

# WEST DEPTFORD SCHOOLS

## RACHEL'S CHALLENGE



**W**ho would have ever thought that a young teenage girl's report for school would have turned into one of the most famous and helpful organizations in the world?

Rachel's Challenge is a club at WDHS that was inspired by the story of Rachel Scott, the first girl killed in the Columbine School shootings. She wrote a paper for school about how one act of kindness could start a chain reaction of kindness. At WDHS, the Rachel's Challenge Club, called Friends of Rachel, continues to strive for kindness throughout our halls. We have four groups in the club, each of which does very important things around the school that include:

- New Student Greeters – they welcome new kids into our school. This program was designed to show new students to their classes and share a friendly face with during lunch. Greeters help familiarize our new students to the procedures within our school.
- Kindness Shout-Out Group (KSO) – This program reports any kind act that occurs around our school. Student names are read over the morning announcements for recognition of their kindness.
- Public Relations Group – This group is designed to make posters and flyers around our school to spread the word about Rachel's Challenge. In addition, they painted a mural in our school hallway.
- Target Letters – This group “targets” a different selection of people every two weeks. They write letters offering “thanks” to the student body and to present additional appreciation for kind acts. We believe that the group really impacts the selected students and are always happy to receive a “thank you” out of the blue.

The importance of this club, in general, is to make a positive change in our school. Since the club started in 2010, it has been very successful. To keep the spirit of Rachel flowing through our school, West Deptford High School is pleased to announce that we will be hosting two assemblies October 12, 2011 to the entire student body. Students in grades 9 and 10 will receive the Level 1 Message and our students in grades 11 and 12 will experience Level 2. In addition, there will be a parent night open to the entire West Deptford Community for those that would like to experience Rachel's Message. The program begins at 7pm in the West Deptford High School Auditorium. This program is sponsored by the West Deptford School District, West Deptford PTO and West Deptford Municipal Alliance Program. Please join us and always remember “just one little act of kindness can go a long way.”

## Pre-School and OT: Perfect Together!



**Pre-School Friends.**



**Lynn Davis, Occupational Therapist, positions Sabrina Van Sciver on the Magic Ball.**

Stop in to one of our Pre-School Classes and you are likely to see “Miss Lynn” performing some “magic” with our young students. Lynn Davis, our Occupational Therapist, is shown helping Sabrina balance on the big ball. To Sabrina it is all about having fun. To Lynn, and Pre-School Teacher Nicole Brennan, it is really about building and strengthening core muscles, increasing movement, coordination and balance. The big pink ball: well, it is really a “magic tool” to an OT.

When teacher Nicole Brennan was asked about the role Miss Lynn plays in the classroom, her reply was: “What

doesn't she do?” The role of the Occupational Therapist is to help the student achieve academic success. For a Pre-School Student, that includes life skills such as teaching students how to put on shoes, wash their hands, brush their teeth and put on clothing; all while singing a song that helps them to remember the steps. Miss Lynn teaches gross motor skills that help “little bodies” wake up their muscles through games and activities. She helps them learn how to write by first working on the muscles that control that movement. Tearing paper, using a pincer grip, tracing and cutting, all promote success in gross and fine motor skills.

A large facet of the OT program is to provide services for positioning, sensory registration skills and daily motor programs. “Looking for Buried Treasure” is an activity designed to help students who cannot tolerate textures such as paint, glue, sand or shaving cream. Miss Lynn creates “hands-on activities” where students use these textures without realizing it. Exercise balls, toys and textures are really part of the “Magic Tool Box” Miss Lynn uses in “Push In” Services provided through teacher consultations, staff training and daily motor programs. All of these services consider the students’ needs as well as the Core Standards.

## The State Department of Education Accepts Green-Fields’ Application



Green-Fields’ application was accepted to participate in the Positive Behavior Support in Schools (PBSIS) Project, which is designed to develop programs and intervention strategies that are intended to reduce occurrences of behavior problems. PBSIS is a collaboration between the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and the Boggs Center at UMDNJ.

At the core of the PBSIS frameworks are the answer to the critical question that follows. What are the factors that most consistently predict academic achievement and positive social behaviors? According to a substantial body of research these are the three factors:

1. Positive teacher-student relationships
2. Supportive teacher behaviors
3. Positive peer relations.

The PBSIS frameworks promise to provide us with a research-based, data-driven, proactive approach to bringing these three decisive factors into focus. In short, the PBSIS data tell us that over time, this program leads to both a decrease in discipline referrals and an increase in student achievement. This past spring, Green-Fields piloted a facet of the PBSIS frameworks, using a school-wide incentive program that is designed to catch children making good behavioral choices. When “caught,” all staff members—including bus drivers and cafeteria workers—reward students with “Blaze Bucks,” which can be redeemed at the “Good Character Market” for Green-Fields branded school supplies. While the pilot was too short in duration to draw any statistically significant conclusions, discipline referrals sharply declined for what has historically been the most eventful quarter of the school year in terms of student misconduct.

PBSIS promises to sustain these efforts while providing a bridge to the Middle School, which has been participating in the program for three years.

