

# Superintendent's Newsletter

January, 2012  
Issue 13

Susan M. Gorky, Superintendent  
Nancy Spitulnik, Asst. Superintendent

## Superintendent's News

Dear Parents and Community members:

We are very busy this time of the school year. Our focus continues to be High Expectations and Active Engagement for All Students and Staff. We want to ensure that all of our students achieve at high levels.

We have launched a Response to Intervention (RtI) universal screener in reading for all K-5 students so that we have baseline data to ensure all students achieve at a high level.

We are wrapping up the development of the FY 13 District budget.

We are learning about and working to develop the new educator evaluator system for our teachers and administrators.

Teachers are working in professional learning communities and task forces to align our ELA and math curriculum to the common core standards. They are developing common formative and summative assessments.

The Middle School is developing a realignment plan to personalize students' education and develop smaller learning communities. Stay tuned for additional information through School Committee presentations, School Council and parent meetings.

The High School is developing an enhanced program of studies for next year.

We are surveying our teachers and administrators to determine where we stand in relation to the Essential Conditions for Schools' Success.

As always, please contact me if you have any questions or you would like to tour our schools.

Respectfully,

Sue Gorky  
Superintendent

**"Together... We Can"**



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### Upcoming Events

Parent Conferences	2/8/12
<u>Early Release Schedule</u>	
NHS	10:20
NMS	10:50
Balmer	11:30
NES	11:40
February Recess	2/20-2/24
Good Friday (no school)	4/6
April Recess	4/16-4/20

# Superintendent's Newsletter

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

DR. NANCY SPITULNIK

## Parents CAN Make a Difference!!

Dr. Nancy Spitulnik  
Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

My article is usually devoted to updates on our curriculum and instruction efforts in the district. However, it really does take a community effort to keep students in school, help them succeed academically and emotionally, and support them to be successful in college and careers.

Parents CAN make a difference in this important task. Research shows that parents have more influence on a child's academic success than teachers do. Family participation in education was twice as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status. When parents are involved, students have:

- Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
- Better school attendance
- Increased motivation, better self-esteem
- Lower rates of suspension
- Decreased use of drugs and alcohol
- Fewer instances of violent behavior

I've listed the top 5 ways that parents can support their child's education and help them achieve to the best of their ability.

Show that school is important for you and your child. What your child knows about school has a lot to do with the example you set. If you show an interest in school, your child learns that school is important. This could be the most important lesson of your child's school career.

Set high expectations for your child's education. Children whose parents have high academic expectations and who offer consistent encouragement for college and careers are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college.

Work directly with your child on learning assignments. The most effective forms of parent involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities at home. This is always easier at the elementary level, when you can help your child complete assignments and projects. At the middle and high school level, check in with your child every day to see what assignments they have to complete. Help them plan for long-term projects by setting up work calendars.

Talk to and listen to your child. Talk to your child about how school and friendships are going, and share stories from your own life to help make connections. Listen to their problems without being judgmental, and offer suggestions for working through difficulties.

Build a partnership with your child's teachers. When parents and teachers work together, everyone benefits: students tend to earn higher grades, perform better on tests, attend school more regularly, have better behavior, and show more positive attitudes toward themselves and toward school. Let the teachers know that you're invested in your child's success, and ask them to contact you with both good and bad news. Work together to solve any learning or behavior problems that arise.

We look forward to working with all our parents to set high expectations for student learning, encourage our students to succeed, and work collaboratively to solve problems so that all our students can be successful.

