

# The Swanson Anchor

November 2014



## From the Principal's Desk

Thank you to parents and guardians who participated in our fall student led conferences in October. Our students and their STAR teachers spent several weeks preparing for these conferences. Student set goals based on their academic progress, their contribution to the school community and their involvement in extracurricular activities. They reflected on their academic achievements and challenges and gained confidence in their abilities to advocate for themselves.

The student-led conference experience and the relationships students build with their STAR teachers are just two indicators that the middle school experience is different – and I would argue more meaningful – than the experience students who attend an intermediate or junior high school. Several members of the PTA recently asked about the differences between these school models.

Simply put, intermediate and junior high schools are organized to mirror the high school model. Students and teachers are not organized into teams, teacher advisory periods may be optional and counselors do not loop with their students. These schools often consist of only 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, with 6<sup>th</sup> graders remaining a part of the elementary program. While the structure of these schools may allow for more opportunities for students to access a variety of courses, they cannot address the needs of the whole child as well as that of the middle school.

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## From the PTA

Hard to believe we have finished the first quarter and are looking ahead to the holidays. There is a lot going on at Swanson, and we continue to need volunteers to help our wonderful faculty and staff keep things humming along. If you haven't done so already, please sign up for the PTA email distribution list. I try not to duplicate what is sent via the APS SchoolTalk messages, so you definitely get different information from these emails. To sign up, send an email to [swanson-pta-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:swanson-pta-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

An issue of significance to many Swanson families concerns how APS is going to handle the need to accommodate 1,500 more middle school students than they have room for today. Enrollment throughout APS is hitting historic highs, and the squeeze will be felt most severely among middle schoolers in the coming years.

Though the Swanson PTA is not taking a formal position on what the right approach is, moving HB/Stratford to the Reed School site would have an impact on our community because of how close it is to Swanson. For more information on what APS is

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### November 2014

- 4 Grade Preparation  
(No School for Students)  
PTA Meeting  
7:00 pm, Location: TBD
- 5 Choral Pyramid Concert  
7:00 pm, Washington-Lee HS
- 6 School Board Meeting  
7:30 pm, 1426 N. Quincy St.
- 11 Veterans Day  
(No School for Students)
- 14 Fall Picture Make-Ups
- 18 AMC 8 Math Contest  
12:45 pm – 2:30 pm  
School Board Meeting  
7:30 pm, 1426 N. Quincy St.
- 25 No After School Activities or  
Late Buses
- 26-28 Thanksgiving Break

### PTA Board

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**Vice President:** Karen Hancox  
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**Follow us on Twitter:**  
[@SwansonAdmirals](https://twitter.com/SwansonAdmirals)

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

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In 1963, Dr. William Alexander spoke at a Cornell University conference convened to examine the status and future of the junior high school. In his remarks, he maintained, "...Intellectual growth means much more than an increasing competence in the academic content of the curriculum. We must endeavor to stimulate in the child a love for learning, an attitude of inquiry, a passion for truth and beauty, a questioning mind. The learning of right answers is not enough...beyond answers alone, we must help children thinking, reasoning, judging and understanding." (*This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents*, AMLE, pps. 3-4.) Dr. Alexander proposed a shift from the junior high school model to the middle school and a movement took shape.

The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) asserts that "the way schools organize teachers and group and schedule students have significant impact on the learning environment." (*This We Believe*, AMLE, p. 31.) At Swanson, we purposely group students and core teachers into interdisciplinary teams so that students and teachers come to know one another; so that students feel safe and supported; and so that teachers can share information with one another about the unique learning needs of each child. Core teachers on each team have common planning time so that they can share information about students' strengths and challenges, plan interdisciplinary learning experiences, and share strategies to best support the students on their teams.

Another attribute of the middle school model is the emphasis on teacher and student advocacy. At Swanson, students meet with their STAR teacher daily. The STAR teacher as a liaison between his or her STAR students and their teachers and parents models appropriate problem-solving skills and serves as an advocate for students. The STAR teacher also helps students practice the skills of self-advocacy by helping them prepare and practice for student-led conferences in the fall and spring and by working with students to advocate for themselves during everyday conversations with their teachers, peers and other important people in their lives.

According to AMLE, "The concept of advocacy is fundamental to the [middle] school's culture, embedded in its every aspect...When students and their advisors meet regularly during the school day, an advisory program helps

students develop respect for self and others; compassion; a workable set of values; and the skills of cooperation, decision making, and goal setting." (*This We Believe*, AMLE, p. 35).

