



Superintendent's Newsletter

April, 2011
Issue 9

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

Superintendent's News



Dear Families and Friends,

Spring has sprung! It seems with each passing day the gentle breezes warm, the grass grows greener, and the sleeping buds are awakening. This is my favorite time of year, especially given this year's winter wrath. I love to see the landscape's whites, grays and browns replaced with blues, yellows, reds and greens!

Spring is the time of the year when, as a school district, the seeds we have sown are beginning to sprout. We are making daily efforts to ensure academic success for all learners. So, too, comes MCAS testing for students in grades three through ten and some students in their junior and senior years as well. I am proud of the efforts made by the vast majority of our students this year. I applaud our teachers and staff for their commitment to high expectations and active engagement for all learners. On behalf of our staff and district as a whole, I am thankful for the support of our partners in education, home and community alike. I renew our commitment to continuous improvement and working towards making the Northbridge Public Schools the premier district in the Blackstone Valley.

We have finalized our district budget for the next school year and anxiously await the outcome of the May Town meeting. We have been fiscally creative and conservative and have in fact reduced our Operational Budget by nearly \$100,000 for FY12. However, the fact remains that there is a gap between the Town Appropriation and the Operating Budget. Perhaps this chart will help you to understand that we must supplement the Operating Budget with Revolver Account monies because the Town Appropriation, which is the combination of Chapter 70 Aide and Town Contribution, does not total our Operating Budget. This circumstance is unique. The revolvers are eventually going to dry up, as revenue coming into these accounts is not as great as the expenditures being made out of these accounts. It is important that the Town continue to increase their contribution so the funding gap is closed over

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Upcoming Events

April 5	End of Term
April 12	Report Cards Home
April 18-23	April Vacation
May 3	Town Meeting

time. You may think, what about all the grants the district is getting? The grants help us to move the district forward in many ways. Examples would be that through grants we can offer summer school or through grants we can offer more Advanced Placement courses. The Operating Budget can't be completely supplanted by grants because the grant monies are earmarked. Quite frankly, the Operating Budget allows us to be a good school district but not a great school district. Our children deserve great; they are our future!

FY2012 School Committee Budget

Chapter 70 Aide	\$14,034,106	58%
Town Contribution	\$6,177,849	26%
Grants	\$1,163,257	5%
Revolvers	\$2,665,768	11%
Total Operating	\$24,040,979	100%

We have many things to shout about! I will mention a few of our most recent accomplishments. Our boys basketball team are Division II Champions! The Rams beat Groton-Dunstable, 60-50, during the 72nd Annual Clark University High School Basketball Tournament. 1978 was the last time Northbridge won the large school title. The boys clinched the Division II Championship title and the State semifinal but lost the State final round 67-57. Congratulations to our students and coaches! Northbridge boys' and girls' basketball teams have both had great success during this year's post-season.

As the second seed in the tournament, the girls' team defeated No. 7 St. Bernard's in the quarterfinal round of the Division II Central District Tournament, 50-45. In the semifinals, the Lady Rams beat sixth-seeded Auburn, 46-25. The girls' basketball team's season came to an end after falling to top-seeded Millbury, 49-30, in the championships. Congratulations Lady Rams!

Most schools dream of one championship and we have had four this year. Many folks are starting to call Northbridge Title Town.

Northbridge High School received a \$153,000 Advanced Placement Grant from the Massachusetts Math & Science Institute, MMSI. NHS will work with MMSI to train teachers, expand student participation in Advanced Placement courses and improve student performance in our Advanced Placement math, science and English courses. This grant allows NHS to raise the bar for all students and offer a high quality Program of Studies.



James Verdone, our High School Music teacher, has been selected to attend the 2011 Symposium on Music in Schools and to receive the Yale Distinguished Music Educator Award. From a pool of more than 300 nominations representing 45 states, this year's honorees were selected by a panel of music professionals for their outstanding accomplishments and vision as public school music teachers. Mr. Verdone will participate in a special workshop with internationally acclaimed cellist Yo-Yo Ma in conjunction with the International Festival of Arts & Ideas.

At the MASS-DECA 52nd Annual Career Development Conference, Jeffrey Andrews, a High School junior, placed first in his category, Financial Literacy. DECA is a national association of marketing students with both state and local chapters. In collaboration with Unibank, Andrew's project was based on the importance of financial literacy education in order to combat the increasing number of consumers who lack the ability to make responsible financial decisions, which Andrews believes has a direct impact on the crippling unemployment rate, growing credit problems and increase in US debt. On April 30th through May 3rd, Jeff will travel with his advi-

sor to Orlando, FL to attend the DECA International Career Development Conference and compete against other students from across the country.