# Superintendent's Newsletter

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

DR. NANCY SPITULNIK

(continued from page 2)

References:

What Research Says about Parent Involvement in Children's Education  
Michigan Department of Education

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Final\\_Parent\\_Involvement\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_14732\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Final_Parent_Involvement_Fact_Sheet_14732_7.pdf)

Family Involvement Makes a Difference in School Success  
Harvard Family Research Project

<http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/family-involvement-makes-a-difference-in-school-success>

Parent Involvement at the Middle School Level  
Access, ERIC

<http://www.middleweb.com/ParntInvl.html>

Parents and Teachers: Strategies for Working Together  
National Association of School Psychologists

<http://www.nasponline.org/communications/spawareness/Parents%20and%20Teachers.pdf>

Tips for Parent: Parent Involvement  
The Learning Community

<http://www.thelearningcommunity.us>

PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES

CATHY STANTON

## Online Free Websites for Student Use

There are so many free websites that are educational for students. Some students are struggling to learn typing skills. It is easier to learn how to type when you practice in short periods of time a few days a week. Purchasing a typing program is expensive and students find the programs boring after a while. While students benefit from practice, they need a variety of typing programs from which to choose. There are plenty of free online typing programs for students to access. Students can practice with one program and then switch to another free online typing program as often as they desire. Just a few of the free online typing programs are [www.nimblefingers.com](http://www.nimblefingers.com), [www.sense-lang.org](http://www.sense-lang.org), and [www.powertyping.com](http://www.powertyping.com).

Sometimes students need a little motivation to get an assignment or a chore completed. Students like to "beat the clock" to finish an assignment. Other times students need a certain amount of time set to finish a reading or homework assignment each night. One of my favorite online clocks is called Online StopWatch ([www.online-stopwatch.com](http://www.online-stopwatch.com)). There are many interesting stopwatches to choose from so students stay motivated to use the timers. Another good website is [www.onlineclock.net](http://www.onlineclock.net).

Students can build vocabulary and study skills by using a website called Quizlet ([www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com)). This website is useful for students in middle and high school where words and definitions are important to learn for various units of study. Students make their own flashcards and are able to print out the flashcards.

The internet has so many sites to help students. However, researching the sites can take a lot of time. I hope these websites will help your students with their study skills.

# Superintendent's Newsletter

## Why is Attendance Important?

- By not coming to school, students diminish the value of their education.
- The benefit of regular classroom instruction is lost.
- Student may not develop the responsibility, self-discipline & effective work skills that are taught in the classroom.
- Not having several students in class may restrict the learning of others.
- A decrease in attendance effects the performance data of the school.
- Students who attend school 85%-100% of the time pass state tests in reading and math at much higher rates.
- If students fall behind and are continuously struggling to catch up, this may diminish their confidence and attitude toward learning.
- Not coming to school and being truant results in higher crime rates.

## What can parents do to help their children get to school?

- Have a back-up plan for cold weather and cars not starting.
- Know that school attendance is a parent and student responsibility.
- Start the habits of a regular school day at an early age and stay interested in what your child is doing in school.
- Try to stay involved in the school by attending meetings, field trips, etc. when possible.
- Keep in touch with who your child's friends are and their interests.
- If possible, drop your child off at school and pick them up afterwards.
- Make a contract with the child to improve their attendance rate.
- Make sure your child understands that you do not approve of them being late or absent.
- Help your child to understand the state's and school's attendance policies.
- Contact the school to ask for help/suggestions.
- Keep a school calendar on the refrigerator at home so that you know when your child does and does not have school.
- Do not allow your child to persuade you into making an excuse for him/her.
- Talk to your child about issues that may be making them late for school.
- Don't give up, reward good behavior and take it one day at a time.

# Superintendent's Newsletter

## Changing Children's Behavior in School

Adapted from article By Diana Browning Wright

**Some kids with learning difficulties develop behavior problems that increase their risk of failure. Learn how you can help.**

Success in school involves being able to complete work, stay organized, get along with kids and adults, be positive about your own abilities and school, follow rules, and do your best work. Some kids may develop behavior problems that add to the risk of failure. Here are a few warning signs:

Your child has trouble following directions or getting along with other kids.

Your child is discouraged or says she/he "hates school."

Your child is frequently "in trouble" in school or sent to the principal's office.

None of the usual techniques - rewards, consequences, home-school communication, behavior contracts - seem to help.