## *From Red Bank to Mexico – A Butterfly's Long Journey*



**A newly emerged Monarch Butterfly enjoys its new environment in Ms. Mack's Red Bank Classroom. Soon, it will begin the long journey to Mexico.**

Students in Ms. Mack's first grade classroom have recently had the unique opportunity to study the life cycle of the Monarch Butterfly. During the warm days of August, Ms. Mack attended *Teaching and Learning with Monarch Butterflies*, a two-day workshop presented by the Monarch Teacher Network. She returned with a wealth of skills and knowledge which she has used to create a magical teaching and learning experience for her students.

Students began this "Journey" in early September by participating in activities designed to teach the life-cycle of the Monarch butterfly, from the egg stage, to the Caterpillar, to the Chrysalis or pupa stage, on to the adult butterfly, and finally, packing for migration (a very long trip).

Ms. Mack began this process late in August by collecting the tiny Monarch eggs during a "field trip" to, of all places, a field. Soon after, the tiny caterpillars emerged and began to grow at an astounding rate until they were around two inches long and nearly 3,000 times their original weight. Once the caterpillar has wriggled out of its skin for the last time, the green Chrysalis or pupa stage is revealed. The pupa is a liquid soup of cells that transforms into a butterfly over 10-12 days. This is where our student story begins...

Ms. Mack's first grade students were careful observers during the early days of the school year. Each morning they would look for signs of the Chrysalis changing to a darker color, signifying the approach of an emerging Monarch butterfly. Finally, just as predicted, the

children were first-hand witnesses to the "miracle of birth" if you will, of not one, but three beautiful Monarch butterflies. After a couple of days, students were able to release their new friends, beginning the long, 2,000 mile journey to the warm climate of Mexico where they will spend the winter.

The children in Ms. Mack's classroom will re-visit this experience throughout the year by eventually creating their own milkweed patch to attract adult butterflies and continue the cycle. Also, Ms. Mack and her students will join up with the fifth grade students from Ms. Dearlove's class at West Deptford Middle School, to share on-going activities and information about the Monarch butterfly.

What a fantastic way to begin the New Year!

## **Elementary Teachers are Hard at Work to Align the Curriculum to the New Standards!**

The New Jersey Department of Education has implemented a very strict timeline in regard to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and the Common Core State Standards. As of September 1, 2011, science in grades K – 12 and math in grades K – 2 are aligned to the new standards as required by the NJDOE. All other content areas will be aligned by September 2012 – in accordance with the implementation table.

These standards are very different from the past. There are fewer standards so that more time can be devoted to teaching concepts; however, the standards are more challenging, and require mastery of grade level skills. A significant focus on 21st century learning, technology integration, and interdisciplinary concepts are woven into the standards and the West Deptford curriculum.

Over the past school year, teachers have been busy mapping curriculum to ensure alignment to the new standards. Once the curriculum was mapped and aligned vertically as well as horizontally, teachers began developing the curriculum using the Understanding By Design format. This was a major undertaking; however, having

teacher input in the curriculum development process is essential.

### **K – 2 Math:**

The most significant difference that parents may notice this year lies in the area of K – 2 math. Since last January, K – 2 teachers on our mapping and curriculum writing committees focused on our Everyday Math units and re-organized units to align to the standards. Each unit now includes a performance assessment where students have to demonstrate new learnings beyond the typical paper and pencil assessment with the exception of mastery. The District will be working with Dr. Eric Milou from Rowan University as we focus on enhancing our math curriculum and increase the rigor in all grade levels.

### **Foundations:**

Following one year of research and one year of a pilot experience, teachers in grades K – 2 will be implementing Foundations into their literacy instruction. Foundations is a Wilson Language program that focuses on phonological/phonemic awareness as well as phonics and spelling for the general education classroom. This program compliments the existing

balanced literacy program that West Deptford currently offers and provides research-validated literacy strategies and instruction to meet federal standards. Last year's pilot teams were amazed with the transfer of learning in student reading and writing abilities.

### **Third Grade Innovations:**

Finally, this year the third grade level has also begun to approach instruction in different ways. For example, this year West Deptford is piloting an Advanced Mathematics program. This program will provide academic challenges to students to exemplify characteristics beyond those of the "good" math student, but target those of the "rare" math student. In addition, throughout the course of this year, the third grade level will begin engaging in a formalized data team analysis process to review the success, challenges, and progress of each individual student. These data team meetings will reflect and advanced format and will take place several times throughout the school year. At a minimum, these meetings will take place following each DIBELS benchmark assessment.

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## High School Tennis Courts Get a Well Needed Facelift!



This summer, the High School tennis courts were reconstructed. The courts were paved and playing surfaces were refinished. New fencing and nets were also installed. The contractor for the improvements was Jersey Construction, who won the job with a bid price of \$283,767. Work on the courts started in July and was completed by the end of August, in time for the new tennis courts to be used by the tennis team and physical education classes.

