor in choir, and participates in the school musical.

Andrew Puleo, twelfth grade student and brass captain, also embraced the marching unit's growth. "Having new members gave me the opportunity to become a better leader," said Andrew, "I would look out for new brass players and help them work on the basics." Andrew has been involved with the marching unit since his freshman year, and he also participates in jazz band and choir.

Both students had much praise for their instructor, Mr. Langdon. Andrew described him as being "very inspirational" and said, "He gives us individual feedback that changes attitudes and helps the ensemble grow."

"He pushes us to our limits but always tells us that he's proud and that he loves us," said Chad. "He's the greatest mentor I ever had."

The year was truly a year of great musical achievement for Boyertown Area High School. Significant events also included the high school's select choir performance at the fall conference of



the American Choral Director Association of Pennsylvania.

Boyertown Area High School's Select Choir was the only high school choir chosen to perform at the conference, held at Susquehanna University on November 10 and 11, 2017. The choir performed alongside a middle school choir, a college choir, and a chapel choir.

Once the group was accepted to the conference, the singers diligently prepared their concert repertoire for a month and a half before the performance, and their hard work paid off when they received a standing ovation.

"When a group of choral directors give a standing ovation, it's because it's well deserved," said Mr. Jeffrey Brunner, choral director at Boyertown Area High School. "It was a huge goal to be accepted at this conference, and the students were so proud of their performance."

Boyertown Area Progress Dinner Celebrates Community

Boyertown was in the spotlight at the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce annual Boyertown Area Progress Dinner. This annual event highlights growth and progress taking place in the Boyertown Area School District.

A highlight of the evening has always been the debut of a student-produced video highlighting growth in the community. For more than 20 years, the Boyertown Area High School telecommunications department has been producing progress update videos for the Tricounty Chamber of Commerce Boyertown Area Progress Dinner. This year's video, a spoof on Forrest Gump, was produced by Boyertown Class of 2018 students Robert Cuthill, Joe Corcoran, Kaleigh Gallagher, Sam Lewis, and Andrew Kulhawy. Overseeing the production was Mr. Bill

Cherkasky, telecommunications teacher.

This year's video highlights the four key transformational strategies of Boyertown's Town Vision:

- Development of the Railroad yard as the town center
- Development of the Secret Valley Bike Trail
- Market demand for dining in a 3 mile radius of the Main Street
- Development of the Boyertown Trolley Project

Greg Herb, Broker and President of Herb Real Estate, Inc. and President of the Foundation for Boyertown Education, thanked the students for their hard work. "All of us should leave tonight being proud of our community ... thank you to the Boyertown Area Senior High students for telling our story."



BASH Seniors (at left) Sam Lewis and Robert Cuthill were part of this year's production team.

The Everyday Heroes of Boyertown Area School District

Pennsylvania public schools educate nearly two million students and approximately 7,000 of those students are in Boyertown Area School District. Each one of those students has an individual story and a different path they are taking into adulthood. The roads to success are as varied as the students, but they are not traveling this path alone. Parents, teachers, administrators, school bus drivers, and cafeteria aids all play a vital role in the success of students.

In January, we pause to salute another group of individuals who spend countless hours each month voluntarily leading our schools and making difficult decisions – our school board directors. School board directors play a special part in the system because they set the foundation for a strong education system in our community.

These elected officials spend countless hours reviewing budgets, approving curriculum and textbook choices, reviewing hiring decisions, adopting policy, and evaluating the academic and operational results of the district. These dedicated volunteers are our neighbors, friends, and community leaders who work hard for the benefit of our children.

"Boyertown is fortunate to have a community that is passionate about education. Our board members represent a diverse set of viewpoints, reflecting the diverse views of those who elect us," says Donna Usavage, School Board President. "This year the board has big decisions to make, including the selection of a superintendent. This month we adopted a set of operating guidelines to help us stay focused on what is important. Moving forward we use our diversity as a strength rather than a source of division."