We are discussing partnerships with the Red Cross and Quinsigamond Community College to host a training and education program at Northbridge High School for our high school seniors and adults from the Blackstone Valley.

The Northbridge Public Schools, Family Continuity of Whitinsville, Northbridge Association of Churches, Whittin Community Center, Blackstone People of Faith Against Domestic Violence and the Northbridge Police Department **have joined together in a coalition** that seeks to unite parents, students, educators, professionals and people from the faith community to diagnose critical concerns in our community, especially those that affect our students and families, and work together to identify and develop strategies and resources to support our students and families. The Coalition will serve as an ongoing think tank and partnership that is dedicated to making our community a place where students and families can flourish.

Northbridge Elementary School is awaiting the date of their NEAYC Accreditation visit. They have worked extremely hard and are well positioned for success.

The Middle School is thriving under the leadership of Principal Mega. They recently received an Anti-Bullying Service Learning Grant to work with student leaders on bullying prevention activities.

Principal Zywein is excelling at the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) which offers high-quality, researched professional development to principals and provides them with the critical knowledge and skills they need to be instructional leaders and improve student achievement in their schools.

I encourage you to play an active role in your child's education! If you do not have a child in the Northbridge Public Schools, I encourage you to contact me for a personal tour of our schools. Please check our website at www.nps.org for announcements and a listing of events.

On behalf of the students and staff, thank you for supporting our schools and Happy Spring!

Yours in Education,

Sue Gorky
Superintendent

“Together... We Can”

NHS CAD

The NHS CAD 1 class has been very successful. We received an NEF grant last year and an additional grant through Fidelity Investments this year. The NEF grant allowed us to buy the race equipment and supplies. The Fidelity grant allowed us to purchase enough licenses to outfit the 3rd floor computer lab with SolidWorks (an industry standard 3D modeling software). In this class, students were taught how to use the program and produce engineering drawings. They were then asked to design a small car (within certain specifications), that would be propelled by a CO2 cartridge. Here are some pictures of the students and the cars in action.



CURRICULUM UPDATE

Curriculum Update
Dr. Nancy Spitulnik

What are the Common Core State Standards?

There have been many discussions in the news about the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Math. These are national curriculum standards that were adopted by Massachusetts as part of our federal Race to the Top grant initiative. These standards were developed by a collaboration of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Dr. Mitchell Chester, the Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, played a major role in developing these standards.

According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (<http://www.corestandards.org/>),

Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning. We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students.

Our work with the Common Core Standards has been exciting as we work to better understand the differences in philosophy between these new standards and our current State Curriculum Frameworks. The current frameworks were built on the philosophy of student proficiency in reading, math, and science by

grade 10. However, student proficiency levels didn't always translate to the ability to succeed in college or employment. The Common Core Standards emphasize "college and career readiness" as a goal. "The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers." (<http://www.corestandards.org/>)

The new standards are intended to move from a curriculum that is "a mile high and an inch deep" with numerous strands to a focused set of learning expectations that emphasize building conceptual knowledge as a foundation for learning content. The Math standards identify 2-3 critical areas of focus at each grade level. The ELA standards include the teaching of literacy skills, not just by the English teacher, but also through History and Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects as students learn to read and comprehend increasingly complex text and write to a source.

We have already started working to align our current district curriculum with the new Common Core State Standards. Our Math Task Force has become familiar with the new standards, and has begun the process to readjust what will be taught at each grade level. The ELA Task Force is creating a District Literacy Plan that will set guidelines for this important task.

This curriculum realignment will take a number of years to complete. The switch to the new Common Core Standards will also impact our state MCAS tests. The DESE has set the following timeline for converting our curriculum and assessment to the new Common Core Standards.

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
	Initial Planning	Partial Implementation	Near Full Implementation	Full Implementation
Curriculum and Instruction	Build awareness; identify what needs to change and how it will be changed	Continue planning; execute changes in targeted grades and subjects	Implement balance of changes	Full curriculum alignment to the State Common Core standards
MCAS	No changes - based on FORMER Frameworks	Focus on standards common to FORMER and NEW Frameworks	Will include SELECTED standards from NEW Frameworks not included in FORMER Frameworks	MCAS based exclusively on the NEW State Common Core Frameworks

I'm sure we'll be discussing Common Core Standards for many years to come. These are some websites for further information on this topic:

<http://www.corestandards.org/> Common Core State Standards Initiative

<http://www.act.org/commoncore/pdf/FirstLook.pdf> Common Core Standards and College and Career Readiness

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/commoncore/> Massachusetts Common Core Initiative

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/0710/item1.html> State report on and analysis of Common Core Standards

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Friday Night Out Program

Thanks to the ARRA grant, the teenagers in Susan Dodd's class at the Northbridge High School are experiencing Friday nights out with their friends just like their typical peers. Susan Dodd has organized a program that meets ten Friday evenings over the course of the year. Students with disabilities are able to meet at a local business for an evening full of fun with their friends. Peers from the Northbridge High School are invited to join their friends at FNO events. Last month four students from Blackstone Valley Technical High School's Life Skills class joined the group for dinner.



