

Swanson Anchor



May 2015

From the Principal's Desk

Believe it or not, the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests are right around the corner. We started with the Writing SOL for 8th graders in early March, and in late May/early June, all of our students will be taking SOL tests:

- 6th grade: Reading and Math
- 7th grade: Reading and Math
- 8th grade: Reading, Math (Math 8, Algebra or Geometry), World Geography and Science

It is essential for students to be present during review and testing time. Teachers will offer opportunities for students to review content during lunch and after school and may also incorporate practice into regular class warm-ups and lessons as testing approaches. Passing the Algebra, Geometry and World Geography SOL tests will allow students to earn verified credit for these courses and is required for graduation from high school. The complete testing schedule is available on the calendar at the Swanson website: www.apsva.us/swanson.

This can be a stressful time for students. Following are tips for parents to help keep this stress to a minimum:

(Continued on page 2)

From the PTA

As we wind down the 2014-15 school year, we will all look ahead to a year of transitions. Some of us will be moving on to high school, while others will watch their 6th and 7th graders become the "upper classmen" next year. All of us on the PTA Executive Committee will be leaving Swanson as our children are promoted from 8th grade into high school. For our family, the feelings are bittersweet; our older kids are both APS graduates, so we know well how fast the days of high school zoom by.

Swanson will continue its tradition of excellence under the strong leadership of Bridget Loft and her staff next year. I've come to know these people better through my work with the PTA this year and have an even greater appreciation for the work they all do every day with our children. I am also happy to announce that we have a full slate of officers ready to get to work next year. Upon the election at the June PTA meeting, I expect the PTA Executive Committee to be comprised of Noah Simon as President, Zoe O'Neil as VP, Liz Walsh as Secretary and Treasurer will be Monique Brown. Madelon Brennan will be spearheading PR, Parent Outreach and Communications, and Anne Henrich will lead Fundraising. These last two are new

(Continued on page 3)

May 2015

- 6 Bike and Walk to School Day
- 7 Spring Choral Concert
7:00 pm
School Board Meeting
7:30 pm, 1426 N. Quincy St.
- 12 PTA Meeting
7:00 pm
School Board Work Session on
Technology, 7:30 pm
1426 N. Quincy Street,
- 14 STEM Night
6:00 pm
- 21 School Board Meeting
7:30 pm, 1426 N. Quincy St.
- 25 Holiday, No School for
Students
- 27 2015 APS Celebration of
Excellence, Washington-Lee
High School, 7:30 pm

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

- Maintain a positive home environment with consistent rules and clear expectations and boundaries. Try to keep routines and structures in place that allow for family time at mealtime, a study time, a regular set bedtime and morning routines.
- Encourage consistent attendance for your child and try to schedule appointments after school.
- Be flexible when dealing with issues, and try not to transfer your feelings of stress to your interactions with your child.
- Deal with little problems before they become big problems.
- Look for the positives and successes and don't forget to tell your child that you recognize them.

(Adapted from "Kids Just Want to Have Fun" by Cathy Hix)

It is important that we are aware of the distractions our students may experience particularly at this time of the year and that we work together to support our students. Thank you for all you do to help your child do his or her best on these important exams.

—Bridget Loft, Principal

From the PTA *(Continued from page 1)*

positions and critical ones that will help all facets of the PTA run more smoothly, with greater ability to meet the needs of our constituents and to serve our school at an even higher level.

It's been an honor to serve on the Swanson PTA. It's also been a lot of fun. If I can make one suggestion for all Swanson parents, it would be to reach out and find a way to engage with the school just a little bit more - ask if a teacher could use any help in the classroom or the office, look for a PTA committee that needs some help. You'll meet new people, get to know a little more about the school - and probably even have some fun!

—Tish Jenkins, PTA President

Promotion Plan

Because of the very large number of 8th graders being promoted on Wednesday, June 17, we will be making a few adjustments to our promotion ceremony in order to accommodate our 8th grade families as equitably as possible.

In late May, we will be distributing tickets to each 8th 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. Extra tickets will be distributed on a first come, first served basis while supplies last during the Kings Dominion pickup time on the evening of June 15.

