

The Swanson Anchor

October 2013



From the Principal's Desk

Education plays a key role in ensuring every 10- to 15-year old becomes a healthy, productive and ethical adult. The Association for Middle Level Educators (AMLE) believes we should base our practice on what research and experience shows us is best for our students.

According to its position paper, *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents*, AMLE affirms that, "an education for young adolescents must be developmentally **responsive, challenging, empowering, and equitable.**" (p. 13.)

At Swanson, we design our programs to be **responsive** to the whole child. For instance, we assign students to core teams of teachers. These teams share students and meet regularly so they can plan interdisciplinary units. They work together to develop strategies to address each student's strengths and challenges. Students meet with their STAR teacher every morning. This connects them to at least one adult who is attuned to their social and emotional needs. Our counselors follow students as they progress to the next grade. In this way, they know and understand their students' unique talents and needs. Students have time during lunch to exercise and release energy. Teachers provide activities so that students can exercise their minds and bodies throughout the day. After school activities encourage students to use their minds, bodies and hearts as they explore clubs and sports and receive help from their teachers.

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From the PTA

So much happens before the first day of school. I salute the folks who took precious vacation time to help us get ready for the new year! Many thanks to those of you who stuffed first-day packets, hosted and provided food for the staff "welcome back" breakfast, sold Swanson P.E. uniforms and spirit items in the gym and organized the new student reception. In addition, I personally thank Principal Loft, PTA staff liaisons Barb Hartman and Laura Partridge, Swanson PTA Immediate Past Treasurer Phoebe Bennett and Immediate Past Co-Secretary Laura Neuwirth for their service to the Swanson community of parents and students.

Our first PTA meeting of the year was held on September 10. It featured a presentation of the PTA audit and approval of the 2013-14 PTA officers and budget. We also discussed a new program, "Challenge Racism Through Stories and Conversation,"

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October 2013

October

- 8 PTA Meeting
7:00 pm
- 9 Walk and Bike to School
- 10 School Board Meeting
7:30 pm
- 11 Parent Teacher Conference
(No School for Students)
- 15-16 Swanson Musical Auditions
2:30 pm
- 24 School Board Meeting
7:30 pm

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heard a presentation from Swanson Activities Coordinator Trevor Holland and received a Principal's report. We'll hold the next meeting on Tuesday, October 8, at 7 pm in the school library. A member of the Swanson Counseling Department will speak on services available to students.

If you haven't contributed to Dollars for Scholars, I personally ask that you consider doing so. Simply visit www.swansonpta.org/ezform and pay with PayPal. We have raised slightly more than \$13,200 toward our budget of \$15,000. This money funds a wide range of Swanson programs, including teacher grants, the Reflections program, Science Fair, Book Fair, the Anchor newsletter, the student literary magazine, grounds beautification efforts, Family Movie Night and Staff Appreciation Week. Dollars for Scholars directly benefits all Swanson students. We can't fully fund these programs unless we meet our budget.

We also rely on parent volunteers to do a great many things that foster academic excellence and well-rounded students. Opportunities include chaperoning field trips, helping at school sporting events, assisting with music and drama programs, working at the book fair and Swanson Spring Fling, organizing the 8th grade promotion dance and contributing to the newsletter. If you haven't volunteered for an activity, I hope you'll consider doing so. You won't regret it!

If you've not yet done so, please be sure to sign up for the Swanson PTA Yahoo Group at swanson-pta-subscribe@yahoo.com. It'll keep you current on the goings-on at Swanson.

Our PTA is only as strong as the support of its parents. I look forward to working with you to support all things Swanson this year. Thanks in advance for your support. I hope to see you at the PTA meeting October 8!

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

We **challenge** our students by expecting them to think about, analyze and apply skills and knowledge they gain in one subject to another subject. We differentiate assignments and class activities based on each student's strengths and needs. We encourage students to give back to their community through service projects and respectful behavior toward our neighborhoods. We also stretch students' minds and interests by providing a variety of elective courses. These range from Family and Consumer Sciences to musical ensembles.

We **empower** our students to make academic and extra-curricular choices. We offer them leadership opportunities by joining specialty STARs. These include the Student Government Association STAR, the Character Education Ambassadors and the Environmental STAR. Our student-led conferences in the fall (October 10-11 this year) and spring allow students to reflect on their learning and share highlights with their parents. (Information about conferences went home recently. Please plan to join your child and his or her STAR teacher for this important conversation.)

