

The Swanson Anchor



March 2015

From the Principal's Desk

When I was pregnant with my son, I dreamed about the child he would become – what he would like to do, what his favorite subject in school would be, where he would go to college. I pretty much had his life mapped out by the time he was born. He would play soccer (like I did), he would wear collared shirts and khakis to school and he would earn straight A's throughout his school career. Instead, my now 8th grader plays baseball (longest game ever!), wears T-shirts with catchy slogans and shorts 365 days a year and has a few C's under his belt.

Parenting is a funny thing...The longer I do it, the more I learn that my kid is his own person with his own likes and dislikes and his own talents and challenges. As much as I'd like for him to be in Algebra so that he can get a jump on high school math in 8th grade, I know that he is appropriately placed in Math 8. Instead of stretching himself in math, he's trying his hand at Spanish. And guess what? He's happy, successful and on a good path – in spite of his "helpful" mother.

I say all this to try to shed some perspective on this whole academic planning marathon we're on as parents. APS' Aspire to Excellence initiative lays out clear pathways for our students as they navigate their way through middle and high school. (Go to <http://www.apsva.us/Domain/95> for helpful information about academic planning and the Aspire to Excellence program.) I agree with Dr. Murphy's philosophy that

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From the PTA

As we trudge through what I hope is the last of winter weather, spring will be here soon. With spring, we begin planning for next year. We on the PTA Executive Board have been so gratified to see the increased participation at our meetings/speaker series and all the activities we sponsor throughout the year. Many hands make light work, and many hands have been working to support our kids. Volunteering for a PTA Committee or on the Executive Board will help you to meet other Swanson parents, learn more about what is happening on a day to day basis at school – what makes Swanson the NUMBER ONE MIDDLE SCHOOL IN VIRGINIA! – and to demonstrate the importance of civic engagement to our kids. Middle School PTA is much less of a time commitment than in elementary school, and as our children's social circles expand, it is so important to get to know more people in their lives. Please consider either getting involved in the PTA next year or increasing your commitment. It is very gratifying and actually pretty fun! Email me at tishjenkins@gmail.com if you are interested.

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March 2015

- 5 School Board Meeting
7:30 pm, 1426 N. Quincy St.
- 5-6 Student-Led Conferences
- 6 No School for Students
- 10 PTA Meeting, 7:00 pm
- 12 CML Contest - Math Classes
Choral Mock Festival Concert
7:00 PM
- 14 PTA Annual Spring Arts and
Crafts Show
- 16-19 8th Grade Writing SOL
- 25 Spelling Bee - Qualifying
Round, 7:50 AM
- 27 6th Grade Humanities
Assembly
- 30- Spring Break
4/6 (No School for Students)

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From the Principal's Desk *(Continued from page 1)*

kids should stretch themselves by taking Algebra in 7th or 8th grade (if they're ready for it) or by taking a World Language – both high school credit classes. I do think that students need to be challenged. They need to learn how to fail and how to dust themselves off and get back on the horse to try again. They need to practice the academic skills that they will use in high school and beyond.

At the same time, we, as parents, also need to ensure that there is an element of sanity in our children's schedules. We need to make sure that if our kid loves art, he or she gets a chance to stretch in an art class. We need to give them a chance to learn a new skill in a Career and Technical Education class (such as Technology Education, Family and Consumer Sciences or Business) or explore what they can do with an instrument as part of an ensemble, stretch their acting chops or sing challenging music in a choir. Each class our children take should help them grow as scholars and as people.

In order to do this, it is important that we recognize that our children are their own people with their own challenges and their own talents. So please do seek out the advice of your child's math teacher if you currently have questions now about your child's math progress. At the end of the school year if you have questions or concerns when you receive your child's county math placement letter, do not hesitate to contact the math coach as directed on the letter so that you can understand the data and rationale behind the recommendation in order to allow you to make an informed decision to best support your child. Talk with our World Language teachers about the feasibility of your child taking a level 1 or 2 language while balancing a myriad of extracurricular activities. Use your child's counselor's knowledge and expertise to help set your child up for success. As for me, I did all of the above when it came to making course decisions for my son and, while I'm still working on recognizing that this is his journey and not mine, he is all the better for it.