### **Why Do Behavior Problems Develop?**

Some kids or kids with LD and/or AD/HD may not pick up on cues around them. They may not understand what teachers or other kids expect from them or how to bargain with others. They may have a hard time waiting for the teacher to call on them. They may have a problem concentrating on things that aren't interesting to them. They may not have learned skills to be a good group member - taking turns, giving and accepting feedback, getting agreement, and compromising.

### **How Do You Find the Cause?**

Think of behavior as an attempt to get something or complain about something. Since behavior is a form of communication, you'll need to figure out your child's message. Is she/he trying to gain something - attention, an opportunity to move around? Is she/he trying escape or avoid something - doing an assignment she doesn't understand, sitting next to a child who annoys her/him? Once you understand what her/his behavior communicates about her /his needs, you can help her learn more appropriate behaviors.

### **What Happens Next?**

After you've figured out the "why" of your child's behavior, these questions will help you develop a plan of action.

What new skill - behavior - should your child learn to replace the problem behavior?

How will she/he learn the new behavior? Who will model (show her how to do it) - you, another child, the teacher? Where will she/he role play (practice) it? Who will cue (remind) her/him to use it?

What changes need to be made in the child's environment - time of day, space, materials, interactions?

What reinforcer will help her/him use the new behavior - rewards, a special activity or privilege, praise?

How often should it be given? Who should give it?

How should problem behavior be handled if it happens again? Are there specific words, cues, or consequences that should be used to stop the behavior quickly?

How will everyone (parents, teachers, and child) involved work together? How often should they communicate?

### **Who Should Be Involved?**

When parents, teachers, kids, administrators, and other school staff develop a behavior plan together, success is more likely. Each person needs to understand his role and communicate with others involved.

Everyone, not just your child, needs rewards to keep a plan going. Send thank you notes to your child's teacher or principal commenting on the improvements you see. Let them know they're making a difference and you appreciate their efforts!

# Superintendent's Newsletter

## ANONYMOUS ALERT UPDATE

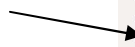
In a continuing effort to keep schools and students safe, the Northbridge Public Schools has implemented an Anonymous Alert program to provide an anonymous, online alert system to report disturbing situations or possible threats to school officials. The Anonymous Alert system can be accessed from the main page of the Northbridge Schools district website, located at <http://www.nps.org>.

Students, parents, and community members are often the first to know about potential problems at the school. Students hear or see things in school hallways or from friends, but may be afraid to tell a staff member for fear of retaliation or embarrassment. Sometimes parents hear information or observe situations in their neighborhood but don't know who to contact.

By filling out and sending an Anonymous Alert, any member of the school community can report sensitive information regarding student safety, violence, drug use, or students who may be in need of assistance. The reports will be monitored by school administrators during regular school hours, and appropriate action taken based on the nature of the report. The alert system stresses that it is NOT an emergency hotline, requesting people to call 911 if there is an immediate concern or threat for school or student safety.

The Anonymous Alert program is part of a comprehensive effort by the Northbridge school district to support students and families. The district has developed a comprehensive Anti-Bullying Policy and bullying prevention curriculum for all grades to educate students, staff, and parents about how to recognize bullying, how to intervene appropriately, and how to support both the target and the aggressor in bullying situations. Full-time school adjustment counselors have been added at all schools to provide counseling and interventions for students and families who need help. The Northbridge schools district is also a part of the Northbridge Coalition, which is a group of community agencies, organizations, and citizens who are working together to help Northbridge become "the kind of community where students and families can thrive, flourish and heal."

Anonymous Alert Link



Anonymous Alert | Northbridge Public Schools - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

Anonymous Alert | Northbridge Public Sc... x Pass

www.nps.org/node/2272

Northbridge Elementary School Balmer School Middle School High School

**NORTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Home

Search this site:  Search

- District Information
- Schools
- Administration
- School Committee
- Quick Links
- Anonymous Alert

The mission of the Northbridge Public Schools is to prepare our students to become responsible, contributing members of society by providing a challenging, rigorous educational program which will maximize academic achievement, enable intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development in an atmosphere which promotes creative and critical thinking.