Finally, we work to ensure that each student has access to an appropriate and **equitable** learning environment. Our Swanson Equity Team addresses issues related to students' and staff members' attitudes and biases about race and ethnicity. We develop yearly goals and strategies in our school Management Plan aimed at reducing the achievement gap. We offer intervention programs for students who have difficulty accessing the curriculum. And we provide enrichment and extension opportunities for students who demonstrate mastery of concepts.

In short, Swanson's staff engages in best practices daily to ensure that each student benefit from a personalized, stimulating, encouraging and evenhanded learning experience. Thank you for trusting us to educate and care for your child.

— Bridget Loft, Principal



Meet Swanson's Newest Assistant Principal, Shannan Ellis

I am joining Swanson's administrative team with great energy, enthusiasm and pride. As a former middle school teacher, I truly feel I am home again! This is my fourth year as an administrator in Arlington Public Schools and 16th year as an educator in the public school system. I taught SAT/ACT preparation, middle school mathematics, and middle school science in Detroit, Michigan for 5 ½ years before relocating to Virginia in 2003. I served as the Assistant Principal of Ashlawn Elementary School prior to being appointed to Swanson. Before that, I had the pleasure of serving as the Mathematics Instructional Resource Teacher at Thomas Jefferson Middle School.

I am a true Spartans fan, as I graduated from Michigan State University with a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics. During post-graduate studies, I obtained a Master's degree in Mathematics and Science Education and an endorsement in Administration and Supervision.

I am the proud parent of two teenage boys and equally as proud to express my love for working with the middle school child. I look forward to working with all of you this year. Thank you for having me!

— Shannan Ellis, Assistant Principal

Math News

Swanson students have a range of math opportunities outside of the classroom, in addition to math help and enrichment within each math classroom. Here's what is currently available:

Math Help Outside of the Classroom:

Math Support

We have school-wide help available to students. Morning help from a math teacher is available every day in room 101 from 7:20 to 7:40 am. This is open to any student who has a math question. Students do not need to sign up in advance and do not need to stay the whole time. It's a great way for students to get help on homework or review for an upcoming test.

Math Internet Resources

Numerous Internet sites provide students with math support, in addition to sites associated with student textbooks. You can find links on Blackboard: go to the "For Students" tab and then click on the correct math class (you may need to select the "Secondary" tab, and then "Middle School Resources" first). Sometimes Internet Explorer doesn't work well with our Blackboard site, so use another browser if possible.

Math Enrichment Outside of the Classroom:

American Mathematics Contest (AMC)

Swanson expects to host the AMC 8 contest in November during school hours. This is a 25-question, 40-minute multiple-choice contest in middle school math. It's designed to promote the development and enhancement of problem solving skills. The contest is very difficult. It's most appropriate for students who are in an 8th grade level or above class and who are enthusiastic problem solvers.

MathCounts

MathCounts is an after-school club where students of all grade and ability levels work on challenging math problems individually and as a group. Students are welcome to come whenever they can. In order to participate at the regional competition, students need to attend regularly. Ten students will be selected to participate in the regional MathCounts competition in February. The MathCounts club will start up in early October.

— Laura Partridge, Math Coach

Announcing This Year's School Musical!

Our show this year is the Getting to Know (GTK) version of Once Upon A Mattress! The musical is a rollicking and magical spin on "The Princess and the Pea."

Auditions are right around the corner! Here's the rundown:

Tuesday, October 15: Singing audition
Wednesday, October 16: Acting auditions
Friday, October 18: Callbacks

If you're going to audition, you must attend both days. We'll meet in the auditorium after school. We will start at 2:30 pm and end at 4:15 pm.

We're in need of sewing help and a choreographer. If we don't get a choreographer, we will have a smaller cast this year, so please get the word out! Contact Mrs. Biggs-Leeds if you can help with sewing or choreography, or know someone who can. Her email address is Karen.leeds@apsva.us.

The rehearsals start after holiday break, on January 3, 2014. We will rehearse six days a week and your attendance is mandatory. Monday through Friday, we rehearse until 4:15 pm. Saturday morning rehearsals run from 9:00 am to 12:15 pm.

Also, we will have a mandatory cast meeting October 29 after school and a mandatory read-through December 3 after school.

Look forward to seeing you!