The middle school model as it exists at Swanson allows for our students to learn and grow at their own pace and in their own way. Our teachers, counselors and staff value our students and understand their unique physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs. We choose to work with middle school students because they inspire and amaze (and sometimes exhaust) us! Thank you for entrusting you child to us and for working as our partner in fostering their growth and maturity as they move through this turbulent and exhilarating time of their lives.

— Bridget Loft, Principal

## From the PTA *(Continued from page 1)*

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doing, you can check the county's website for the latest: <http://www.apsva.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=19099>. A link is always prominently displayed on the main APS website, as well.

If you are interested in providing feedback, a neighborhood survey will be up through December at <https://www.change.org/p/arlington-county-board-aps-school-board-and-arlington-county-board-don-t-relocate-hb-woodlawn-to-reed>.

For 8<sup>th</sup> grade families, keep in mind that deadlines are approaching to apply for the IB Program at Washington-Lee and for the PA Scholars Program at Yorktown. (For W-L, only those who do not live in the W-L neighborhood need to apply now. For students who will already be attending W-L, they will know the process to apply if/when they want to do so.) We had a great turnout at the October PTA meeting where this was the main topic – evidence of how engaged our families are in our children's education! You can also check out both schools' websites to get more detailed information.

Thanks for your support and engagement. If there are issues you think are important to the PTA, please let me know at [tishjenkins@gmail.com](mailto:tishjenkins@gmail.com).

— Tish Jenkins, PTA President

## Promotion Change

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In June 2015, Swanson will promote the largest class of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in its history. During this exciting event, we expect a record number of friends, family and well wishers on hand to support our students.

In preparation for this expected turnout, we will implement some procedures to ensure equitable distribution of as many seats as possible for all of our Swanson families.

- In advance of the promotion ceremony, all Swanson 8<sup>th</sup> graders will receive two tickets for seating in the gym for family members to view the ceremony in person.
- Families will receive one additional ticket to view the ceremony in the auditorium on our closed circuit TV system.
- In advance of the event, families may find a limited number of tickets for both the gym and auditorium available on a first come, first served basis.

In order to ensure that all of our spectators have access to seating and that we do not violate fire marshal's regulations, no one will be admitted to the gym or auditorium on promotion day without a ticket.

Look for more information in January. Students can expect to receive tickets in May from their STAR teachers

— Scott McKeown, Assistant Principal

## Curious? Inquisitive? The Swanson Science Fair Wants You!

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Are you curious to see what Swanson students have been up to in their science labs? Do you like to have intriguing conversations with “tweens”? Then the Swanson School Science Fair is the place for you!

On Thursday, January 29, 2015 we will gather our judges together to visit with our budding scientists. We promise a delicious array of food and stimulating conversation. Please consider joining us from 6 pm – 9 pm. Contact Mahi Savage at [mahi.savage@apsva.us](mailto:mahi.savage@apsva.us) for questions or to sign up!

— Mahi Savage and Amy Hodge  
Science Fair Chairpersons

## The Latest in Latin

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Students in Latin (and often friends they've invited along) have already been busy outside the classroom this fall.

Back in September, many of them visited the campus of George Mason University in Fairfax to attend a gathering of Legio XX – a reenactment group of Roman soldiers, gladiators, townspeople and barbarians from the Roman Empire. Members of Legio XX are passionate builders of accurate – and beautiful – replicas of a wide range of artifacts from early Greek to Late Empire: helmets, swords, shields and body armor, of course, but also of more domestic items: a hand mill-stone, implements for weaving, jewelry, as well as soldiers' tents and a small replica Roman “take-out.” They were very generous with all attendees, allowing students to touch and try on anything they wanted to.





*A replica Ancient Greek boar's tusk helmet, with accompanying images of the steps leading to the reenactor's design and construction of the replica: an image of an 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE artifact (with the teeth intact but leather long disintegrated), ivory carving of a man wearing a very similar helmet from within the same period, and finally, a quotation from the Iliad, describing Odysseus wearing a boar's tooth helmet. Yes, Odysseus of the Trojan horse... would have worn a helmet like this one!*



Then, on Friday Oct. 17, close to 50 APS Latin students (and friends) come to a viewing of the film "The Eagle" at the Washington-Lee auditorium. The movie, based on a story by Rosemary Sutcliff, is about a young man in Roman Britain who decides to restore his dead father's honor by going in search of the missing standard of the legion his father had commanded. The loss of a standard was seen as a true blow to a legion's honor and luck; we have several coins from the imperial period that commemorate the recapture of stolen legionary standards.