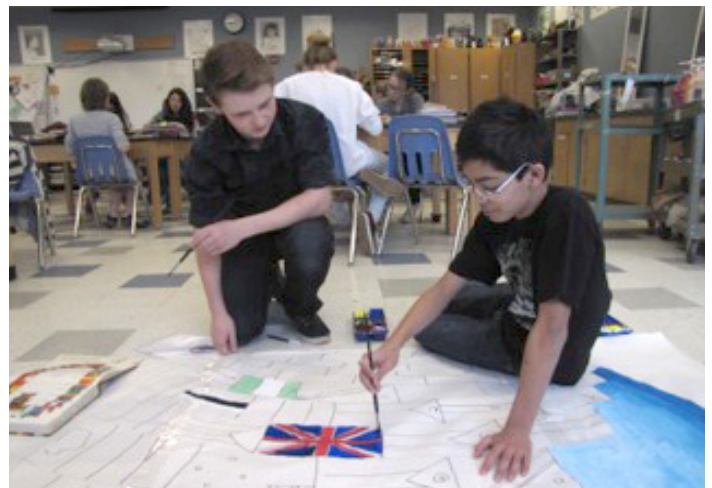
In order to ensure a safe, comfortable experience for all of our 8th graders and their loved ones, no one will be admitted to the gym or the auditorium for the promotion ceremony without a ticket.

—Scott McKeown, Assistant Principal

A Multicultural Night Mural!

The Visual Arts students created a mural for Multicultural night. Many students worked on the project for a week. They chose flags that they thought should be included in the mural and then painted them in. This worked better than just having them paint certain flags. With this process, they were able to paint flags of places they were from or had visited, which was more enjoyable. It also sped up the project greatly, since students were eager to have their flags displayed on Multicultural Night!

—Cecily Corcoran, Visual Arts Teacher





Fiction Contest Highlights Swanson's Creativity

Wavelength, Swanson's literary magazine, is pleased to announce winners for a school-wide fiction contest. With nearly 25 entries, it is clear that this community is chock full of creative writers.

- First Place: **Sofie Dalton** for "Looking for Isabel"
- Second Place: **Shambhavi Ramaswamy** for "A Mirage No More"
- Third Place: **Charles Ciccoretti** for "Small Speech from an Unknown Man"
- Honorable Mentions: **Ryan Mulcahy** for "House Fly" and **V.D.M.S.** for "Nightmare Fuel"

Read the full text of each piece on Wavelength Online, a link on the Swanson homepage, and stay tuned next month as we honor more writers for April's poetry contest.

—Leah Graham McFarlane, 8th Grade English Teacher

Spotlight on Literacy

Swanson Spelling Bee

Thank you to all students, teachers and parents who attended this event! We would like to applaud the following students who participated in the final round of the Swanson Spelling Bee on Wednesday, April 22:

- 6th graders: **Braxton Breed, James Story, Liam Norman,** and **Brenna Meehan**
- 7th graders: **Michael Farrell-Rosen**
- 8th graders: **Kate Cobey** and **Ethan Brodnitz**

Congratulations to our winners:

- 1st Place: **Brenna Meehan**
- 2nd Place: **Michael Farrell-Rosen**
- 3rd Place: **Liam Norman**

Oratorical Contest

We extend accolades to all participants of the Oratorical Contest answering to this year's speech prompt, "How My Optimism Will Help Me Press On to the Greater Achievements of the Future." Judges from Arlington's chapter of Optimist International were impressed with Swanson's outstanding speeches. The following 8th graders

Student Government Election

Are you a 6th or 7th grader who is interested in planning spirit week and a pep rally? Are you interested in organizing service projects? Would you like to be part of a community that has a voice in the school? If so, you should consider joining the SGA! We are having an informational meeting on Friday, May 1 during STAR in room 228. Please come to hear more about what we do and pick up an application. All applications are due Friday, May 8.