—Bridget Loft, Principal

From the PTA *(Continued from page 1)*

Our speaker series continues in March. Siobhan Bowler will be presenting at the March 12 meeting. She does fantastic work with Arlington adolescents on drug and alcohol issues. As our children get older and move up toward high school, new peers and pressures will face them. For most of us, this is new territory. She can help us to identify the signs to look for, where to go for help, and to learn how drugs and alcohol affect the adolescent brain. I have seen her present before, and she is really terrific. You don't want to miss this one! March 12 at 7:00 pm in the library.

—Tish Jenkins, PTA President

Promotion Plan

Because of the very large number of eighth graders being promoted on Wednesday, June 17, 2015, we will make a few adjustments to our promotion ceremony in order to accommodate our eighth grade families as equitably as possible.

In late May, we will distribute tickets to each eighth grader through their STAR teachers. Eighth graders will receive two tickets each for the gymnasium and one ticket for the auditorium where we will project the ceremony on a live video feed. If extra tickets become available, we will distribute them on a first come, first served basis while supplies last during the King's Dominion pickup time on the evening of June 15, 2015.

In order to ensure a safe, comfortable experience for all of our eighth graders and their loved ones, no one will be admitted to the gym or the auditorium for the promotion ceremony without a ticket.

—Scott McKeown, Assistant Principal

HELP WANTED. No Experience Necessary!

The Swanson administrative team and school resource officer (SRO) are seeking interested parents to collaborate in assessing our emergency preparedness plans. Through regular meetings with Swanson admin and our SRO, we hope that this parent would be able to help to

communicate important safety information to the PTA and other stakeholders, helping to enhance Swanson's readiness in the event of a crisis. No prior school or public safety experience is required. If you are interested in participating in these talks or for more information, please call Scott McKeown, Assistant Principal, at 703-228-5503 or Cpl. Kevin Treakle, School Resource Officer, at 703-228-5527. Don't forget to check out the Swanson safety plan available at <http://www.apsva.us/Page/29131>.

—Scott McKeown, Assistant Principal

Skate for Catherine Raffle Tickets on Sale Now!

Hey Swanson students, staff and parents! To start off the month of March, the SGA is holding a fundraiser at school. We will be selling Skate for Catherine raffle tickets. Skate for Catherine was started four years ago after Catherine Blair passed away from neuroblastoma, a rare childhood cancer that attacks the nervous system. All proceeds go to the Blair Foundation, which supports research on childhood cancer.

Raffle prizes include an iPad mini, a Sports Sampler, a Restaurant Sampler, Family Adventures and more!!! Raffle tickets are just \$5 for one ticket, and \$20 for five. They are being sold in the morning in the small gym, the large gym and the cafeteria. Buy a raffle ticket to win one of these cool prizes, and support neuroblastoma research.

—Luke Anzaldi, Leah Karush and Caroline Colman

Spotlight on Literacy Events

To promote the love of literacy during African American History month and February's For the Love of Reading, the Swanson HILT program, in coordination with Library Services and Minority Achievement, kicked off its annual RIF distribution on February 6 with staff read-alouds centered around or written by African American writers and poets. These interactive readings were followed by students "speed dating" with RIF books until they found the right one to add to their personal libraries.

The love of literature lingered as Swanson celebrated the national African American Read-In on February 13. This year, English and Reading classrooms honored the literary contributions of African Americans in a variety of meaningful ways. While some conducted read-alouds in an

intimate classroom setting, others attended the library presentations offered throughout the day led by Swanson staff, students who had participated in the Words Out Loud writing contest and the Swanson Dance Crew. The Clippers sixth grade team used the Read In as an opportunity to make cross-curricular links by tying it to the history of the Underground Railroad, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights Movement in a multi-sensory experience for students.