87 Linwood Avenue  
Whitinsville, MA 01588  
(508) 234-8156

**Anonymous Alert**

Wed, 03/09/2011 - 11:12am - Anonymous

**Anonymous Alert**

**Anonymous Alert is NOT an emergency hotline. If you are reporting an event that could immediately affect your school community, please call 911 or your local emergency number.**

This Anonymous Alert program is intended to facilitate the reporting of sensitive information to school officials, including information regarding student safety, violence, drug use, or students who may be in need of assistance. Reports submitted here will be forwarded to a designated school administrator and, at the school administration's option, to local enforcement agencies. No disciplinary action will be taken on an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

**Date/Time of Act:** \*

Please enter the date and time of the act

**Location:** \*

Enter the location of the act

**School Name:** \*

Enter Balmer for Balmer School, NHS for the High School, NMS for the Middle School, NES for the Elementary School, and Other for other location.

**Persons Involved:** \*

Start Mailbox : North... Sue's Calendar ... Article : Northbr... 2 Firefox Balmer Teachers Anonymous Aler... Jan 2012 (Previ... 1:23 PM

# Superintendent's Newsletter

## NHS NEWS

### STUDENT WORKS CHOSEN FOR NEW YORK ART EXHIBIT

Four Northbridge High School students have had their art work selected to be on display at the National Youth Art Month Show in New York City. Please join us in congratulating Brianna Beauvais, Erin Cunningham, Hannah Mignault and Kaleigh Simonds on this wonderful accomplishment.



Hannah Mignault, Grade 9



Brianna Beauvais, Grade 10



Erin Cunningham, Grade 10



Kaleigh Simonds, Grade 11

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE



AP Environmental Science Students Tour the Millbury Sewerage Treatment Plant

## ALL-STATE CHORUS

Northbridge High School Senior, Dalton Weaner, has been selected to perform with the Massachusetts All-State Chorus on March 3rd, 2012 at Boston's famed Symphony Hall. This is a fantastic honor for Dalton and Northbridge High School.

Dalton was selected to take part in the Central District Chorus and received an All-State audition recommendation. On Saturday, January 21, 2011, Dalton auditioned for the All-State Chorus at Shrewsbury High School. His selection to the ensemble solidifies that he is one of the top high school vocalists in the state of Massachusetts.

Dalton will attend the Massachusetts All-State festival on March 1-3, 2012 at the Boston Seaport World Trade Center. His day long rehearsals will culminate with the aforementioned performance at Symphony Hall.

# Superintendent's Newsletter

## NHS NEWS

## MEADOW POND FIELD TRIP

The Northbridge High School AP Environmental Science class took a field trip to Meadow Pond to observe the behavior of bald eagles as well as our local ecosystem. The photo below captures the amazing way bald eagles are thriving here in Northbridge. High School senior, Hallie Zolides captured the moment and shares her experience below.

\*\*\*\*\*

“It was really cool to see all the bald eagles on Meadow Pond because it is rare enough to find one eagle around here, never mind, FOUR eagles all in the same area. Watching them interact and vocalize to one another was exceptional. We observed their behavior for about an hour, and it was amazing. I've grown up being aware that bald eagles are endangered so I never expected to see any in my hometown. The fact that there are more and more eagles in our area shows that the ecosystem is healthy enough to support an apex predator. Bald eagles live in areas featuring clean enough water to support their prey so seeing this many of them demonstrates that efforts to clean up local fresh water bodies have been successful. The annual Massachusetts Eagle Census numbers increase annually which means eagles are making a great recovery from near extinction in the 1960's due to toxins in our environment. It is heartening to see successful results of environmental regulations right here in Northbridge!”



## SHERIFF EVANGELITIS VISITS NHS



Worcester County Sheriff Law Evangelidis shared his experiences and insights into the criminal justice system with Northbridge High School Law students and faculty in the NHS Media Center.