—Christine Joy
World Geography & Instructional Lead Teacher

participated in the regional level Oratorical Contest in the auditorium on Wednesday evening, April 22: **Konika Akter, Alex Burnham, Grace Cheek, Kate Cobey, Will Fineman, Peter Fleckenstein, Drew Kellenberger, Preston Loper, Gus Nathanson, Lilith Pilkerton, Greg Roberts, and Hanna Xu.**

Congratulations to **Alexandra Burnham** and **Peter Fleckenstein** on their advancement to the zone level competition of the Optimists Oratorical Contest. Best wishes to them for this terrific honor! Second place went to **Lily Pilkerton** and **Gus Nathanson.**

Third place went to **Konika Akter** and **Greg Roberts.**

Young Playwrights' Theater

Congratulations to 8th grade student playwright Rose Duane for having her play performed at YPT's New Play Festival on April 21st at the GALA Hispanic Theatre in Washington, DC. What a tremendous honor!"

Pick a Poet Visit

In celebration of Poetry Month and sponsored by the Humanities Project, professional poet Joseph Green from poetryN.O.W. visited the classrooms of Ms. Affleck, Ms. Cazan, and Ms. Chiu to conduct an engaging writing workshop utilizing stream of consciousness techniques to bring out the poet in us all.

Gearing up for SOLs

As the Reading SOL approaches in the next month, students and parents may wonder how they can best prepare. In addition to getting a good night's rest and eating a healthy breakfast, students need to build reading stamina by reading daily. This doesn't necessarily mean how fast or how much a student can read in a given amount of time, but how focused he or she is in sustaining active reading. Before reading, active readers preview the text (title and subheadings) to set a purpose for reading. During reading, they ask questions and make relevant connections. Afterwards, they approach the questions by looking for evidence and going back to the text to confirm their answers. Active readers also remember what they read and arrive at comprehension. In using the reading process, a reader stays engaged by trying to make sense of the text, the ultimate goal.

Students can build stamina by reading widely across genres, checking for understanding, and asking questions to build comprehension and higher order thinking skills: What would most people think the article is mainly

about? What evidence supports this? Why did the author write this? How did the author organize his or her writing? How is this related to my community or the world at large? What lessons can be learned from this selection? If I could give this story another title, what would be the most logical choice? In building curiosity about a text, we are laying the foundation for critical reading, a lifelong learning skill.

—Cindy Chiu, Reading Specialist

The Latest from Latin

March and April are always busy months for Swanson Latin students. On Friday March 13 (a lucky odd-numbered day in Roman times), all Latin students sat the National Latin Exam. This exam is taken by over 150,000 students in all 50 states and 12 other countries worldwide, and tests students' knowledge of Latin grammar and reading comprehension, Roman history, classical mythology, and Latin sayings and derivatives. A record 79% of Swanson's participants in the exam won an award this year, which offers a challenge (of the best kind) to the rising 7th grade Latin students.

In Latin I, **Ian Brumback, Sophia Coccozza, Jackson Praed, John Miller, and Connor Smith** all earned *cum laude* (honorable mention) certificates. **Julia Harple** earned a *magna cum laude*, bronze award.

Sam Browne, Caroline Cunningham, Owen Maupin, Alma Pekerti, Maria Polise, Griff Splan, Eli Todd, Fritz Vogel, and Aidan Walz all earned silver *maxima cum laude* medals. And thirteen Latin I students earned gold medals and a *summa cum laude* award: **Graham Lazorchak, Timinte Abraham, Charles Ciccoretta, Julianna Clarkson, John-William Cordero, Spencer Collart, Robert Crotts, Clemens Finger, Alivia Ishee, Rose Shafer, Karuna Sinha, Emma Stowell, and Kirill Usubyan.**

In Latin II, *cum laude* awards went to **Caroline Edwards, Charles Edwards, Miles Hahn, Noah Helm, Hannah Gagelin, Drew Kellenberger, Emily Kile, Heide Lopez-Sanchez, Liz Shean, Vicky Summit, and Lydia Troup.**

Bronze *magna cum laude* awards went to **Julia Adde, Nick Donnelly, Lily DiBenigno, and Bridget Flynn.**

Silver medal *maxima cum laude* awards went to **Bella Drake, Jared Garfinkel, Owen Schaff, Ashby Shores,** and **Bronte Waddoups.** And the Latin II gold medalists were: **Julia Billera, Natalie Chin, Samantha Haga, Claire Cofield, Draken Garfinkel, Sophie Lent,** and **Calder Lowenthal.**

While I would like to recognize the hard work of all my students who took this challenging exam, special mention and congratulations has to be given to the **four students** who not only earned gold medals, but attained **perfect scores on the exam**—something less than half a percent of participants achieve nationwide: **Graham Lazorchak** in Latin I and **Julia Billera, Natalie Chin** and **Samantha Haga** in Latin II.

