

The Swanson Anchor

November 2013



From the Principal's Desk

Thanks to those of you who participated in our student led conferences last month. Students and their STAR teachers spent weeks preparing for them. Students set goals based on their academic progress, their contribution to the school community and their involvement in extracurricular activities. They reflected on their academic achievements and challenges and practiced describing their progress to their classmates and STAR teacher.

Students reported feeling more confident about their abilities after leading these conferences. Also, 93% of STAR teachers who completed an internal survey indicated that helping prepare for the conferences helped build or strengthen relationships with their students.

The student led conference experience is grounded in research. According to the Association for Middle Level Learners, "Young adolescents need opportunities to reflect upon the work they are producing in order to develop the ability to do so..." (Source: This We Believe in Action.) Noted scholar Dr. Peter Scales explains,

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From the PTA

It's practically impossible to believe, but 20% of the school year already is behind us, and we're transitioning into the second marking period of the school year! Now that students, parents, teachers and administration are firmly ensconced in their respective routines, I ask that you add one more thing to yours – involvement in the PTA. This commitment can range from bringing an item to the teacher workday breakfasts to chairing a committee and running an event, but ALL contributions make a BIG difference to the Swanson community. (If you've been considering involvement but don't know where to begin, please feel free to contact me at 3jernigans@verizon.net.)

Thank you to every Swanson family who has contributed to Dollars for Scholars, the PTA's primary fundraiser for the year. If you haven't contributed, please consider doing so. As many of you know, we are over-capacity and our budget will be stretched thin to cover extra expenses associated with expanding existing programs to serve a growing student population. The E-Z Form is accessible on the Swanson website under PTA – PTA Forms. Or, send contributions in by envelope marked PTA – Dollars for Scholars. This fundraiser is vital to fully funding the events and projects that enhance the learning experience of each Swanson student.

I am delighted to report that plans are in the works for the Second Annual Swanson Spring Fling juried arts and crafts market. Committee members include (Chair)

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November 2013

November

- 1 Deadline to Participate in the APS GO! Parent Travel Survey
- 4 End of Grading Period
- 7 Strengthening Families Program
6:00 pm
Challenging Racism
7:00 pm
- 11 Veterans Day (No School for Students)
- 12 PTA Meeting
7:00 pm
- 14 Report Cards Issued
- 27-29 Thanksgiving Break
(No School for Students)

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Becky O'Neil, Karen Hancox, Tatjana Curcic, Karen Eldridge and Cecily Corcoran, Swanson Art Instructor. We will hold the event in the Swanson large gym on Saturday, March 15, 2014. Applications will be available via email from any member of the committee beginning mid-November. We want to create an event that will thrive from year-to-year, but we need your involvement to build a strong foundation for future committees! Please contact Committee Chair Becky O'Neil at becky@beckyspetcare.com if you are interested in serving on this event team.

The next PTA meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 12, at 7:00 pm in the school library. We are planning a presentation from Christine Joy who will speak at the meeting about our growth as a Professional Learning Community. In the interim, I hope that you'll consider giving some of your time and talents to the PTA for what ultimately will be a fulfilling experience for you, for your child and for their classmates at Swanson. May a delightful November be yours!

— Julie R. Jernigan, 2013-14 Swanson PTA President

Thank You, Swanson PTA!

The Visual Arts, Technology Education and Family and Consumer Sciences programs are underfunded this year. But thanks to a generous allocation by the Swanson PTA, our elective programs now have additional funding.

These elective classes are hands-on and require a wide range of consumable items to teach students different concepts in our curriculums. With the additional funding we will be able to not only demonstrate but also give students the opportunity to practice the standards of learning and competencies outlined in our curriculums. These funds will also allow us to spend time reinforcing and enriching activities so that we might scaffold our lessons, reaching learners on multiple levels.

On behalf of the students in our classes who will greatly benefit from your generosity, thank you for your support of our programs!

— Jim DeMarino, Technology Education Teacher

— Cecily Corocoran, Visual Arts Teacher

— Chris Taylor, Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher

“Middle level educators are in a unique position to help build many developmental assets such as feeling empowered and playing useful roles, building social competence and developing a commitment to learning.” (Source: This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents.)

The student-led conference is a powerful venue to support this learning. Middle level education expert Brenda Dyck identifies several benefits of student-led conferences in Middle Ground Magazine. They:

- Encourage students to accept responsibility for their academic performance.
- Help students take ownership for the things that interfere with their learning success.
- Teach students the self-evaluation process.
- Develop oral communication and organizational skills.
- Increase self-confidence.
- Enhance communication between student and parents.