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Greetings to all new Swanson Admirals and their families! Our counseling staff is an integral part of Swanson Middle School. We are involved in many activities, including:

- Individual and group counseling
- Crisis counseling
- Classroom guidance
- Student registration
- Course advisement
- Student schedules
- Career development
- Student-peer relations
- Consultation with staff and parents
- Parent/teacher conferences
- Grade level transition activities
- Special education meetings

Our goal is for students to have a successful and fulfilling school experience. In order to accomplish this, we encourage students and their parents to get to know their school counselor. We are available from 7:30 am to 3:00 pm.

Here's this year's counseling staff:

- **John Barnes**, Director of Counseling Services, 703-228-5505, john.barnes@apsva.us
- **Michelle Wilkes**, Grade 6 Counselor, 703-228-5511, michelle.wilkes@apsva.us
- **Alvaro "Marcello" Flores**, Grade 7 Counselor, 703-228-5519, alvaro.flores@apsva.us
- **Hillary Hawes**, Grade 7 Counselor 703-228-2347, hillary.hawes@apsva.us
- **Judy Jankowski**, Grade 8 Counselor, 703-228-5509, judy.jankowski@apsva.us

- **Monica Lozano**, HILT Counselor/Minority Achievement Coordinator, 703-228-5512, monica.lozano@apsva.us
- **Faye Murphy**, Registrar, 703-228-5508, faye.murphy@apsva.us
- **Jackie Torres**, SPED/Testing Secretary, 703-228-5502, jackie.torres@apsva.us
- **Sara Lugo**, Counseling Administrative Assistant, 703-228-5538, sara.lugo@apsva.us

Swanson also has Support and Related Services staff members various days of the week. They include:

- **Liska Friedman**, Social Worker
- **Dr. Melissa Deichmann**, School Psychologist
- **Dr. Vicky Lyons**, Interlude Psychologist
- **Sara Daidy**, Testing Coordinator
- **Sharen Humann**, Resource Teacher for the Gifted
- **Melissa Stone** and **Elissa Dwyer**, Speech Pathologists
- **Sally Tumolo**, Physical Therapist
- **Sandra Stoppel**, Occupational Therapist
- **Nancy Sheriff**, Vision Specialist
- **Astrid Berk-Scholl**, Audiologist/Hearing Specialist
- **Myrna Gonzalez Rojas**, Bilingual Resource Assistant/HILT Teacher Assistant

Tips for a Successful Year

Your child's ability to be successful at school begins with the value you place on learning and homework. Talk with your children about their plans to meet their academic obligations and how you can support them. Here are some tips on helping your child have a successful school year:

- Create a quiet, well-organized study area in your home. Choose a setting that is well lit where studying can take place without disruptions or distractions.
- Agree on clear limits for the use of the TV, phone, computer or video games after they've met their responsibilities. These activities are great incentives to help students become efficient time managers!

- Establish a daily homework time. Homework, like other activities, needs to be scheduled into your child's life. Learning to set priorities is an important life skill. Help your child learn to balance schoolwork with extracurricular activities and social interactions. Students always have homework, whether it's working on a long-term project, preparing for an upcoming test or quiz, or reading at least 30 minutes daily.
- Encourage children to complete homework on their own. Homework teaches students the skills they need as independent adults. These include following directions, beginning and completing a task and managing their time. Parents serve as consultants and monitors of homework. Students should use their assignment notebooks and have the phone number of a friend to call if they are absent or need clarifications on assignments.
- Establish a consistent bedtime, no later than 10 pm, for the middle school years. A good night's sleep fosters classroom productivity. Get homework and materials organized before going to bed so things are not forgotten in the morning rush.
- Make sure your children eat a nutritious breakfast and arrive at school on time every day.
- Motivate children to do their best by praising their efforts and accomplishments. Encourage them to hand in assignments and projects on time that are neat, complete, correct and thorough.
- Encourage your child to seek out teachers when problems arise. Education is a partnership between the school and home. Knowing your child's teachers and their expectations, and keeping in touch with them and your child's counselor will help you support them.

October's Character Education Focus: Respect

Character Education is about learning, discussing and incorporating qualities that help make each of us our best selves. Guided by the Character Ambassadors (an 8th grade STAR), with the support of Cecily Corcoran and the Counseling staff, Swanson students focus on one of the "Six Pillars of Character" each month — Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Fairness, Citizenship and Trustworthiness — through a variety of activities and film clips.

These same qualities guide our monthly recognition program, Admirable Admirals. Staff members nominate students for this recognition. We display nominees' pictures and a write-up on their demonstration of character near the main lobby.