As we continue to celebrate the success stories in our schools, let's not forget our elected school board directors who play a significant role in creating the environment where those successes can happen. During this month of recognition, we ask you to show your appreciation for their service. Please show your gratitude in some way for their time, effort, and dedication to the advancement of public education. Thank them for advocating on behalf of our collective interests and making the difficult



BASH School Board Directors (standing, from left) Steve Elsier, David P. Lewis, Clay D. Breece, Robert J. Caso, Brandon J. Foose, (sitting, from left) Christine M. Neiman, Donna Usavage, Ruth A. Dierolf, and Jill A. Dennin.

decisions. Most importantly, thank them for being everyday heroes and making our students' success their priority.

High School Students Present Energetic Musical

For many students, the spring musical is a keystone experience of their high school years. They forge friendships and develop grit, from the nerve-racking audition process to long nights spent in rehearsal, all leading up to putting on a show for their friends and family and their greater community. Boyertown Area Senior High students are going through that right now as they perfect their lines and memorize their choreography for Snoopy! the Musical. This fun, high-energy musical is a sequel to You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown, with a focus on the life of Snoopy, Charlie Brown's mischievous beagle.

Having a musical is unusual for this year, because the music department is touring Spain during the spring, occupying the time the show is usually performed. However, the students and music department banded together and decided the show must go on. They wasted no time after releasing the cast list on Sunday, November 12, to the first rehearsal on Monday, November 13.

From then until their last rehearsal on February 15, students put in three to four hours of practice every night, along with Saturday rehearsals. "It's a very hectic schedule but it's all worth it," says

twelfth grade student Megan Droege, who is played the role of Peppermint Patty. She also performed in last year's musical The Sound of Music, as did many of the Snoopy cast members.

The intense schedule doesn't faze these students. Mary Fetterman, a twelfth grade student who played the role of Lucy, says it was an intensive rehearsal process, but it's one of the best casts she's ever worked with. "Everyone worked hard and wanted an amazing show, I think everyone was impressed."

The small cast of 25 students grew close, as twelfth grade student David Helmer, who played the title role of Snoopy, describes: "These are my friends that I've grown up with in the music department."

The students also enjoyed working with their director, Mr. Scott Didyoung, an English teacher at the high school. "His visions are great," says eleventh grade student Taylor Kuszyk, who played the role of Sally. "He makes magic."

According to Mr. Didyoung, it's all about the



The cast of Snoopy! put in long hours of rehearsals to prepare for opening night.

students. "They're amazing, stupendous, they're the light of my morning."

When asked to describe the show, cast members said it was entertaining, grand, carefree, and very family-friendly.

Practicing Math Prompts Giggles and Laughter

Imagine a room full of third, fourth, and fifth grade students not only practicing their math skills, but in fact, enjoying them. That is the scene visitors will witness in the Washington Elementary School library during Math Jamboree, a new after-school initiative to assist students with their math skills.

Math Jamboree is a program run by Mrs. Sandy Takacs, math intervention teacher for third, fourth, and fifth grade. "We've had after-school math intervention for five years, but it was limited to fourth grade math skills," said Mrs. Takacs. Now students can work on homework and improve on skills they're currently working on in class, while also brushing up on skills they already learned.

The program works like this: Students are divided into their grade levels and work in 20-minute segments, switching off between homework or skills practice and fun math-related games. Students play games like Yahtzee or use computer programs like Zearn or Prodigy.

There are many goals with Math Jamboree, with its academic goal being that students gain proficiency

at their current skill level so that they can move on to the next skill level. However, Mrs. Takacs also aims to make math fun instead of a chore. "I want them to leave feeling good about themselves and go into the school day with confidence," said Mrs. Takacs.

Although this is the first year of the program, Mrs. Takacs already hears from parents and teachers about students' improvements, and says that even after just three meetings she has seen improvements in homework completion.