Of the 312 parents who took our exit survey, 78% agreed or strongly agreed that the student led conference was valuable and informative. One parent commented, “It was very helpful to have my son with me and to have him lead the discussion!” Another stated, “This process is a great learning experience and ability for kids to take ownership of their progress.”

As with all of our initiatives, we will continue working to improve on the experience. The next round of student led conferences is slated for March. If you have questions about your child's progress in the meantime, contact his or her teachers directly. Thanks again for supporting your child and their teachers in this endeavor!

— Bridget Loft, Principal

Swanson's Annual Food Drive

As holiday time nears, more and more people living in Arlington are in need of food to feed their families. Swanson and Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) come together each year to meet this need.

This December, Student Government Association (SGA) and Mrs. Taylor's Emerging Scholar (E.S.) STAR will come together to help organize Swanson's Annual Food Drive. We hope to surpass last year's collection of non-perishable items.

Please support Swanson by donating non-perishable food. We especially need more filling foods, such as peanut butter, tuna, oatmeal and rice! We are counting on our students here at Swanson to lend a helping hand by doing small deeds to do tremendous things for others.

For any questions, please contact Mrs. Joy (SGA STAR) or Mrs. Taylor (E.S.). The food drive will run from December 2-13.

— Rosie Eldridge, SGA student

Coming Soon: Stella and Dot Fundraiser!

The Student Government Association is involved in many activities at Swanson, including organizing service projects and spirit week. We would like to do some new and creative things this year, but we need your help!

To that end, we will be having a Stella and Dot fundraiser soon! You can purchase jewelry and handbags in early November, just in time for the holiday season. We will hold a merchandise show at the school in early November. You'll be able to place online orders around that time, too.

Please look for more details on Swanson's website and listserv.

— Christine Joy, SGA Sponsor

Tech Ed Students Create Shirts for Their First Service Project

Students in Mr. DeMarino's Technology Education classes and in Swanson's Technology Student Association worked together to create 320 T-shirts for the Project Y.E.S. program. Project Y.E.S is a youth mentoring program offered at 15 of Arlington's elementary schools. Students made the shirts using the ChromaBlast T-shirt printing technology that is used for Communication Technology projects. The proceeds from the project help fund the school's TSA program!

— Jim DeMarino, Technology Education Teacher



Clipper Families Gather for a Café Evening

On Thursday, October 24, the Clipper team joined together with family and friends for an evening of good food and conversation. The annual event is a great opportunity for students to introduce their families to new friends as well as teachers.

The cafeteria was buzzing as Clipper students socialized with friends. "It is so nice to see students bonding quickly at the beginning of the year. The Clipper Café allows students to share their new environment with family," noted Tony Philippon, Clipper Team Captain.

The big hit of the evening was the Clipper cake and hot chocolate. Everyone left full of good cheer.

— Beth Sanderson, Clipper Reading Teacher



A Great Start for Sea Hawks!

The Sea Hawks are off to an exciting start! After navigating the routine of opening lockers, switching classes, and meeting new peers, the team hosted a Popsicle social at the end of September to celebrate the first month of middle school.

As illustrated by the pictures, October challenged students to investigate new concepts and perspectives. In Ms. Egan's Science class, students used dry ice to examine fluid density. They observed how the carbon dioxide gas flowed downward because its density is higher than that of air. Ms. Schrecker's History students explored various Native American tribes in their unit about Early American Indians and the Environment. After researching, they wrote and presented persuasive speeches in the First Annual American Indian Tribunal.

We congratulate Sea Hawk students on completing their first quarter, and look forward to working with them as they continue to share new experiences and adjust to middle school. Please mark your calendars for our next team event, Sea Hawk Supper, on November 14, 2013.



Kimberly Villazon-Soto holds dry ice during an experiment in Science class.



Will Reynolds persuades members of the audience to preserve the lands of the Lakota Tribe during the First Annual American Indian Tribunal.

Swanson Student Wins National Book Festival Summer Writing Contest!

The Sea Hawk team would like to recognize Sofie Dalton, the Grand Prize Winner of the National Book Festival Summer Writing Contest! Ms. Dalton was prized for writing an essay about a novel that had a person impact on her life, Jeanne Birdsall's *The Penderwicks*.



Sofie Dalton (left), Grade 6, is honored at the National Book Festival in Washington DC. Dalton's essay, "A Book that Shaped Me," won the Grand Prize for the National Book Festival's Summer Writing Contest.