The National Latin Exam wasn't the only exam Latin students took in March. Some also opted to have a go at the National Mythology Exam, and among them were 18 6th graders from our new "Foundations of Latin" class. This exam test—no surprise—knowledge of classical mythology; in addition to general mythology questions, there is an annual theme (this year it was Theseus) and there are sections to choose from on Norse or Native American myths, or on books of the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid*. The Mythology exam only awards medals to scores over 90% and gold medals only go to perfect scores, but despite this tall order, fully 15 of the 18 6th graders who sat the exam won a medal! **Grace Lynch, Sam Kiser, Isabelle Cordero, Yasmine Kaddache, Chris Jennings** and **Andrew Murray** earned bronze medals; **Reese Feldmeier, Damien Kanner-Bitetti, Tess Cogley, Dillon Bass, Jean Lee,** and **Ainsley McCabe** earned silver medals; and **Caroline Coleman, Noah Troppe,** and **Jacob Schneble** earned perfect score gold medals! Something tells me they plan to rise to the challenge of this year's NLE results...

7th and 8th graders also participated in the mythology exam. Bronze medals went to **Miles Hahn, Julia Billera, Caroline Cunningham,** and **Spencer Collart;** silver medals to **Calder Lowenthal, Natalie Chin** and **Alivia Ishee;** and **Emma Stowell** earned a gold medal. In case you are starting to think that Swanson Latin is all work and no play (well...*school* and *fun-ludus*—are the same word in Latin after all), we did take time out on April 21 to celebrate Rome's 2,768th birthday (MMDCCCLXVIII—a number which we noticed satisfyingly uses all the Roman numeral symbols together), with picnic lunches on the front lawn for the 7th and 8th graders, and in-class parties for the Foundations classes. The weather was absolutely

perfect, the blossoms were gorgeous, and the food was plentiful (if not very authentic). It was a lovely way to celebrate together after months of really hard work.



Latin II mod. 2 NLE award winners



Picnic under the blossom to celebrate Rome's birthday (Colosseum cake in the background courtesy of Calder Lowenthal)



7th grade girls find a sunny spot for the Latin picnic.

—Melanie Stowell, Latin Teacher

Don't Forget to Sign up for Summer School!

Families and students can sign up for summer school classes in the Swanson counseling office. The application and catalog can be found at the APS summer school website: <http://www.apsva.us/summerschool> or as hard copies in the Counseling Office.

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.).

Below are important deadlines for summer school registration:

- **Friday, May 8:** High school new work for credit registration
- **Friday, June 12:** Make-up and strengthening courses and HILT/HILT extension registration
- **Thursday, June 25, 8 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. :** Late registration for summer school, held at Kenmore

2015 Color of Leadership Boys Conference

On Saturday, March 21, over 200 young men from Arlington middle schools attended the 2015 Color of Leadership Boys Conference, sponsored by the Office of Minority Achievement. This group included 48 of our own Swanson students! The day included motivational speakers, career workshops, leadership activities, athletics, and lots of fun!

Helping Your Child Succeed: Tips for Test Taking

The end of the school year is approaching, which means students will begin preparing for Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, and 8th grade students may soon be taking final exams. While these tests may seem daunting, they provide an opportunity for students to show how much knowledge they have gained throughout the school year. There are many things that students and families can do to prepare for, and reduce stress associated with, test taking:

- **Take advantage of extra help:** Many teachers will offer extra support sessions and materials to help students prepare for tests. Students should seek out these additional opportunities, even if they feel they have a good grasp of the material. Teachers have a lot of experience preparing students for testing, so take advantage of that expertise. The best way to reduce testing jitters is to be adequately prepared.
- **Be mindful about your preparation schedule:** We know from research on memory and learning that cramming for tests does not work. In fact, a recent study showed that spacing out studying, versus cramming material, was more effective for 90% of participants. Encourage students to take control of their studying by making a schedule with multiple small milestones for content they want to master. This will make the material feel more manageable and will enhance students' ability to recall important information later.
- **Take care of yourself:** Sleep, eating, and exercise patterns have the power to enhance, or detract, from a student's test performance. While pulling all-nighters, chugging energy drinks, and planting themselves in front of the computer can make a student feel like they are working hard, they may not be working smart. Eating healthy, taking planned exercise breaks, and getting to sleep on time, both during test preparation time and the day before the test, will help students to be more alert and able to focus on test material.