Another facility improvement in progress at the High School is the replacement of the visitors' bleachers at the football stadium. Though the completion date for the project is still to be determined, the new foundation is finished and the bleachers are being prepared to ship for installation. Landsite Construction Co. was awarded the project at a bid price of \$164,750.

The completion of these projects will make the High School athletic facilities more safe, secure and enjoyable for the District and the community.

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## Middle School Cross-Country Team is Back!

After a one year layoff, the West Deptford Middle School cross-country team is back! Implemented in the fall of 2000, the team consists of both boys and girls who are in the 7th and 8th grade. Over the past ten seasons, the team has had a very successful record, including a few undefeated seasons.

The team hosts their home meets at West Deptford Park, where they complete the 1.5-mile course through the back trails of the park. They also have the luxury of watching our High School team compete prior to their meets. This allows them to model themselves after some of the more advanced runners. This is very important because the Middle School is the only feeder program for our High School team.

While mostly competing in the Colonial Conference, the team has also enjoyed success against other schools, some of which include: Kingsway, Clearview, Schalick and Delsea. West Deptford has shown success against these larger schools throughout the years as well. They also participate in some individual oriented meets that include: The South Jersey Open, The Wildcat Invitational, The frosh/soph meet held at Gloucester County College and The Colonial Conference Championship held at Penny Packer Park in Haddonfield.

It is apparent how grateful the students and community are to have the team back this year. With over thirty members on the

team, Coach Tom Cross says "The level of enthusiasm and dedication that these student athletes are demonstrating has been great." After a strong start at five wins and one loss, another successful season is right on the horizon for this year, and hopefully many more.



**West Deptford Cross Country Team Members David Ahlzadeh, Lori-Ann Johnson and Jonathan Smith at practice.**

# West Deptford Schools Welcomes New Staff!



**West Deptford Middle School Welcomes New Team Members (pictured left to right): Amanda Burkett, Jaclyn Argo, Jessica Murphy, James Schroff, Jennifer Stephens, Kristin Sincavage and Colleen Cech.**



**West Deptford High School Welcomes New Team Members (pictured left to right): William Rumaker and Kimberly Macey.**



**Green-Fields Elementary School Welcomes New Team Members (pictured left to right): Elise Wajid, Jennifer Hitchner, Beth Andalaro, Christina Farrell, Jamie Everwine and Dawn Susco.**



**West Deptford School District Welcomes New Team Members (pictured left to right): Denise Leaf and Robin Folino.**



**Oakview Elementary School Welcomes New Team Members (pictured left to right): Kim Labree, Cindy Cobb, Kim Long, Adrienne Boucher and Kim Meginniss.**



## Message from the Superintendent

It is hard to believe that we are already in the month of October, and the 2011-12 school year is more than one month old. It was a very active summer for all of us in the District, and many new, exciting initiatives are underway this year.

As you can see from the previous pages of this newsletter, we added a significant number of outstanding new staff members this year.

In late August, the District was informed that we were

selected as one of the ten districts in the state to pilot the Educational Excellence for New Jersey Teacher Evaluation System. We are very proud of this, and we are hard at work completing all of the requirements of this pilot program.

I look forward to working with the members of the West Deptford Community to continue to provide our students with excellent educational opportunities, an enriched curriculum, and a safe, orderly, technology-rich environment.

## The New Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights

Over the past several months, West Deptford Township Schools has prepared for the enactment of the new Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights. This Bill was signed into law by Governor Chris Christie and is reported to be the toughest Anti-Bullying law in the entire country. This is a very complicated law to interpret; however, it does have a significant impact on the way in which schools across the state will respond to acts of bullying. In order to teach employees about the requirements and intent of the law, trainings have been provided to employees throughout the District. Bus drivers, cafeteria workers, LPC Aides, teachers, administrators, administrative assistants, coaches, Young Eagles Providers, students etc., either have already received training or will receive training during the first marking period. In order to assist parents to understand the law and its impact on West Deptford Township Schools, the following parent informational sessions will be offered:

Middle School PTO Meeting	10/04/2011	6:30 p.m.
Elementary PTO Meeting	10/19/2011	7:00 p.m.
High School PTO Meeting	11/02/2011	6:30 p.m.

During these trainings, parents will have the opportunity to

view sample letters that will be used throughout the year, learn about the educational programs and initiatives that will be implemented into the schools at each of the three levels, and they will have the opportunity to learn about the reporting practices required by law. These sessions are not scheduled to address individual family issues; however, if questions, concerns, or issues do exist, please feel free to contact your child's building-level principal or the District's Anti-Bullying Coordinator, Ms. Kristin P. O'Neil.

In addition, several evening presentations have been scheduled for parents throughout the District. Please mark these dates on your calendar. Each of these sessions will be held at the West Deptford High School. The District would like to thank the West Deptford High School PTO for providing refreshments for attendees.

Rachel's Challenge	10/12/2011	7:00 p.m.
Cyber Bullying	11/17/2011	7:00 p.m.
Ryan's Story	03/28/2012	7:00 p.m.

We hope to see you all in attendance for each of these exciting learning opportunities.

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### FOCUS ON WEST DEPTFORD SCHOOLS

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