The sheriff was introduced by NHS junior, Erik Drew, who worked on Evangelidis' successful campaign in November of 2010. Erik put his Law teacher in contact with the sheriff, and the whole class benefited from his informative and entertaining visit.

In his current job, Evangelidis runs the jail in Worcester County. He explained to the students that those “in jail” are awaiting trial, and those in the “house of corrections” are serving terms of up to 2 ½ years. He feels that a key part of his job is to prevent recidivism by getting the clients to stay off drugs and to get jobs when they are released.

The students were grateful to have learned from an experienced, high-ranking official in our criminal justice system. Northbridge hopes to see the Sheriff again next year.

# Superintendent's Newsletter

NHS NEWS

OWL BANDING

The Northbridge High School Science Club participated in an Owl Banding activity.



# Superintendent's Newsletter

## NHS SPORTS NEWS



### NHS SWIM TEAM



**Back Row L-R:** Sara McCarthy(Capt.), Julie Huguni(Capt.), Brian Brennan, Rob Ekberg, Cheyenne Carey, Kyle Durand, Colby Foster, Sarah Deneault(Capt.), Erin Ducey(Capt.)  
**Third Row L-R:** Dominique Auger, Alyssa Murray, Kelsey Rudert, Hannah Mignault, Erika Haverty  
**Second Row L-R:** Kim Ekberg, Taylor Brock, Isabelle Price, Codi Bennett, Morgan Martel, Jess Ekberg  
**First Row L-R:** Hannah Borghetti, Marissa Thompson  
**Missing:** Kat Resker

Winter sports have reached their half way point. The boys and girls basketball teams are off to very good starts. The boys are now 9-2 and with their next win qualify for district play. The girls are now 7-3 and will also qualify for post season play.

Ice hockey is also having a fine season and stands at 7-3 and looks to qualify for the post season.

Wrestling hosted our annual invitational tournament on Jan. 14th. There were 22-24 teams from all over Massachusetts, RI, Connecticut and Vermont. Kyle Stanley placed 3rd in his weight class and Tyler Velazques placed 4th in his.

The swim teams have competed at a very high level thus far picking up 3 wins to this point.

Indoor track has seen another record broken as Callie Hansson broke the record in the 1000 meter race.

# Superintendent's Newsletter

NMS NEWS

PROJECT 351

## PROJECT 351

In January, 2011, Governor Patrick launched Project 351 as part of his inaugural celebration. Project 351 created a youth congress to celebrate service and civic leadership. One student representative from each of the 351 cities/towns in the Commonwealth participated in this event.

The administration and staff at Northbridge Middle School are pleased to announce that RACHEL SULLIVAN has been chosen as the 2012 Project 351 Representative for Northbridge Middle School. Rachel represented Northbridge Middle School at a Youth Congress held on January 14th and participated in the Congress as well as a community service project. Rachel will participate in two or three events between now and the end of the school year. We are proud to have Rachel serve as our representative – CONGRATULATIONS!



## AUTHOR TM MURPHY VISITS NMS

On Tuesday, December 20, 2011 a special visitor came to Northbridge Middle School to speak with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. TM Murphy, from Falmouth, Massachusetts came to talk about his book series (*The Secrets of Belltown*) and how to become a better writer. The best-selling author has written several mystery books for middle school students.

After his 1 ½ hour presentation in the auditorium with the entire 6<sup>th</sup> grade, TM Murphy had lunch in one of the classrooms with 20 students who were selected for a special Writer's Workshop. Ten students from each TEAM were selected to have lunch (thank you, Mrs. Mega) and take part in a two-hour special writing workshop.

TM Murphy engaged the students during his presentation with fun and crazy stories from his childhood to have the students realize that they write best when they are writing about something they know. His visit was a positive and encouraging day for all of the students, faculty, and staff of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Students enjoyed the experience greatly and spent many lunches sharing their thoughts and ideas with each other.