The teenagers are dropped off by their parents at the event and picked up at the end of the evening. The Friday Night Out group promotes social interaction, independence and real life skills as the teenagers engage in an evening of fun. To date, the Friday Night Out group has gone to Uno's in the Blackstone Valley Shopping Center, the Whitins Community Center for swimming and pizza, and Pinz in Milford for bowling and arcade fun. This month the teens are heading back to the Whitins Community Center for more swimming and pizza!

Students, parents and teachers are raving about the opportunity these teens have to socialize with each other on a Friday night. Students work with Susan Dodd during the school day to plan the events. Menus, spending money and possible car pools are part of the planning process for these young teens. The group celebrated two of the students' birthdays during dinner at Unos in February. Typically the group will meet once a month for a fun-filled evening. If parents have any questions, please feel free to email Susan Dodd (sdodd@nps.org).

Special Education Parent Advisory Council

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council meets on a monthly basis the second Thursday of each month from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at one of the schools. There are usually two or three business meetings a year. The rest of the meetings are dedicated to presentations geared for parents of students with special needs. The PAC officers are Kathy Lyons, Teresa Phaneuf and Deb Davis. Each presentation is thoughtfully designed to assist parents at the various stages in their child's life. The PAC officers try to gear information to parents of high school students, middle school students as well as for parents with young children.

Last month the Department of Developmental Services presented information to assist parents as their children turn 18 and 22 years of age. This was one of the most well attended presentations to date. DDS brought packets and walked parents through the steps of applying for Social Security as their child turns 18. DDS discussed the variety of services students may be eligible for as they become adults. The transition process for services was explained to parents for students who need services as adults.

Please consider joining the Special Education Parent Advisory Council for one or all of the meetings. For further information, please contact Kathy Lyons (kathy11@verizon.net), Teresa Phaneuf (tre2@charter.net) or Deb Davis (debrad1926@aol.com)

NES



NES commemorated many celebrations this winter: Dr. Seuss's birthday and the 100th day of school were among activities that students participated in.



Students were excited to celebrate the 100th day of school (February 16th). Various types of activities took place throughout the day: using unifex cubes to make sets to 100, drawing what they would look like in 100 years, sorting and counting 100 pictures, finding a mystery picture in a 100 chart, writing activity--"I wish I had 100...", and reading stories that include 100th day concepts.



Preschool children worked in teams on a Construction Unit. This unit involves children making a plan of what they want to build. They talked together, drew the plan together, and created their building with recyclable materials. The children finished their buildings by painting them and putting on the last finishing touches. One team made a firehouse. One team made a house. One team made an apartment building, and one team made a work building.

BALMER



Students in Mrs. O'Brien's fourth grade class participated in an immigration simulation in which they portrayed immigrants from different countries. They learned first hand what it was like for immigrants to leave their homeland, endure the long voyage across the Atlantic and then be processed at Ellis Island. The students kept immigration diaries to document their experiences along the way.



Balmer School students presented bioreports to the class. The students dressed up as the subject of their biographies.



The Coalition Community Group

"The Coalition" is a new community group formed to bring together parents, students, educators, professionals, people from the faith community, and concerned citizens to identify and address student concerns. The group hopes to diagnose the critical problems that students in the Northbridge community face, and to develop strategies and resources to alleviate these concerns.

The focus of The Coalition will be to unite the community, build relationships, and change lives, as it works together to create solutions to problems like bullying, depression and suicide, racism, and substance abuse.

"The community of Northbridge is reeling right now in the wake of a string of tragic deaths. A lot of kids are feeling hopeless. They're looking around and wondering what's going to happen next," said Bill Hodgeman, a local youth pastor. "As I talk to people in the community, I get the sense that this Coalition is long overdue. It's time to bring people together. It's time to have some difficult and necessary conversations, to come alongside of these hurting students and give them a voice, some help, and some hope," he said.

"Northbridge is not unique to these issues and we find that many communities have had similar incidents, but we can be unique in our response," said Craig Maxim, Director of Family Continuity in Whitinsville. "The development of a coalition in Northbridge will assist us in identifying not only the needs but begin to develop solutions. We invite concerned citizens to join with us in identifying our strengths as a community and how we can transfer those strengths into caring, action, and solutions," he added.

The Coalition is currently supported by the Northbridge Public Schools, Family Continuity of Whitinsville, the Northbridge Association of Churches, the Whitin Community Center, People of Faith Against Domestic Violence, and a growing number of students, parents, and other organizations.