— Dana Cazan, 6th Grade English Teacher

Kids on Crutches

When students need to be on crutches, please make us aware so that we can plan for safety and mobility needs. If your child will be on crutches, please inform our school nurse, Marci Stoterau, by phone or e-mail (703-228-5514 or mstoterau@arlingtonva.us). She will get the information out to staff as appropriate so that we can help while your child has limited mobility.

— Scott McKeown, Assistant Principal

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

The International Baccalaureate Program (IB)

The IB program provides a rigorous education for highly motivated and academically proficient Washington-Lee students in grades 11 and 12. The IB program is unique in that it provides a cohesive interdisciplinary education leading to a diploma that is recognized at universities throughout the world.

Students apply for admission to the IB program in 8th grade. Applicants must also successfully complete Algebra by the end of 8th grade, as well as the second year of a World Language (with the exception of Latin).

For more information, please attend the no-obligation information session on Wednesday, December 4 at 7:00 pm in the Washington-Lee Auditorium. Please contact 8th grade counselor, Mrs. Jankowski, for more information at judy.jankowski@apsva.us.

Career Education: Coming Soon To A Computer Near You!

November is Career Education Month. Counselors will meet with students in November and December to introduce them to the newest web-based career planning and college exploration tool—Naviance.

Naviance offers career assessments and information, college search tools and information, personality and learning style assessments, a career portfolio to record honors, awards, work history and extra-curricular activities, resume builders, and a summer enrichment and scholarship database. It also offers the opportunity to journal about school related dreams, goals and aspirations! More information about accessing Naviance from your home is available under the Counseling section on Swanson's website.

One of the important goals of career awareness is to help students understand the relationship between school subjects and future career interests. Virginia Career View (www.vaview.vt.edu) is another free web-based tool that offers occupational information, college information, career videos and web links. It also offers a Career Information Hotline at 800-542-5870.

What can you as a parent do at home to support career education?

- Teach and reinforce positive study habits.
- Discuss different occupations and their duties.
- Assign age-appropriate chores and responsibilities to your children.
- Volunteer with your student in community projects.
- Capitalize on your child's interests through enrichment opportunities.

48th Annual Career Poetry and Poster Contest

The National Career Development Association (www.ncda.org) sponsors an annual Poster and Poetry contest. Students can get rules and entry forms from their counselor or English teacher. Swanson typically sweeps the county contest. In the past, Swanson students have won at states, including monetary prizes!

This year's theme is: "Charting the Course" — a very nautical theme! Contact Mrs. Jankowski at judy.jankowski@apsva.us for more information. Deadline for submissions is November 12 to the counseling office.

Bullying and Harassment Prevention

October was National Bullying Prevention month. Counselors visited classrooms to discuss the important issues of bullying, cyber-bullying and sexual harassment

in classroom seminars. Your student received important information in booklets purchased from Channing-Bete:

- Grade 6: Bullying: Keeping Tabs on and Giving Respect
- Grade 7: Cyberbullying: Keeping Tabs on Digital Safety
- Grade 8: Sexual Harassment: Keeping Tabs on Stopping Harassment in School

Encourage your students to be **Upstanders** and let us know of bullying situations that they witness.

Parents play an influential role in anti-bullying efforts. We urge you to become educated about the problem. A good place to begin is the APS Bullying Prevention Parent's guide at www.apsva.us/Page/2772. You can find more information at www.stopbullying.gov. Take the "Test Your Bullying Knowledge" to uncover the myths about bullying. Please feel free to contact your child's counselor for more information.

Character Education Focus for November: Responsibility

A child's success in school relies on a solid partnership between the student, their guardians and the school staff. This partnership involves shared expectations about the knowledge, skills and experiences that we want every child to possess. Student led conferences, parent-teacher conferences, Parentvue, progress reports and report cards all provide parents with important information about their child's academic progress and socio-emotional development.

Family rules, open communication, and homework routines help children learn to balance their various obligations along with home responsibilities. As middle schoolers seek more independence, teaching students responsibility and good character is paramount to helping prepare them to wisely handle these increasing freedoms.

What are some of those shared expectations?

- Always do your best...and always do your own work.
- Take advantage of opportunities for extra help, retakes, enrichment, and leadership.
- Treat everyone with respect...including yourself.
- Do what's right. It's the courageous thing to do.
- Take responsibility for any mistakes or poor decisions you make and seek ways to improve.

- Come prepared to learn—do your homework, bring your supplies, participate.

Ask yourself these questions: Does your child...