*Swanson Latin students have fun trying on some ancient military gear, from Mycenaean Greek to 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman.*



*Students at the Latin Mini-Convention learn about and try reciting some lines from Cicero's speeches to the Roman Senate during the greatest crisis of the late Roman Republic: the Catalinian Conspiracy.*

Finally, on Saturday, October 18, also at W-L, students could attend the first annual "mini-convention" as a precursor to November's huge annual State Convention in Richmond. About 150 students go to the Richmond convention, where there are a bewildering number of events and activities. The mini-convention was set up to explain to students what to expect at the real thing and to showcase some of the less-well-known contests and events, knowing that attending the November convention better informed and participating more deeply will enhance students' experiences.

— *Melanie Stowell, Latin Teacher*

## Thank you Swanson PTA and Parents!

A heartfelt thanks you to the Swanson PTA and parents! The Technology Education, Visual Art and Family and Consumer Sciences classes will benefit greatly from your generosity! These classes are underfunded and for the second year in a row, the Swanson PTA has generously provided funding so that the competencies for our curriculums can be met and students can put into practice the principles of study. We appreciate and are grateful for your continued support of the work we do with your children.

— *Jim DeMarino, Technology Education Teacher*

— *Cecily Corcoran, Visual Art Teacher*

— *Chris Taylor, Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher*

## YEAST Takes the FACS classes by STORM!

Suzanne Plimpton, National Science Foundation and Swanson Parent (Owen, 8<sup>th</sup> grade), came to teach our 8<sup>th</sup> grade FACS class about yeast breads! We learned about budding and fermentation. She demonstrated and then we put our new knowledge to work. We also learned that accuracy in taking temperatures and measuring is very important in creating an edible product!

— *Chris Taylor, Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher*



# COUNSELOR'S CORNER

## High School Information

As 8<sup>th</sup> grade students prepare for high school, APS offers numerous opportunities to learn more about high school options within the county. Please find below a list of information sessions and academic planning and scheduling nights. If you have any questions, please contact your student's 8<sup>th</sup> grade counselor – Laura Goodwyn (Typhoons and Tropical Cyclones) [laura.goodwyn@apsva.us](mailto:laura.goodwyn@apsva.us) or Hillary Hawes (Hurricanes) [Hillary.hawes@apsva.us](mailto:Hillary.hawes@apsva.us).

## High School Information Night

Families of children who will be entering high school in the fall of 2015 are encouraged to attend the High School Information Night to get an overview of APS high school programs, including parent resources, school information sessions, and program application deadlines.

**Date:** Mon., Oct. 27, 2014

**Time:** 7 pm – 9 pm

**Location:** Washington-Lee High School  
(1301 N. Stafford St.)

**Learn more:**

<http://www.apsva.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=3013>

## High School Information Sessions

High school information sessions provide an opportunity for families to visit schools, meet the principals, tour the buildings and get a general sense of the schools' personalities. All parents are encouraged to attend one of the sessions and there is no RSVP required. Note that for families planning to apply to a school other than their neighborhood school, attendance is required at **both** the session for their home school and the school they are considering.

School	Wed., Nov. 12, 2014	Tues., Dec. 9, 2015	Tues., Jan. 13, 2015
<b>Wakefield</b> (703) 228-6700	10 am	8:30 am	10 am
<b>Washington-Lee</b> (703) 228-6200	8:30 am	8:30 am	8:30 am
<b>Yorktown</b> (703)228-5400	10 am	10 am	8:30 am
<b>H-B Woodlawn</b> (High School Program) (703) 228-6363	3 pm	3 pm	3 pm

For more information, check the APS website: [www.apsva.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=3018](http://www.apsva.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=3018)

Please direct questions regarding High School Information Night or the high school information sessions to Gladis Bourdouane, Communications Coordinator, at [gladis.bourdouane@apsva.us](mailto:gladis.bourdouane@apsva.us) or 703-228-7667. Access this information electronically at the following link: <http://www.apsva.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=3019>

## Important Dates

APS High School Information Night	October 27; 7 pm – 9 pm at W-L
Pre-IB transfer applications available on W-L website	November 3
High School Information Session #1	November 12; 8:30 am at W-L
<b>IB Information Night</b>	<b>November 24; 7 pm – 8 pm at W-L</b>
High School Information Session #2	December 9; 8:30 am at W-L
High School Information Session #3	January 13; 8:30 am at W-L
Pre-IB Transfer Application Deadline	January 16; due by 4 pm to IB office

### Academic Planning and Scheduling Nights

These sessions provide an opportunity for you to meet the counseling staff at your child's high school and get important information about course selection.