Here at Swanson, we love literacy! See below for opportunities to nurture the reader and writer within us all:

1. T.A.B. (Teen Advisory Board) is a book club where students read and review new books for the library. To join, attend a Thursday meeting during lunch. The remaining dates are: March 5, April 9 and April 23. See Ms. Hailey or Ms. Metz if you have any questions.
2. The Swanson Family Book Club will meet Monday, March 2 from 7:00–8:30 pm. Contact Ms. Dykema, Ms. Hailey, or Ms. Metz for more information.
3. Swanson's online edition of the Wavelength Literary Magazine is holding a fiction writing contest. Anyone can submit, but the deadline is March 9. Please submit your piece on Google Docs to Leah McFarlane.

—Cindy Chiu, Reading Specialist

Pick Your Lucky Book!

From March 16–27 at the Swanson library, we will be trying something new and exciting: we will be running "Pick Your Lucky Book!"

We are all occasionally guilty of judging books by their covers, but during the last two weeks before spring break, we want students to see what they might be missing. Students will be able to check out books that have been wrapped so that the cover, author, title, and other identifying information are obscured. Students are invited to try a book they might never have thought to check out. If they find their lucky book, they can spend spring break reading something amazing!

We hope to have many people find their perfect lucky book. Please e-mail Tammy Metz (tamara.metz@apsva.us) or Amy Hailey (amy.bailey@apsva.us) with any questions.

—Tamara Metz, School Library Media Specialist

SOL Writing Tests for 8th Graders

This is a reminder for 8th grade parents and students that the SOL Writing Tests will be given March 16–18. The tests are given during the morning and are untimed. Please mark your calendars and make every effort to ensure your child attends school on these dates.

Summer School: Registration Begins March 5

Information on 2015 summer school options is now available online. Registration begins starting March 5. Visit the APS website to learn more: <http://www.apsva.us/summer-school>. Summer school will be held on the following dates:

- Middle: July 13 to August 14 (5 weeks)
- High: July 6 to August 14 (6 weeks)

As you review your child's academic progress this year, please keep in mind the APS promotion policy: "To be promoted to Grade 9 from Grade 8, a student must have successfully completed four of the required seven courses; 8th grade mathematics, English, Science, and World Geography." (School Board Policy 20-1.)

Upcoming Parent Resource Center Events

Middle School Sibshop

Date: March, date TBA

Location: Syphax Education Center, 2110 Washington Boulevard, Room 113, Arlington, VA 22204

Middle School Sibshops are peer recreation and support sessions for students, grades 6–8, who have brothers or sisters with disabilities, special needs, and/or significant health issues. Sibs are encouraged to join us for a super fun evening. Dinner will be included! A \$5.00 donation is requested, but not required, to cover dinner and materials. Registration is required. Contact the Parent Resource Center at emma.parralsanchez@apsva.us or 703-228-7239 to register or obtain additional information.

Becoming an Active Member of Your Child's IEP Team

Date: April 9, 2015; 9:30 am–12:00 pm

Location: Syphax Education Center, 2110 Washington Boulevard, Room 113, Arlington, VA 22204

Participants will:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the IEP process, including standards-based IEPs;
- Understand components of the IEP, including Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance, measurable annual goals, assessment options, service delivery models, and accommodations for students with disabilities;
- Learn how to prepare for IEP meetings; and
- Develop effective collaboration skills to work with your school-based team members.

Register for this event by visiting www.apsva.us/prc/events or calling: 703-228-7239.

Minority Achievement

Attention Swanson Boys: Register for the 2015 Boys Leadership Conference: The Color of Leadership: A Male Perspective! Participants will see great guest speakers, participate in workshops and learn leadership skills. For more information, see Ms. Reardon in the Counseling Office!

This January, five Swanson students attended the **Metro DC Diversity Leadership Conference** with Ms. Reardon. The conference was held at the Friends School in Sandy Spring, Maryland. The conference focused on stereotypes, biases and how we can improve our schools.



On January 29, 22 Swanson students attended a free showing of *Selma* at Regal Ballston. The students enjoyed the film and have continued the conversation about the civil rights movement back at Swanson.



On January 30, the **Emerging Scholars cohort** visited the **University of Mary Washington** in Fredericksburg, Virginia with Ms. Reardon. The students were treated to an admissions presentation, a tour of the campus, and lunch in the dining hall. Thank you to UMW and our chaperones!