- Record homework in a planner, checking off completed tasks? (Blackboard is a backup.)
- Use the planner at the end of the school day to determine what he or she needs to bring home?
- Have all of the necessary supplies for class? (Check periodically to see if these need re-stocking.)
- Proofread or edit their work? Check the backside of worksheets? Read instructions? Check with your child to see if the project had a rubric.
- Keep the binder organized? Are loose papers filed?
- Have a quiet place to study—free of distractions?
- Know how to “study” for a test?
- Read at home?
- Pack up and put homework in the binder before going to bed?
- Get a good night’s sleep and eat a nutritious breakfast?

Together, we can reinforce those important skills and habits that will ensure academic success.

For more information, download these free booklets in English or Spanish from <http://publications.usa.gov>: “Helping your child with homework” and “Helping your child become a responsible citizen.”

Missing School is Missing Out

We are responsible for teaching your child, but we can’t do our jobs if your child is absent frequently. A child who misses a day of school misses a day of learning. The coursework in today’s middle schools is more challenging than it used to be. Students who are frequently absent are setting themselves up for serious academic problems.

Being late for school hurts a child’s learning, as well. A student who is 10 minutes late every day will miss 30 hours of instructional time during the year. STAR is an important time for students to gain information and form important relationships.

Making sure your child goes to school every day and on time is one of the most powerful ways parents can ensure success — in middle school, high school and beyond.

Tips for helping to improve your child’s attendance:

- Talk with your child about the importance of attending school regularly.
- Avoid scheduling family trips or doctor’s appointments during school hours.
- Make sure your child stays healthy by eating nutritious foods and getting exercise.
- Support rules and consequences for absenteeism.
- Try to keep a consistent bedtime. Children need at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep.
- Have a regular morning routine.
- Teach your children to use an alarm clock.
- Stay in touch with the school. Your child’s counselor is an important contact.
- Remember to celebrate and reward good attendance.

Our school social worker, Liska Friedman, will be working with students who have attendance issues. Please feel free to contact her if you have any questions or concerns.

The Latest from Latin

On Saturday October 26, 10 Swanson Latin I students attended the “Kick-off Certamen” at St. Stephens and St. Agnes School in Alexandria. A certamen is a quiz-bowl style contest on all things Latin and classics related. Students answer questions about mythology, history, sayings and derivatives, as well as Latin grammar and comprehension questions.

Both teams did really well, placing 6th and 8th overall against high school and middle school teams from all over northern Virginia. These included teams from classics powerhouses like Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology and Flint Hill School. Although the final rankings are based on cumulative results from three rounds of random pitting (which puts the scores of other teams in the hands of their competitors in other rounds), both Swanson teams won at least one of their

rounds and both earned a trophy for the school. Their teamwork and mutual support was a pleasure to witness.

Everyone enjoyed the event and I think Swanson Latin can look forward to a strong certamen season. Ad astra per aspera!

— Melanie Stowell, Latin Teacher



Left to right: Peter Fleckenstein, Emily Kile, Julia Billera, Bronte Waddoups, Yue Tang, Natalie Chin, Claire Cofield, Drew Kellenberger, Gus Grohmann (and Calder Lowentabl...not pictured)

After-School Activities Update

The first quarter is quickly coming to a close and Swanson's clubs and teams are off and running! Here is the latest news to keep you in the know about what's going on after school:

Sports

Tennis, Dive, and Girls Soccer all had amazing seasons once again this year! The tennis team took home half of the medals at the county championships. Girls soccer showed plenty of grit, skill, and teamwork to capture second place in the county. And the dive team continued its unparalleled achievement by clinching its third straight undefeated regular season. Great job Admirals!

Girls Basketball and Boys Soccer are currently underway. We hope to see everyone coming out to support our teams, even on those cold November evenings! After the Winter Break, Wrestling and Boys Basketball will begin. Make sure to listen to the morning announcements for more information.

Clubs

Almost all of our clubs have begun to meet after school. They include a few brand new clubs like Debate, Minecraft, and Video Game Design. We know that it's often hard to keep track of what club is meeting when and where, so we're rolling out a new monthly Activities Calendar. It will come home via backpack mail and be available on the website starting the first week of November. The calendar will include a daily list of club meetings and other important events. Make sure to keep checking the daily announcements as well, as they will have the most up to date information about schedule changes or cancellations.

If you have any questions or concerns about any after school program at Swanson, please don't hesitate to contact me at trevor.holland@apsva.us or 703-228-5510.

— Trevor Holland, Activities Coordinator