Classroom Guidance: Teasing, Bullying and Harassment Prevention

Since 1993, Swanson's counselors have gone into classrooms each October to deliver guidance units on teasing, bullying, harassment prevention and cyber safety. The curriculum is grade-specific and includes discussions, scenarios and videos. These sessions complement the information received in the September Annual Safety Assembly, designed to provide all students with the necessary information to identify and respond to these problems. Our focus is on:

- Treating others the way you want to be treated
- Treating people with civility, courtesy and dignity
- Being accepting of differences
- Solving problems without violence
- Not ridiculing, embarrassing or hurting others

What can you do to help your children?

- Be proactive. Encourage them to tell you, a teacher, a counselor, an administrator or a trusted adult when they have a problem. It is easier to solve problems before they escalate.
- Reiterate the difference between "ratting" and telling; the former is reporting someone just to get them in trouble, while telling is reporting that you or someone else is in danger.
- Buddy-up whenever possible. Many problems can be avoided when students are with friends coming to and from school, in the halls and in the neighborhood. Students can support each other so that their friends can assert themselves and avoid being targets.
- Coach your child on how to deflect teasing by staying in control and withholding the emotional reaction that pays off a bully's actions. Kids who can handle teasing are less likely to be the targets of bullies.

- Build your child's self-esteem and feeling of competence through genuine praise and unconditional love. Read more about strategies that parents can use in *101 Ways to Deal with Bullying: A Guide for Parents* by Michele Elliot.

High School Information and Transfer Sessions

Information about these sessions was not available at press time. Please watch for announcements on the listserv or check out the APS website (apsva.us) under Registration.

You may want to attend **High School Information Night** on Monday, October 29 from 7 – 9 pm at Washington-Lee High School (1301 N. Stafford Street). Families of children who will be entering high school in the fall of 2014 will get an overview of APS high school programs, including parent resources, school information sessions and program application deadlines.

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST)

Established in 1985, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) is the Governor's School for Science and Technology in Northern Virginia. Students are selected for TJHSST through a competitive admissions process aimed at highly motivated students with diverse backgrounds, talents, and skills who demonstrate:

- High ability, aptitude and interest in math, science, and technology
- Intellectual curiosity and self-motivation to pursue scientific research
- A desire to be challenged with an extensive curriculum focused in math, science and technology
- The highest academic and personal integrity
- An aspiration to become a member of a community of learners, explorers, mentors and leaders.

Students interested in applying to TJHSST are encouraged to complete applications found online beginning September 23 (www.tjhsst.edu/abouttj/admissions/aboutus.html). An information session for 8th graders was held at Swanson on September 27.

Dates for those interested in applying are as follows:

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 5 | Open House for interested students at Holmes Middle School |
| October 11 | Online application for pages 1-2 due |
| October 18 | Absolute application deadline by 4 pm. (No late applications accepted.) |
| December 7 | Admissions test |
| January 17 | Semifinalist pool posted or mailed |
| January 25 | Essay/Student Information Sheet Administration |
| February 11 | Teachers recommendations due |
| March 28 | Final Admissions Decisions posted or mailed |

International Baccalaureate (IB) Program at Washington-Lee

The IB program provides a rigorous education for highly motivated and academically proficient Washington-Lee students in grades 11 and 12. 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. They're required to have successfully completed 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, you can attend the no-obligation information session December 4 at 7 pm in the Washington-Lee auditorium. Learn more at www.apsva.us/Page/9100.

Strengthening Families Program

The well-received Strengthening Families Program (SFP) will be offered this year at Williamsburg Middle School beginning September 26 in both English and in Spanish. SFP is an engaging, highly interactive and fun initiative that promotes family bonding, enhances communication and encourages positive interactions between parents and their children ages 10 to 14.

The program has been shown to significantly improve social skills and school performance, reduce problem behaviors and promote positive decision-making. SFP is a grant-funded program presented in collaboration with Arlington County Child and Family Services and

Arlington Public Schools that can benefit all families. There is no charge for participants.

A catered dinner is served each week beginning at 5:45 pm. Childcare is provided for children under age 10. To register for the program or for more information, please visit: www.StrengtheningFamiliesArlington. You may also contact Jennifer Landis at jlandis@arlingtonva.us or 703 228-1108.

Minority Achievement

The Office of Minority Achievement is dedicated to helping students discover and use resources that will help them progress toward their personal goals. This department works to create an equitable, hospitable, appreciative, safe, and inclusive environment for students, families, and staff members. The desired result is openness, inclusiveness, respect, and appreciation for diversity of thought, values, cultures, learning styles, perceptions and actions.