#### School

#### Date and Time

Wakefield	January 22 at 7 pm
Washington-Lee	January 28 at 7 pm
Yorktown	January 8 at 7 pm

### International Baccalaureate Information

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Program is a rigorous, two-year comprehensive program for highly motivated, high achieving students in grades 11 and 12 at Washington-Lee High School. Students apply for the IB program in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Candidates should have completed Algebra and French 2, Spanish 2, Chinese 2, Arabic 2 or Latin 2 by the end of grade 8.

**Note:** students who reside in the Washington-Lee school neighborhood are not required to apply for Pre-IB. The only students who need to apply for Pre-IB are transfer students districted to other APS High Schools.

If your student is interested in the IB program, it is strongly recommended you and your child attend the information night on Monday, November 24 at Washington-Lee High School.

### Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST)

An information session was held on October 7 for students interested in attending TJHSST, and applications were due October 17. Please direct questions regarding application to Hillary Hawes at [Hillary.harwes@apsva.us](mailto:Hillary.harwes@apsva.us).

### Important Upcoming TJHSST Dates:

- November 15: Annual Open House (Note: this event will be held at Holmes Middle School)
- December 6: Admissions test
- January 16: Semifinalist pool notifications posted
- January 24: Essay/student information sheet administration
- February 13: Teacher recommendations due
- April 30: Final admissions decisions posted/mailed

## National Bullying Prevention Month Activities

As part of National Bullying Prevention Month in October, Swanson counselors visited classrooms to present information and engage students in discussions about the important issues of bullying, cyberbullying and sexual harassment. Counselors shared information about the prevalence and scope of these behaviors, their negative impact on students and steps students can take if they experience or witness bullying.

These lessons also focused on the idea of being an "Upstander," or someone who defends or stands up for others when they are bullied. Parents can encourage their students to be Upstanders by supporting victims and telling their counselor or another trusted adult if they witness bullying. For more information, and resources on preventing and addressing bullying, visit [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov).



## Report Bullying

Students and families are also reminded that Swanson's website features a bullying reporting system through which students can anonymously report bullying activity. The reporting form is accessible on the bottom left hand side of the Swanson homepage.

## Parent Resource Center

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The Arlington Public Schools Parent Resource Center (PRC) offers information and resources to families to help them address their child's educational needs. Services the PRC provides include workshops, programs, library materials, and individual meetings with a PRC coordinator.

### Upcoming PRC Programs and Events:

- **Arlington ADHD Parent Support Network meetings**

All meetings are held at the Syphax Education Center, 7 pm – 8:30 pm. Upcoming meetings:

- December 4, 2014: Fun and Bonding with Your Child with ADHD
- February 10, 2015: Tools for Writing
- April 14, 2015: ADHD and Social Relationships

Please direct questions about the ADHD Parent Support Network to Kathleen Donovan at [kathleen.donovan@apsva.us](mailto:kathleen.donovan@apsva.us) or 703-228-2135.

- **Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Parent Education Series**

All meetings are held at the Syphax Education Center, 7 pm – 8:30 pm. Upcoming meetings:

- December 10, 2014: Technology and ASD
- February 18, 2015: I'm Determined
- April 15, 2015: Social and Play Skills

Questions about the ASD Parent Education Series can be directed to Emma Parral at [emma.parralsanchez@apsva.us](mailto:emma.parralsanchez@apsva.us) or 703-228-7239.

### Upcoming Community Events:

- **Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC) Meeting**

November 18, 2014: 7 pm – 9 pm  
Arlington Public Schools Education Center  
426 N. Quincy Street, Rooms 101 A&B, Arlington, VA 22207

- **Arlington Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) Meeting**

December 11, 2014: 7 pm  
Parent Resource Center  
2110 Washington Blvd., Suite 158, Arlington, VA 22204

## Arlington Families

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The Arlington Families website provides valuable online resources for parents and caregivers of children of all ages. It highlights upcoming educational opportunities and fun family activities happening around Arlington. Get practical parenting tips, connect with other parents at informative workshops, or find resources that can help you learn about your child's development: [www.arlingtonfamilies.com](http://www.arlingtonfamilies.com).