Members of the community who want to make Northbridge a place where students and families can flourish are invited to attend the next meeting on Thursday, April 28, 2011, at 7:00 PM at the Northbridge Middle School Media Center

For more information, please contact: Craig Maxim at maxim@familycontinuity.org, or Bill Hodgeman at pastorbill@psrc.org.



Northbridge Middle School

Marine Care Package Community Service Project Grade 6 – Northbridge Middle School

A sibling of a sixth grade Kunnatta student has recently been deployed overseas as a United States serviceman. Tom Cacciola is a P.F.C. machine gunner in a weapons platoon attached to 2nd Battalion 8th Marines, (*America's Battalion*) in an undisclosed area in Afghanistan. Tom and his battalion are in a remote location with limited access to supplies and provisions. He and his fellow troops rely heavily on the donations of civilians back home for many of their basic necessities. The sixth grade is helping Tom's family achieve their goal of sending 100 care packages to this group of young soldiers. Cumberland Farms, Inc. has contributed a \$2,000.00 donation to help offset the cost of shipping the packages!

We are grateful for your support in donating items for the troops. All donations were greatly appreciated. We collected items until Friday, March 11th.



With the help of Tom's family, our students packed and assembled the care packages to be ready for shipment. Students will also have the opportunity to write letters and make cards to send along with care packages. For more information, please contact Lynne McNeil, 6th grade Geography teacher, at lmcneil@nps.org or 508.234.8718. Thank you for your support!



Here are a few photos of students on the Veldi Tribe who built original games for the play being read (*The Phantom Tollbooth*). At the end of the project, the students were able to play their games with their fellow classmates.

The project included writing a goal, writing rules and directions, at least 20 questions and answers from the story and designing the board.



Stop Bullying Now! You can make a difference! 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. More information may be found at www.nps.org.

Northbridge Middle School



Middle School students participated in an Anti-Bullying Program this winter.

Kaleidoscope Theater

B.U.L.L.Y. - Better Understanding By Listening and Learning About You - a show dealing with the ever-present and often dangerous problem of bullying in our schools!

Northbridge High School Sports

The winter season has been an avalanche of stand out moments.

Swimming- although the season record wasn't as positive as we hoped for, some individuals were exceptional. Marissa Thompson, Alyssa Murray and Kyle Durand all qualified for state competition in their respective events. Kyle also competed at the National level at an invitational in Texas.



Wrestling- The annual Northbridge Invitational was a huge success with 22 schools competing in the day long tournament. Luke Labonte, Joe Orphin, and Josh Schiappucci all wrestled their way to states. Luke finished 2-2 at states, one win from placing.

Hockey made a run at post season play, but came up one point short. Adam Kubic, our Slovakian exchange student, had an outstanding winter along with leading scorers Mike Barkin and Ryan Drew.



Indoor track- Although the numbers were down a bit, the teams competed at a very high level and earned their share of victories. Tommy Hansson broke the 1000 meter record a number of times throughout the winter and qualified for states where he finished 8th. Erin McIntyre represented us in the high jump; she placed 3rd at the districts and competed at the state level.

Northbridge High School Sports

Girls Basketball had an historic year, reaching the district final for the first time. They finished the season at 19-4. Senior leadership was key as Cortney Rosenlund led



the team in scoring, Sarah Phelan and Rachel Clasby controlled the paint all winter and Katie Pryor's shut down of defense and timely scoring were the keys to their success. As the second seed in the tournament, the team defeated No. 7 St. Bernard's in the quarterfinal round of the Division II Central District Tournament, 50-45. In the semifinals, the Lady Rams beat sixth-seeded Auburn, 46-25. The girls' basketball team's season came to an end after falling to top-seeded Millbury, 49-30, in the championships. Congratulations Lady Rams!



Girls Varsity Basketball Team



Boys Varsity Basketball Team

Boys Basketball - The boys were sitting at 7-4 and not sure where the season was going. It clicked in and they have posted a 14-1 record since. They won the Clark Tournament Large School Division, District Division II title, the Central/West regional title and played for a Div. II State Title on 3/19 at the DCU center. The

boys' team clinched the Division II Championship title after defeating Oxford, 67-53 at Fitchburg State University.

They won the State semifinal round against West Champion Sabis.

On Saturday, March 19, their run came to an end when they were defeated by North District title holders New Mission, 67-57, in the State final game.

Congratulations to our students and coaches! They played with heart, soul, skill and Rams pride. Most schools dream of winning one championship and we have had four this year.



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For Community and School Information:

www.northbridgetimes.com
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 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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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.

Translation of documents are available upon request to the Pupil Personnel Services Office