To learn about future opportunities, contact Chrissy Reardon at 703-228-5512, or christine.reardon@apsva.us.

Nomination for Inventor of the Year!

The design process that the 8th grade Technology Education class started last year and continued this year for a specialized project has earned Swanson a nomination for Autodesk Inventor of the Year. Check out the awesome things happening in the lab, and make sure to vote for Swanson at this link (read about Swanson's invention under "July"): http://inthe fold.autodesk.com/in_the_fold/2015/02/autodesk-2014-inventor-of-year-voting-now-open.html.

— Jim DeMarino, Technology Education Instructor

Swanson's Winning Writers Scholastic Writing Awards

Four 8th graders deserve congratulations for awards in the DC Metro Scholastic Art & Writing competition. Isabella Frymoyer, won a Gold Key for her memoir,

"Thing of Beauty" and two Honorable Mentions for poetry and another memoir. Honorable mention awards also went to Hannah Rosman for "Princess Me!" in the humor category, Ellie Berenson for her memoir, "Tale of a Short-Lived Bubble" and Konika Akter for a poem, "i used to be, but now i am."

Words Out Loud

The English Language Arts Office of Arlington Public Schools sponsored the annual *Words Out Loud: Celebrating the African American Read-In* contest and selected a poem by Hannah Rosman, grade 8, "The past isn't over" for a literary celebration at Clarendon's Barnes and Noble on February 25.

Visit Wavelength, Swanson's online literary magazine, from the Swanson homepage to read these outstanding pieces and much more!

Student writers and artists meet each Tuesday after school with Ms. McFarlane in room 232, and new members are welcome. Let leah.mcfarlane@apsva.us know if you have any questions.

—Leah Graham McFarlane, 8th Grade English Teacher

Continental Math League Contest

The fourth Continental Math League contest occurred on Thursday, February 5. Swanson students continue to excel on the contest with the 6th graders on top with a perfect cumulative score as a school. Here's a question from the 7th grade contest: Two-thirds of the people in a room are seated in three-fourths of the chairs. The remaining people are standing. If there are six empty chairs, then there are ____ people in the room.

Top cumulative scorers in each of the grade levels are as follows:

Cumulative Perfect Score of 24:

6th graders:

Joel Brown
Camille Chiu
Daniel Nadel

8th grader:

Hanna Xu

Cumulative Score of 23:

6th graders:

Casey Bloome

Nicholas Papavassiliou

Cumulative Score of 22:

6th graders:

Allison Craig

Henry Uz

Luella Wallander

7th grader:

Claire Williams

8th grader:

Claire Cofield

Cumulative Score of 21:

6th graders:

Leah Karush

James Licato

Natalie Martin

Liam Norman

George Stutzman

Samuel Youkeles

7th graders:

Kaya Guthrie

Michael Kyrychenko

Zachary Luzius,

Henry Olson,

Christina Sheckler

8th grader:

Calder Lowenthal

The final contest was held in early March and will be reported in the April Anchor.

(The answer to the question in the first paragraph is 27.)

—Laura Partridge, Math Coach

MathCounts

The MathCounts team has had a busy year so far. The club is open to any student interested in math problem solving. Students have had the opportunity to participate in three different math competition events. On a Saturday in December, twelve MathCounts participants competed in a practice MathCounts competition at Longfellow Middle School. The students representing Swanson

were: **Timinte Abraham, Raka Banerjee, Natalie Chin, Claire Cofield, Clemons Finger, Isabella Frymoyer, Michael Kyrychenko, Daniel Nadel, Anna Reiner, Kirill Usubyan, Mike Usubyan, and Hanna Xu.**

Swanson then participated in the Carderock Math Contest held at the NAVSEA Warfare Center in Bethesda, Maryland in January. Students also got to take a brief tour of the facilities and saw the water basins where model boats and submarines are tested. The following students participated in the field trip: **Timinte Abraham, Raka Banerjee, Natalie Chin, Claire Cofield, Isabella Frymoyer, Daniel Nadel, Nicholas Papavassiliou, and Hanna Xu.** At the event, 8th grader **Hanna Xu** qualified to participate in the countdown round. A special thank you to Claire's mom and Nick's dad for being drivers and chaperones.