## Keeping Kids Safe Online

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Between social media, video games and surfing the Internet, kids spend a great deal of time online. While the Internet can be a valuable communication and learning tool, it also presents many opportunities for children to be put at risk for cyberbullying, fraud and other types of online victimization. Parents can help children stay safe online by teaching them how to protect themselves and to make responsible decisions when it comes to their online behavior.



Here are some tips for promoting responsible, safe Internet use at home:

- **Consider putting limits on technology use:** Placing family computers in rooms where children can operate independently, but still have consistent parental supervision, can help reduce the possibility that kids will navigate to threatening sites or engage in inappropriate behavior. You may also elect to limit the time kids can be online and what times of day these sessions can take place. Using parental controls can also minimize risk by blocking inappropriate content. In addition to the many effective parental control products on the market, parents can use the “Safe Search” feature on Google which blocks explicit content. Consider turning off location services on your child’s cell phone and electing to not allow phone apps to share data. Many game systems also have parental controls that allow you to restrict length of play, only allow games with certain ratings to be played and restrict in-game purchases.
- **Facilitate ongoing dialogue about online safety and etiquette:** Just like any other potentially risky situation, kids are looking to you to for guidance on how to behave appropriately when using the Internet. Initiate conversations about safe technology use, taking advantage of every day circumstances, like a pop-up ad appearing or a news story about online fraud, to continue the dialogue. Remind kids that they don’t check their values at the door when they sign online: being kind, treating others with respect and thinking before you speak all still apply to online behavior.
- **Practice regular online “housekeeping:”** Remind kids to change their passwords on a regular basis (at least every six months) and to make passwords unique and not easy to crack. Effective passwords use numbers and symbols and don’t include any personal information like names or birthdays; consider using nonsense words to make them harder to figure out. As privacy settings are updated on social media sites and apps, kids should monitor their personal settings to make sure they are only sharing content with friends. Children should also be prompted to check for software updates for their computers and phones. Software updates often include important security fixes that protect your device against malware.

For more information on online safety for kids, check out [OnGuardOnline.gov](http://OnGuardOnline.gov) and [Netsmartz.org](http://Netsmartz.org).

### **New this Month:**

*The anchor will now include a special monthly feature called: “Career and Technical Education News,” to bring you the latest on Business and Information Technology, Technology Education and Family and Consumer Sciences classes.*

# Career and Technical Education



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

## Upcoming events and information

### Tech Ed: TSA

- Technology Student Association**
- Technology Education Students
  - Meets Every Thursday
  - Room 126
  - Northern Regional Fair
  - Technosphere State Conference

### FACS:

**Science in the Kitchen meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month in Mrs. Taylor's room, #114.**

### Business & IT:

**Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the month in Ms. Williams' room, #132.**

## What is CTE?

CTE stands for Career and Technical Education. CTE programs prepare students to enter the world of work with the academic and vocational skills they need to compete in a fast paced, skilled, job market upon graduation. CTE courses in middle school are exploratory and offer students the opportunity to **apply new and different** skill sets to projects and activities. CTE courses **implement Virginia state** competency-based learning strategies to deliver curriculum. The **CTE** courses at Swanson are Business and Information Technology, Technology Education, and Family and Consumer Sciences. The hands on nature of these courses allows students an opportunity to learn through tactile opportunities.

## CTE classes in action at Swanson Middle School



**Family and Consumer Sciences:** Students bake bread with Suzanne Plimpton, parent and National Science Foundation volunteer. They learned about yeast and fermentation.



**Business and Information Technology:** On Fun Friday, 6th grade students learn to make animations using *Microsoft PowerPoint*. They are taught the basic concepts of how to add slides and effects and how to change the timings of effects.



**Technology Education:** Students in 8th grade use the design process and STEM concepts to design the fastest dragster. The vehicles are 3D printed, manufactured in the Wood Shop, tested in a wind tunnel, mass is recorded, and students predict the winner on the computerized track. Results are converted to scale speed.



**Swanson Middle School**

*Home of the Admirals*

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