Some of the programs at Swanson include:

- Lunch Talk about Race and Identity (all grades)
- HILT Lunch Talk
- Latinas Group
- Boys Group
- Black/African-American Girls Group
- Asian/Asian-American Group
- The Crew (all students are invited to come together once a month for a multicultural activity)
- College Fair and College Tours
- Latino Youth Conference
- GMU – Pre Early Identification Program
- Summer Opportunities
- Teen Volunteering

Students are welcome to participate in any and all groups. For more information, please contact Monica Lozano at monica.lozano@apsva.us or 703-228-5512.

We look forward to a wonderful year together!

— *The Counseling Services Department*

Join the Swanson Builder's Club!

The Swanson Builder's Club is a service club sponsored by Kiwanis. Its high school equivalent is the Key Club.

Our Builder's Club started up last year after the winter holidays. Club members broke ground to plant Swanson's first vegetable garden. Because we began late, the crops weren't up until summer time. However, the garden produced several pounds of lettuce and cucumbers, which we donated to AFAC.



Plans for this year's club are to continue the vegetable garden and find various worthwhile service opportunities for club members.

Everyone is welcome to join! Our meetings will take place on the first and third Thursday of each month beginning in October. We'll meet from 2:30 – 3:30 pm in room 260.

I hope to see you at our first meeting!

— Felicia Meier

Seventh Graders on the Hunt!

On Friday, September 6, the entire 7th grade got together on the front lawn of the school for a "get to know each other" scavenger hunt. It was a great way for them to meet one another and all of our 7th grade teachers, and a fun way to kick off the new school year. Students and teachers alike had fun!



Schooners Celebrate the Transition to Middle School

After a full week of finding their way around a new school, learning new teachers' and classmates' names, getting used to lockers with combinations, and memorizing their schedules, the Schooners marked their successful transition to middle school with popsicles and socializing on the front lawn at Swanson. As you can see from the pictures, the students are celebrating this new chapter in their lives while enjoying the treat, as well as the sunshine and fresh air. Although the start of a new school year requires some adjustment for all students, the Schooners are settling in and great things are already happening. Congratulations on making it through your first week of middle school, Schooner students and Schooner teachers! We look forward to a great year with each and every one of you!

— *The Schooner Teachers*



Meet Swanson's New Teachers!

Rachel Affleck

Clippers English/Language Arts Teacher

I'm thrilled to be joining the Swanson team! Before coming to Swanson I worked in ELA Academic Intervention at a middle school in Rochester, NY. My experience also includes teaching SAT test preparation courses, college level writing tutorials, and middle school ELA classes. In my spare time I enjoy craft projects, art museums, and outdoor adventures ranging from casual hikes to whitewater kayaking.

Stephanie Brown

Mariners English/Language Arts Teacher

It's great to be a Swanson Admiral! My teaching voyage began in Okinawa, Japan where I taught conversational English to students of all ages. Here in the states, I've taught in many different schools including the inner city of Jacksonville, Florida and in a Gifted and Talented program in Boca Raton, Florida. At Swanson Middle School, I hope to use all of these experiences to create an environment where my student can feel empowered to reach all of their educational goals. In my free time, I enjoy reading, traveling, and spending time with friends and family. Go Admirals!



Maritza Carpenter

Spanish Teacher

I am looking forward to being part of the Swanson community! I began my career as a Special Education teacher in Washington, DC teaching Spanish and Life Skills. Before coming to Swanson, I was the Social Studies Teacher at the Teenage Parenting Program. I enjoy visiting my family in Panama, and spending quality time with my husband and my two teenage children. I am very excited to join the Foreign Language Department at Swanson and to share my love for the Spanish language with all my future students.

Ackesha Cathirell

Voyagers Special Education Teacher

I began teaching in DC Public Schools where I educated special needs students in preschool through 4th grade. I truly enjoy helping students of all ages and abilities achieve success. I always endeavor to become a student's guide through education and not the gatekeeper of knowledge. Though I was born and raised in Toronto, Canada, summer is my favorite season and I enjoy cycling, jogging and relaxing outdoors with my husband and daughter. I look forward to serving the students and families of Swanson.

Dana Cazan

Sea Hawks English/Language Arts Teacher

I am excited to begin my teaching career at Swanson! This past May I graduated with my M.Ed. from the University of Mary Washington, where I specialized in Secondary English. One of my goals this year is to encourage students to make interdisciplinary connections in their reading and writing. I also hope to help students develop an appreciation for the community that surrounds them. Outside of the classroom, I enjoy traveling to national parks and coastal towns with my family. I look forward to being an Admiral!

