

The Swanson Anchor

April 2015



From the Principal's Desk

One of the challenges of promoting equality and cultural competency with Swanson staff and students is how to talk about and what to do about the concept of privilege. Oftentimes the idea of privilege brings about feelings of guilt and resentment, which stymie our forward progress in promoting equity in our instructional practice and in our relationships with students. I recently had the privilege (aren't the different connotations of this word interesting?!) of hearing Karen Wolf, a SafeZone facilitator who educates audiences about LGBTQ communities, speak about the challenge and opportunities that privilege presents. She gave me permission to share the bulk of her speech with you. Ms. Wolf writes:

Lots of us don't like the word "privilege." People think it means that because you have a particular trait – whiteness, maleness, heterosexuality – that you have done something wrong, or have not experienced hardship in your life. But that's not what privilege is. No one is wrong having an identity, and everyone has experienced hardship in one way or another. Privilege means that when you experience failure or pain, you know it isn't because of that particular identity. When I am rejected from a job, I know it's not because of my race. Privilege is also about these things happening on a macro level – we know that LGBTQ people are at a much higher risk of homelessness, especially youth and people of color. Even though any given straight individual probably hasn't done anything to cause this problem, they are much less likely to find themselves facing homelessness

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From the PTA

With the beginning of the fourth marking period underway, we on the PTA are looking toward next year. We are thrilled to have seen so much participation among parents this year, all working together to support our kids. Engagement with the PTA can happen in so many different ways. I was recently asked about what the PTA does at Swanson, so I thought I would take a moment to describe just a few of the things that the PTA does, some of which are one-time, some are monthly and some are on as-needed basis.

On a monthly basis, we hold meetings in the library (2nd Tuesday of the month at 7 pm) which typically feature a speaker on a topic that was identified to be of interest through a parent survey in the fall. By doing this, we hope that it helps to make the PTA more relevant to the interests and needs of our parent community.

The PTA also operates a number of ongoing activities such as providing teacher breakfasts on the days when they are working while the kids are off, stocking the

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April 2015

- 9 School Board Meeting
7:30 pm, 1426 N. Quincy St.
- 16 Multicultural Night
7:00 pm
- 20 CCPTA Meeting, Library
7:00 pm
- 21 National History Bee Regional Finals
8:00 pm
- 22 Oratorical Competition
Auditorium
6:00 – 9:00 pm
- 23 School Board Meeting
7:30 pm, 1426 N. Quincy St.
- 24 Glamour and Glitz Gala
6:00 – 8:00 pm
- 27 Spring Picture Day

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

(though obviously, some do). If they do become homeless, they are not as likely to face job discrimination because of their sexuality or gender identity, or be turned away from resources like shelters.

Privilege and marginalization also intersect. You can be white and poor. You can be black and disabled. You can be a queer Latino woman. So the ways you can access power might be limited in multiple ways, or you may have access to power in some ways and not in others.

When you have privilege, you are in a position of relative power. Not because all privileged individuals have it better than all individuals in a marginalized group, but because the power structures in our society allow certain groups as a whole more access to power than others. So with privilege, as with power, comes great responsibility. Toni Morrison wrote, "I tell my students, 'When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.'"

Bell Hooks writes, 'What matters is what we do with privilege.' It is my responsibility as a person with white privilege, to use that unearned privilege to free others by working against racism. It is my job, as a person who has been blessed with a lot of education, to educate others. It is my job to use the power that I have access to empower people who are lacking in that power. To share it, and to multiply it. That is, to the best of my knowledge, my purpose on earth.

So what does sharing power and multiplying it look like at Swanson on a day-to-day basis? It can be seen in our student affinity group meetings during which white

students and students of color talk about their positive and challenging experiences at Swanson. It is demonstrated in the work of the Swanson Equity Team (SET), a group of staff members who host lunch talks and facilitate professional learning sessions on how to engage in culturally competent instruction. It could also be seen in the PTA sponsored series, "Challenge Racism Through Stories and Conversation," in which parents learn about the impact of privilege on our schools, communities and children. Ultimately, it is evident when all of us help our children to recognize that, as beneficiaries of the outstanding Arlington Public Schools, we all have privilege and that we all have a responsibility to use our privilege to confront the "-isms" (racism, sexism, ageism, etc.,) that promote inequity and injustice.

The following resources provide helpful tools for parents, teachers and students to talk about privilege and equity issues: www.teachingtolerance.org and The Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, <http://www.maec.org/>. APS' Office of Minority Achievement also offers a wealth of resources. You can access this information by clicking on the "Programs" tab on the APS webpage (www.apsva.us) and clicking on "Minority Achievement" or you can go straight to the Office of Minority Achievement's page via this link, <http://www.apsva.us/Page/2521>. Please join us for our annual Multicultural Night celebration from 6 pm – 8 pm on Thursday, April 16 as we celebrate our community's diversity. If you are interested in participating in the "Challenge Racism Through Stories and Conversation" program during the 2015-2016 school year, keep an eye on Swanson's website for more information about the program. Finally, do note that Swanson staff is exploring sponsoring an affinity group for white students next school year. More information to come on this opportunity.