# Superintendent's Newsletter

NMS NEWS

AIMSWEB READING SPECIALIST

## Welcome Mrs. Arsenault!

Northbridge Middle School is pleased to welcome our new Reading Specialist, Mrs. Shannon Arsenault. Mrs. Arsenault comes to us with a wealth of experience collecting and analyzing data. Mrs. Arsenault has been working for the past couple of weeks meeting the teachers, looking at data, and setting up some reading support services for our students. Mrs. Arsenault, along with our grade five ELA teachers and Inclusion Specialists, participated in AimsWeb training. Aimsweb is a progress monitoring tool that will help us identify and monitor students needing support in the literacy area. Thanks to all who participated in the training!

## PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE BALMER SCHOOL

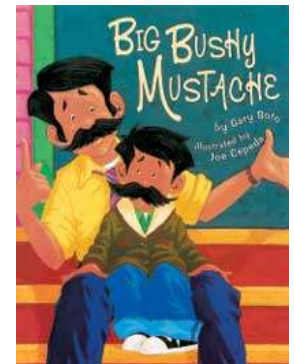


GRADE 2

THE BIG BUSHY MUSTACHE

## Meet the Author

Unlike many authors, **Gary Soto** never thought about becoming a writer when he was a kid. Instead, he wanted to be a priest or a paleontologist — a scientist who studies fossils and bones. But when he was in college, he came across a book of poetry, liked it, and started writing his own poems. He's been a writer ever since!



GRADE 3

PILGRIM PROJECT



GRADE 2

SINTERKLAAS PROJECT

# Superintendent's Newsletter

## NES NEWS

### Northbridge Elementary School

I would like to thank all families for your support in establishing a positive, successful school year for all students. The ongoing communication among parents, students and teachers is critical in assuring student success and for that I am truly grateful!

Last year, we obtained accreditation from the **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**. NAEYC has ten standards for early childhood programs and we continue to employ these standards. The over 300 criteria are included in: Relationships, Curriculum, Teaching, Assessment of Child Progress, Health, Teachers, Families, Community Relationships, Physical Environment, and Leadership and Management.

While working within Professional Learning Communities, teachers have established and reached strategic and measurable goals that have a direct impact on student achievement. Some of these accomplishments include aligning the Language Arts and Mathematics curriculum to the new Massachusetts Common Core Standards, and supporting Response to Intervention (RtI) strategies. RtI provides direct small group and/or 1:1 instruction when students don't learn, as well as monitoring individual student progress. In addition, specialists have been incorporating Language Arts, Math, and Science skills within physical education, music, technology, art, and library classes.

The Northbridge Elementary School staff also continues to reach out to the community by providing various outreach services to families with children ages 18-36 months. The School Council is sponsoring four play groups for parents and young children. These "Mommy and Me" classes were instructed by Deb Hudgins and were very well attended. We also continue to work with the Northbridge Fire Department to implement the Students' Awareness of Fire Education (SAFE) program in kindergarten classrooms.

The above mentioned is a testimony to the many attributes that make for a successful educational program and I am thankful for the support and commitment of our dedicated teachers, staff, volunteers, and families.

Sincerely,  
Jill Healy, Principal



# Superintendent's Newsletter

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Jill Healy, Principal  
Melissa Walker, Business Manager  
Cathy Stanton, Director of PPS  
Kadion Phillips, Director of Educational Technology

## For Community and School Information:

[www.northbridgetimes.com](http://www.northbridgetimes.com)  
[www.blackstonevalleytribune.com](http://www.blackstonevalleytribune.com)

**The Northbridge Public Schools now accept online payments!** Parents and community members can make payments for preschool tuition, athletic fees, activity/club fees, after school program fees, facility use/rental fees, credit recovery course payments, and school food service through a quick, convenient, and secure online payment center established by UniBank. Please visit our website [www.nps.org](http://www.nps.org) and click on the link on the left hand side "Online Payment Center". Complete each screen to process your online payment. Payment can be made by check or credit card.

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**Have a safe and productive school year.**

*It is the policy of the Northbridge Public Schools not to be discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, national origin, color, homelessness, sexual orientation, age or disability in its educations programs, services, activities, or employment practices.*