The students also enjoy participating in this program. Fourth grade student Khaligah Carimos likes doing homework at school so there's more time to play outside at home.

Other students enjoy getting more time to do their work. Fifth grade student Sherman Ellis says that he



Khaliyah Grimes (left) and Jalissa Walton (right) get a case of the giggles while playing a math game.

likes having extra time to think about what he is learning.

High School Students Embrace Differences and Encourage Respect

Although it seems like stories of division are everywhere, the students at Boyertown Area Senior High choose to stand up for justice, embrace difference, and encourage respect among all their classmates. Through the school's participation in the No Place for Hate program, students give back to their community in many ways, including a peer-education program, community events, and engaging with students from other communities at a conference.

No Place for Hate and Youth Leadership Conference

No Place for Hate is a program created and sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), an organization founded to stop the defamation of Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all. The No Place for Hate program aims to help all of a school's stakeholders take the lead on improving and maintaining school climate, so all students can thrive.

Seven teacher-recommended students attended the Youth Leadership Conference, organized by the ADL's Philadelphia chapter. This group met with students from other schools in the area, where they asked hard questions and had respectful conversations about diversity and inclusiveness.

One of the topics was the impact of racial stereotypes. The students were paired together and asked questions with a minute to respond. One of the questions was if they were aware of the stereotypes about their own race. Brendan Hanmum, an eleventh-grade student in attendance, was paired with a young woman who was Puerto Rican, who shared how her life had been impacted by stereotypes of her race. "It really opened my eyes on how people of different races experience

prejudice and how far we need to go," he said.

For eleventh grade student Tessa Felicione, the story of keynote speaker Akbar Hossain left an impression. "It was really amazing to hear his story of how he overcame his father's death, poverty, and the harsh prejudice of being a Muslim immigrant after 9/11 and becoming a University of Pennsylvania law student."

"I've never had someone come away and not be touched by this experience, it's such an honor to be a part of it. These are students who want to make a difference," says Mr. Phil Specht, a twelfth grade Inclusive Collaboration Model teacher at Boyertown Area High School. He is one of the leaders of the No Place for Hate committee and students have been attending this conference under his guidance for 11 years.

Peer Education

Through this initiative, a peer education program was formed. The program uses the ADL's A World of Difference Institute training program, and this year 30 students completed the course. During the training, students learn about bullying prevention, the definition of bullying, and strategies on how to be an ally to those targeted by bullying. The students also had discussions about stereotypes.

Using what they learned in the training, the students went to ninth grade classrooms to talk with their peers about embracing difference and encouraging respect. The students broke into groups and worked with the younger students on activities surrounding bullying and how to prevent it, and ended with a discussion about the presentation and activities.

"I remember my classmates not being engaged when the peer educators came into our classroom," said

eleventh grade student Emily Mitchell. Emily is a current member of the peer education program and used the memory of her experience to engage with her younger peers. "The students I had were very participatory, and we were able to play games and do engaging activities, which I think had an impact." Although the program is only for one class period, Emily says that it's the beginning of a relationship with these students and that she continues to talk with them.

Community Involvement

"This is really about impacting the whole community," says Mr. Specht, who began his work in the district at Middle School West. In 2003, in response to a cross-burning incident and racial slurs found in a bathroom stall of Middle School West, the community organized the first Unity Walk. Mr. Specht joined the effort in 2006 and was so blown away by the warmth and welcoming of the Boyertown community that he moved from Delaware County to a house just a mile from Boyertown Area Senior High. The Unity Walk has continued to be a tradition in the District, beginning and ending at Middle School West and featuring several family-friendly activities.

Mr. Specht has always been impressed by the community and sees the potential for more programming in the future, including a local student "exchange" program, so students can understand their neighbors and learn from people different from themselves.

"Coming together is really the only way to overcome boundaries. Understanding cures fear," says Mr. Specht.