As Bell Hooks says in *Homegrown: Engaged Cultural Criticism*, "What matters is what we do with privilege." Working together, we can use our privilege to create an extraordinary learning environment for all of our children.

—Bridget Loft, Principal

From the PTA *(Continued from page 1)*

fridge with snacks in the Teachers Lounge every month, and selling spirit wear throughout the year. The PTA also coordinates the Sports Banquets, the Welcome Reception before school starts, the 8th grade promotion reception for families and the evening dance party for the students. We also recently coordinated a smashingly successful Arts and Crafts Fair called Handmade Arlington that raised several thousand dollars for the PTA.

The PTA sponsors a program called “Challenging Racism through Stories and Conversations” in an effort to raise awareness about this important matter in our society. We fund teacher grants, which support our faculty’s often above-and-beyond efforts to provide extra instruction, materials, or even snacks during after school tutoring. This is particularly important during this time of budget constraints.

The list of everything we do is too long to incorporate in this newsletter, but I hope this sampling of activities offers some insight into what the PTA does.

The most important thing to note is that at Swanson, the PTA is a big, combined effort. There is no one person who does it all, and as the saying goes, many hands make light work. As someone who has never served as a PTA officer before, I’m really enjoying this perspective of what goes on at school and how even the smallest efforts can make a big difference. I hope you will continue to support the efforts of Swanson’s PTA and maybe even do more next year!

—Tish Jenkins, PTA President

Multicultural Night – April 16!

Swanson’s Annual Multicultural Night Celebration and Potluck Dinner are coming up on Thursday, April 16 at 6 pm. Students have been working in their STAR classes creating decorations of their own customs and cultures which will decorate the cafeteria. Some very talented Admirals have been practicing hard to bring festive performances to the evening. Come on out for a night of fun, food, and festivities! Bring a family favorite dish or one that represents your culture to share! Volunteers and donations are always welcome, and if you have any questions, contact Trevor Holland at trevor.holland@apsva.us.

—Trevor Holland, Student Activities Coordinator

Interested in School Safety?

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

Award Ceremony Held for National Scholastic Art Competition

The Award Ceremony for the National Scholastic Art Competition was held in the Washington Lee Auditorium last month. There was a large crowd to receive their Regional Awards, as Honorable Mention works of art were displayed as a slide show. After the Ceremony, parents, students, and friends walked over the Arlington Central Library to view over 425 works of art (all the Gold and Silver Key works of art). The artwork was on display until March 25.





—Cecily Corcoran, Visual Arts Teacher

Art Students go GAGA for Green!

Swanson Art STAR and 7th Grade Visual Art students are painting an African Water Hole on a Rain Barrel for Operation Rain Barrel, “Go GAGA for Green.”

“Go Gaga for Green” is organized and produced by George Mason’s Office of Community and Local Government Relations, Arlington Public Schools, and Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment along with support from Arlington County and the local business community. Go Gaga for Green is held at Mason’s Arlington Campus in Founders Hall in April of each year to coincide with Earth Day. Go Gaga for Green celebrates environmental sustainability in Arlington with food, fun and live entertainment.



Two signature features of the event are Operation Rain Barrel — a program that engages Arlington public school students in creating amazing artistic rain barrels while they learn about sustainability, and The Arlington Green Patriot Awards, which honors individuals and organizations that exemplify their commitment to environmental sustainability. At the Go Gaga for Green event, the artistic rain barrels are on display and sold through a silent auction to raise proceeds. Additionally, the nominees and winners of the Arlington Green Patriot Award are recognized and announced.

Proceeds benefit:

- Arlington County Council of PTAs’ Scholarship Fund
- George Mason University’s Early Identification Program
- Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment’s Energy Masters Program

“Go Gaga for Green” celebrates Earth Day on April 25, 2015 from 5 – 8 pm at Mason’s Founders Hall – Arlington Campus, 3351 Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22201.

—Cecily Corcoran, Visual Arts Teacher

Continental Math League Contest

The final Continental Math League contest was held in March. We don’t yet know how Swanson placed, however, the 6th graders ended up with a perfect team score for all five rounds of the contest! Several students also ended the contest series with perfect scores: **Joel Brown, Camille Chiu, Daniel Nadel, and Hanna Xu.** Congratulations!