In February, 10 students represented Swanson at the regional MathCounts competition. There were 18 schools and over 150 students at the event. Swanson students earned an award plaque for the school by placing a very respectable 5th place overall. The students who participated in the MathCounts regional event were 8th graders: **Natalie Chin, Claire Cofield, Isabella Frymoyer, Mike Usubyan, and Hanna Xu;** 7th grader: **Matthew Saenz** and 6th graders **Matthew Carey, Daniel Nadel, and Nicholas Papavassiliou.** **Hanna Xu** once again qualified for the countdown round at the contest.

Practices are continuing as students work toward earning gold level status. A future Anchor will include a wrap up of MathCounts activities.

—Laura Partridge, Math Coach

Special Education Corner

Special Education Cycle

The Eligibility Process for Your Child to Become Eligible to Receive Special Education Services

“Before your child can become eligible to receive special education services, the school is required by law to determine your child’s specific needs. The school determines these needs through a process consisting of many steps, often termed the “Special Education Cycle.” When viewed as an ongoing cycle with several steps along the way, the special education process is easier to understand.”

See “Anchor” articles from November 2014 – February 2015 to view prior steps in the Special Education Cycle.

What are the next steps once my child is found eligible for Special Education Services?

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

What: If the Eligibility Committee determines that your child is eligible for special education services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) Committee is formed to develop an IEP. The IEP is a written document that describes an educational program specifically designed to meet your child's learning needs. The IEP includes the following information:

- A description of what help your child needs in order to be successful in school and how this help will be given through special education services (including related services).
- A description of your child's educational levels based on classroom performance and other assessment data.
- A summary of your child's strengths and weaknesses.
- A listing of annual goals and short term objectives directed toward developing weak areas.
- How your child's progress in meeting goals and objectives will be measured.
- Accommodations necessary for success in the learning environment.
- State/county-wide/and Literacy test accommodations.
- A description of how much special education will be delivered in the general education setting and in the special education setting (including Family Life Education).
- Transition goals and objectives for students 14 years and older.
- Diploma options.
- When special education services will begin and how long they will last.

Who: The members of the IEP Committee usually include the school principal/designee (chairperson), Teacher (s), parent(s), and the student, when appropriate. Students are encouraged to participate whenever possible. Your presence and participation in developing the IEP is most important because you know your child better than anyone.

When: Within 30 calendar days after a student is initially found eligible for special education services, the school will work with you to select a convenient time for the IEP meeting and confirm in writing the date and time agreed upon.

What Happens Next: Special Education Services begin with parental permission.

What documents should I keep? A copy of the IEP

Please look for highlights of topics related to special education services in future issues. You can also view this information on the APS Office of Special Education website:

<http://www.apsva.us/Page/2865>.

—Shannan Ellis, Assistant Principal

Call for Entries: 3rd Annual Arlington Student Film Festival

Student filmmakers of all ages, from Arlington Public Elementary, Middle and High Schools, are invited to enter the 3rd Annual Arlington Student Film Festival! You can find the entry form online at tinyurl.com/asff15-entry-form. The deadline is April 15, with finalists announced May 15. The festival will be held June 5–6.

The Arlington Student Film Fest has screened over 70 films by students from every middle and high school and several elementary schools in Arlington, awarded over 50 prizes, and given away thousands of dollars in scholarships to local film education programs.

Made possible by generous grants from the Arlington Community Foundation and the H-B Woodlawn community, the Arlington Student Filmfest lets young filmmakers share their work with a live audience on June 6, and to meet mentors and collaborators from across the County the night before at the Fest-Eve '4-hour filmfest' icebreaker activity.

Students may enter short films of any genre. Past categories have included Drama, Comedy, Documentary, Experimental, Journalism/Newscast, Literary Adaptation, Academic Subject Film, PSA, Parody, Music Video, Musical and more.

For more information, contact Tom Mallan, Festival Coordinator at arlingtonstudentfilmfest@gmail.com, and check out the Facebook page at facebook.com/arlingtonstudentfilmfest.



Swanson Middle School

Home of the Admirals

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