APS Parent Resource Center (PRC) Upcoming Events

Registration is required for all PRC events. Please register by visiting the PRC events page: <http://www.apsva.us/Page/2883>

Annual Mental Health Fair/ Workshop

Date: Monday, May 11, 2015; 6:30-8:30 pm

Location: Arlington Public Schools Education Center, 1426 N. Quincy Street, 1st Floor, Arlington, VA 22207

Doors open at 6:30 pm for a Resource Mini-Fair, followed by the presentation, "Understanding Your Child's/Teens Moods: What's Typical and What's Not" featuring Dr. Justine Larson at 7:00 pm Simultaneous Spanish language interpretation will be available.

—Laura Goodwyn, School Counselor

Activities Corner

As our Sports seasons finally draw to a close, I would like to take a moment to thank everyone who assisted in keeping things running smoothly. We've battled through wins, losses, and (particularly for Boys Soccer) ties! There have been weather delays and postponements, last minute schedule changes and transportation switches. We've seen county champions crowned, and 15-year old county records fall.

Overall, we're most proud that all of our student athletes continued to represent everything that it is to be a Swanson Admiral. They showed great leadership, sportsmanship, and maintained an overall 3.7 GPA! Thanks to all of our coaches for the guidance, motivation, and late hours. Thank you to our parents, pep band, and students for bringing that Swanson spirit to home games. Lastly, for our rising 6th, 7th, and 8th graders: next year's season begins in less than four months, so get your practice in and your game face ready!

—Trevor Holland, Student Activities Coordinator

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 - April 2015 to view prior steps in the Special Education Cycle. What should you continue to expect if your child has an IEP?

Annual Review and Development of the IEP

What: The Individualized Education Program is reviewed at least annually by the IEP Committee. An annual review assures that special education goals and objectives specified in the IEP are appropriate and progress is reviewed.

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: At least annually, but as a parent, you may request an IEP review meeting at any time by contacting your child's teacher or principal.

What Happens Next: Triennial Reevaluation

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

Career and Technical Education News



Business and Information Technology, Technology Education, Family and Consumer Sciences

Swanson STEM Night

Career and Technical Education Summer Plans?

We are looking forward to seeing you at the Swanson CTE, Math and Science STEM Night!

May 14, 2015
@ Swanson Middle School Awards and Hands-on Activities for all ages!

Particular details and program information will be coming out soon!

Has your child shown an interest in their Career and Tech Ed class this year? Do they enjoy learning about new technology and applying it to real life situations? Did they like the hands on activities that followed up the lessons? Summer is a great time to explore a wide range of STEM camps for kids. There are a number of camps offered to middle school students that are geared for their age group and development. Places to look might include local colleges, local school systems (including APS), Smithsonian Museums, local parks and recreation offices. Capitalize on their excitement from coming off a CTE class and continue offering them opportunities to foster possible careers down the road!

Career and Technical Education Students in Action!

Family and Consumer Sciences:



Students in FACS are exploring the capabilities of the new Husquvarna Ruby Deluxe Embroidery Machine! The 7th grade Teen Living class is programming and completing design projects on the machine. The 8th grade Life Management class is putting designs on our hospital gowns for Honduras.

Business and Information Technology:

8th grade students in the semester long Business and Information Class are learning about Excel. They are making charts, data tables, and spreadsheets. Great office skills for future use in high school and beyond.



Technology Education:



That's not Super Mario, it's Flip the Robotic Monkey. Students in the 7th Grade Technology Education class use code and program skills to automate Flip the Robotic Monkey. These skills lead the students to the Automation & Robotics unit, learning with the LEGO NXT robots. Students learn how to program different sensors; touch, light, sound, and ultrasonic to culminate in a final obstacle course!