At the completion of the series of five contests, the following students scored a combined score of 23 or higher (out of a maximum score of 30):

Combined score of 23:

6th graders – **Hannah Grossman** and **Gabe Margosis**

7th graders – **Ryan Bhojwani, Robert Crotts, Claire Duncan, Henry Erwin, Max Gieseman, Jack Vietmeyer** and **Helyn Walther**

8th graders – **Nikola Porto, Sabrina Shuster, Philip Suskin** and **Cate Whitehouse**

Combined score of 24:

6th graders – **Matthew Carey, Reese Feldmeier, Christopher Jennings** and **Natalie Kerbel**

7th graders – **Sam Bender-Prouty, Mariana Holladay, Jessica Horner, Max Nagle, Henry Olson, Suruchi Sen** and **Holden Singh**

8th graders – **Erika Christensen, Ferris Linde** and **Zach Stone**

Combined score of 25:

6th graders – **Braxton Breed, Emily Mucchetti** and **Andrew Murray**

7th graders – **Graham Lazorchak** and **Christina Sheckler**

8th grader – **Ryan Dodds**

Combined score of 26:

6th graders – **James Licato, Natalie Martin** and **Henry Uz**

7th graders – **Kaya Guthrie, Michael Kyrychenko** and **Zachary Luzius**

Combined score of 27:

6th grader – **Allison Craig, Leah Karush, Liam Norman, George Stutzman, Luella Wallander** and **Samuel Youkeles**

8th grader – **Calder Lowenthal**

Combined score of 28:

7th grader – **Claire Williams**

8th grader – **Claire Cofield**

Combined score of 29:

6th graders – **Casey Bloome** and **Nicholas Papavassiliou**

Perfect Scores of 30:

6th graders – **Joel Brown, Camille Chiu** and **Daniel Nadel**

8th grader – **Hanna Xu**

—*Laura Partridge, Math Coach*

Virginia Math League Contest Results

Students in all three grade levels competed in the Virginia Math League contests earlier this year. This contest is similar to the Continental Math League contest in that each grade has a unique contest that is 30 minutes long and requires the students to use problem solving skills. However, it is also quite different since students can use a calculator and there are 35 questions, not just six. Many students are not used to feeling time pressures on tests and contests, so they had to be careful and use their time wisely. Achieving a 50% on this contest is a very good score!

The following students were in the top groups for their grade level on the contest:

6th Grade: **Nicholas Papavassiliou** – 33; **Braxton Breed** – 28; **Casey Bloome, Joel Brown, Camille Chiu, Leah Karush, Daniel Nadel, Joshua Robbins** – 26; **Reese Feldmeier, Christopher Jennings, Alissa Rivero** – 25; **Caroline Coleman, Molly Lane, Gabe Margosis, Andrew Murray** and **Liam Norman** – 24

7th Grade: **Robert Crotts** and **Kotryna Vismante** – 26; **Grady McCrery** – 25; **Ben Adams, Sam Bender-Prouty, Michael Kyrychenko, Graham Lazorchak, Claire Williams** – 24, **Max Nagle, Katarina Olsen, Patrick Rampton, Nina Reich, Christina Sheckler** and **Aidan Witeck** – 22

8th Grade: **Hanna Xu** – 32; **Matthew McKnight** – 28; **Natalie Chin, Clemens Finger** – 27; **Calder Lowenthal, Gregory Roberts, Liam Thompson** – 26; **Claire Cofield, Mila Fox-Parola, Zach Stone** – 25; **Julia Billera, Erika Christensen, Gabi Fowler, Nikola Porto, Owen Schaff** and **Darby Westwater** – 24

A special thanks to math teacher Nicole Cunningham for taking care of many of the contest logistics.

—*Laura Partridge, Math Coach*

Summer School: Registration

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. Please review Page Two of the catalog for important registration deadline information that applies to your child's courses.

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.)

Rising 6th Grade Orientation: April 9 and 10

Swanson will host an orientation for current 5th grade/ rising 6th grade students on April 9 and April 10. Rising 6th grade students will have the opportunity to tour Swanson, meet our administrators, and enjoy performances from some of our students. A group of current 6th graders will serve as student guides, helping us welcome our new Admirals!

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>

ADHD Parent Support Network Meeting

Date: Tuesday, April 14, 2015; 7:00-8:30 pm
Location: Syphax Education Center, 2110 Washington Boulevard, Rooms 103/105, Arlington, VA 22204

Autism Spectrum Disorders: Parent Education Series

Date: Wednesday, April 15, 2015; 7:00-8:00 pm
Location: Syphax Education Center, 2110 Washington Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22204
Topic: I'm Determined

Join to learn more about Virginia's "I'm Determined" project. I'm Determined, a state directed project funded by the Virginia Department of Education, focuses on providing direct instruction, models, and opportunities to practice skills associated with self-determined behavior. This project facilitates youth, especially those with disabilities, to undertake a measure of control in their lives, helping to set and steer the course rather than remaining a silent passenger. Parents will receive an overview of I'm Determined, learn about some of the ways staff are currently using I'm Determined, and access tools for families. Simultaneous Spanish language interpretation will be available. This workshop will be presented by APS Autism Specialists Deborah Hammer, Joshua Taylor, and Laura Depatch, and student guest presenters.