Elissa Dwyer

Speech-Language Pathologist/Communication Program

I am a Speech-Language Pathologist. I am originally from Michigan where my parents and younger sister still live. I have been in a Maryland school district for the past three years. I have worked with students ages 6 months to 15 years old. I also work part time in a rehab center with

adults who have suffered strokes. I love the Arlington area and am so thrilled to be working here.

Leslie Enright

Hurricanes Teacher

I am very excited to join the Swanson/Arlington community as I begin my eighth year of teaching this fall. I started my teaching career in elementary school and moved to middle school three years ago and have loved the switch! For the last seven years I have worked for Fairfax County Public Schools but am very excited to work for APS now.

I earned my undergraduate degree from SUNY Oswego, where I also learned how to snow board! I then came home to northern Virginia to earn my graduate degree from UVA. Although my passion is math, I love a good a book. I especially love to read when the weather is nice and I have time to sit outside. My husband and I also love to travel when we both can take off work.

I look forward to the new school year!

Amy Hailey

Librarian

Over the past 12 years I have worked as an educator, first in North Carolina and then in Georgia. Our boxes are now unpacked here in Arlington. My husband and I look forward to raising our two children in this area. I love working as a media specialist and cannot wait to start talking about books with the students at Swanson.

Susan Harrison

HILT Resource Teacher

I join Swanson with great enthusiasm and anticipation! For the past two years, I was the HILT teacher at the Teenage Parenting Program. It was a challenge and an honor to help the students navigate the complex social and emotional problems they faced as they became acclimated to life in a new country, especially as new mothers. I even helped them to learn a little bit of English along the way! Before Teen Parenting, I taught for one year with the terrific HILT team at Yorktown H.S. Through county-wide activities (and as a substitute teacher), I have come to know the faculty of Swanson's award-winning HILT department. I count myself lucky to have the opportunity to work with and learn from them.

A career switcher, I spent a few decades in the private sector before becoming a teacher. I love music and have participated in a variety of hand-drumming (djembes, bongos, congas, etc.) ensembles with my husband. Our daughter Katherine lives in the San Francisco Bay area and will be married in July 2014. We share our home with a 9 year-old American Eskimo dog named Mia who has us wrapped around her furry little paws.

I look forward to meeting and making a contribution to the Swanson community.

Mary-Hannah Klontz

Chorus Teacher

I cannot wait to begin teaching at Swanson as I have greatly missed working directly with students! My most recent assignment has been Arts Education Specialist where I worked with all the music, art and drama teachers in the county. As a result, I know and respect my arts colleagues at Swanson as well as teachers at schools that are in the Swanson attendance area. I have taught vocal music at Barrett Elementary and Washington-Lee High School in Arlington and at middle schools in Kentucky and Washington, DC. I absolutely love technology and plan to bring that into my teaching as much as possible to meet the needs of all my students. My husband, Paul, is a member of the U.S. Army Herald Trumpets and we have two daughters who have grown up in the Arlington schools and are now pursuing degrees in music education.

Katie Nichter

Captains English/Language Arts Teacher

I recently moved to the area from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where I taught middle school Language Arts for three years. Before teaching, I attended the University of North Carolina for undergraduate and graduate school. In my spare time I love to read, cook, do yoga, and Zumba. (I even got licensed to teach Zumba over the summer!) I am very excited to join the great and welcoming community at Swanson!

Patricia Pease

Clippers Science Teacher

I have just returned from one year of study abroad (in Italy and London) for a Master's degree in Geographic Information Science. This interrupted my more than 15 years with APS. I am very excited both about the new things I learned in Science as well as teaching at the 6th grade level, because this science has a nice overview of topics about which I love to read. I also have three children who went through Arlington Schools, finished college and now work in the area.

Beth Sanderson

Clippers Reading Teacher

I am thrilled to join the teaching team at Swanson! My career as a reading specialist and teacher began in the Alexandria City Public School system. For five years I worked with young readers in primarily first, second and third grade. Prior to coming to Swanson, I coordinated a program in three Arlington elementary schools to strengthen reading skills for students. I also served as a reading instructor for juniors and seniors at Langston High School. In my free time I enjoy traveling with my husband, knitting and reading. These days our favorite stop is Chicago to visit our son in college.