Dyslexia Workshop for Parents

Date: Monday, April 20, 2015; 10:00-11:30 am
Location: Syphax Education Center, 2110 Washington Boulevard, Room 103, Arlington, VA 22204

This free session for parents, presented by Special Education Coordinators Meg Davis and Christina Cotton, will:

- Define dyslexia, and identify characteristics of dyslexia
- Describe various reading methods and programs, as well as assistive technology tools
- Discuss how parents can seek support for their children at school
- Review the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT), Section 504, and Special Education processes in Arlington Public Schools, and
- Provide parents with tips and strategies for working with their children at home.

Minority Achievement

Our Kidz Career Fair at Marymount University

On Saturday, March 7, nine Swanson students attended the Our Kidz Career Fair at Marymount University. At the event, students were able to learn from 12 career representatives, including employees from General Electric, Discovery Education, Marriott, Arlington Fire and Rescue, and more! Students walked through the campus, ate in the dining hall, and spoke to current Marymount students. Thank you to Our Kidz for organizing the event and to Marymount University for hosting!

#BlackLivesMatter: Two Remarkable Writers on Being Black in America

This spring Arlington Reads 2015 presents two extraordinary young writers who speak to the layers of acceptance that can create community or deny it.

Arlington Public Library's annual one-theme, one-community reading initiative focuses on the concept of race in America as seen through the works of Jesmyn Ward and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, one born in the United States and the other who still calls Africa home.

Following news headlines from Ferguson, Mo., New York, Cleveland and other cities in 2014, the social media hashtag "#Blacklivesmatter" was named Word of the Year by the American Dialect Society.

- Wednesday, April 8, 7 pm – Jesmyn Ward will speak at Central Library
- Thursday, May 7, 7 pm – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie will speak at Central Library

—Shannan Ellis, Assistant Principal

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 – March 2015 to view prior steps in the Special Education Cycle. What are the next steps once my child has an IEP?

Delivery of Special Education and Related Services

What: Special education and related services begin when the parent gives written approval of the IEP. The program of service is specified in the IEP.

Who: The special education staff at your home school or IEP specified program.

When: After the IEP is signed

What Happens Next:

Annual Review and Development 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>

Other tips:

- Get to know your child's case carrier. He/She will schedule meetings with you and update you about your child's progress.
- Understand that any member of the IEP team can request an IEP meeting at anytime.

—Shannan Ellis, Assistant Principal

Career and Technical Education News



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

Swanson STEM Night

Building Support for Swanson's CTE Program

Please join the Swanson CTE, Math and Science Departments in celebrating our successes in STEM.

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

Particular details and program information will be coming out soon!

As a CTE team at Swanson Middle School, we work together to build support for our programs by:

- Educating our parents, staff and students through word of mouth, school and community newsletters, PTA meetings, County STEM programs, and parent information sessions.
- Connecting with our Advisory groups at the county level who share a common interest in our programs and curriculum. Together we raise public awareness of the opportunities available at our school, develop partnerships with community members in our fields and work together to enhance the curriculum in our classrooms.
- Using technology and social media to share information and upcoming events and opportunities. (Swanson CTE website coming soon!)
- Involving parents in the classroom and with local, district and state opportunities within our curriculums and our student groups (TSA, FCCLA, FBLA).

Career and Technical Education Students in Action!

Family and Consumer Sciences:

Students in the Taking Charge class experience technology at it's best! The girls take home a computerized baby for the weekend. The baby, simulates a real infants schedule. The baby will need constant care and will cry for feeding, diapering, rocking, and fussy periods all throughout the weekend. The radio-wave wristband will require the girls to be the baby's only caretaker for the weekend. A computerized print out will follow upon the baby's return!

Business and Information Technology:

Students in the Computer Applications class are learning how to create business documents such as: business letters, memos, news releases, and outlines. These very important documents are all part of FBLA tests that students can take in high school.

Technology Education:

The Technology Student Association (TSA) attended the Northern Virginia Regional Fair at Mount Vernon High School on March 21, 2015. The Swanson MS TSA chapter had 25 students attend and participate in 12 different STEM competitive events. The Swanson TSA plans to attend Technosphere May 1-3, 2015 held at the Hampton Roads Convention Center. These students will participate in various STEM competitive events and attend multiple General Sessions at the state leadership conference. Good Luck TSA!