

The Swanson Anchor

October 2014



From the Principal's Desk

We had a terrific start to the school year, and I trust your child is settling in and enjoying new activities and opportunities at Swanson. I appreciate your efforts to support your child with your presence at some of our opening activities including summer transition workshops for rising 6th graders conducted by our counselors, orientation, the September PTA meeting and Back-to-School Night.

We had a great turnout at our Activities Fair on September 11th. Students and parents had the opportunity to learn about the many clubs, PTA sponsored enrichment activities and sports that we offer at Swanson. Please encourage your child to get involved in our extracurricular programs, as we have something for everyone. Research shows that students who are actively involved in their school communities feel more connected to the school and are often academically successful. No need to worry if your child missed the Activities Fair, as they are always welcome to join clubs and activities midstream. Trevor Holland, Swanson's Activities Coordinator, can help connect students to activities that interest them. He can be reached at 703-228-5510.

Student-led conferences occur on the evening of Thursday, 10/9 and the morning of Friday, 10/10. (Please note that Friday, 10/10 is a holiday for students as is Monday, 10/13.) Our students take a leadership role during these conferences, which provide an opportunity for them to reflect upon their successes during the first quarter and provide you with an update of what they have learned in each of their classes. Please note that these are student-led conferences and that students' STAR teachers will act as a resource to them but will not facilitate the conference.

(Continued on page 2)

From the PTA

As the school year gets underway, we've met teachers at Back To School Night, our kids are getting back into the homework routine, and the temperatures are falling. I wanted to take a moment to remind you about ways that your PTA is supporting our school and ways that you can get involved to help our kids and teachers both.

To reduce the fundraising burden of selling items to weary neighbors and relatives, we have our **Dollars for Scholars** program. All you need to do is donate directly. For this to work, we need widespread participation. Please take a moment to pay, either online via Paypal using this form: www.swansonpta.org/exform, or by sending a check into school with your child. Every bit helps!

(Continued on page 2)

October 2014

- 2 Community Engagement Meeting to Discuss Middle School Capacity Options
7:00 pm, Williamsburg MS
- 6-10 Swanson Book Fair
Location: TBD
- 10 Student-led Conferences (No School for Students)
- 13 Holiday (No School for Students)
- 14 PTA Meeting
7:00 pm, Location: TBD
- 22 School Board Meeting
7:30 pm, Location: TBD
- 24 Early Release for Middle and High School
- 27 High School Information Night
7:00 pm, Washington-Lee HS

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This is an extremely positive opportunity for our students to emphasize their strengths, acknowledge their weaknesses and, with support from you and their STAR teacher, set goals for their academic work for the rest of the school year. This is also an opportunity for you and your child to talk about his or her work habits and to plan for how you can support his or her learning as we progress through these important years of middle school. We strongly encourage you to be a positive part of this conferencing process. Remember that your child is an important part of this conference and should attend the conference with you.

Drop-in times are a new feature to the student-led conference schedule this year. During drop-in times, all teachers will be available for parents who may need to drop by to ask a quick question for clarification or just would like to put a name to a face. Drop in times are as follows:

- **Thursday, October 9, 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm**
- **Friday, October 10, 8:00 am - 9:00 am**

This time is not designed for parents to have another scheduled conference. Conversation time will be limited to allow the teacher maximum opportunity to converse with multiple parents. The full schedule for these days is posted on the Swanson website at www.apsva.us/swanson.

Another way to get involved is to attend PTA meetings. The PTA will meet at 7:00 pm in the library on the following dates: 10/14, 11/4, 12/9, 1/13, 2/10, 3/10, 4/14, 5/12 and 6/9. Information regarding programs is publicized prior to each meeting. Consider volunteering as a way to keep in touch with what is happening at school. Teams send out requests for volunteers and many of the unique learning opportunities we offer to our students are made possible because of the parents who volunteer.

Keep up to date with upcoming events at the Swanson via the website and follow us on Twitter at @**SwansonAdmirals**, @**SwansonSport** and @**swansonlibrary**. The website offers quick resources such as the calendar and information related to programs and events. You can also join the PTA listserv at this site.

Many thanks to all the parents who volunteered during the opening weeks of school by stuffing first day packets, providing breakfast for the staff and helping with the orientation. We look forward to seeing you during the coming weeks. Please keep in touch.

— Bridget Loft, Principal

The National PTA Reflections program offers a way for our students to express themselves creatively through visual art, music, poetry, photography or other arts media. This creative program engages students in a unique way and allows them to compete in an unpressured environment. We need a lot of parents to help in this effort, so if you have even a little bit of free time, please contact Cheryl Colbert at makmay0201@hotmail.com.

We are also starting a program to help families that are new to Swanson get acclimated to our warm and generous school. The new students will be given a buddy of the same gender on their team, and the parents will have personal contact information for parents who can help them navigate. If you are a returning Swanson family and would like to get involved, please contact Laura Tayloe at [ljtaylor@msn.com](mailto:ljtayloe@msn.com).

Challenge Racism through Courage Conversations is a fantastic program aimed at encouraging participants to learn about racism, the problem it continues to be, and it teaches how to become more comfortable having difficult conversations. I participated last year, and cannot say enough positive things about it. APS offers it once a year; this year APS will hold it at Campbell Elementary School. As we want to continue making Swanson as welcoming and positive for all students, parents, faculty and staff, our PTA is funding another section of this program here at Swanson. We will hold 11 conversations beginning October 16 that run through the spring. I encourage you to register. Space is limited, and last year we had a wait list, so please don't delay. For more information and to register online, please visit www.challengeracism.org. You can view a very short video at www.youtube.com/challengeracism.

And finally, we have many more opportunities for you to get involved. Please see the online form, www.swansonpta.org/ezform, to review volunteer opportunities and sign up!

—Tish Jenkins, PTA President

2014-2015 New Teacher Bios:

In Their Own Words

Beecher, Loren (6th grade Mathematics, Schooners Team):

I am very excited to once again be a member of the Swanson community! Both of my sons, Robert and Cole Beecher attended Swanson and loved their experience here. I bring many years of experience teaching mathematics, most recently teaching Math 7 at Gunston Middle School. I have a rich personal life enjoying social events with family and friends. I look forward to learning all about Swanson alongside my new 6th grade students.

Beyer, Molly (HILT Teacher):

I am very excited to begin my teaching career at Swanson! My path to becoming an ESOL teacher began when I moved to Austria after my college graduation to work as an English Language Teaching Assistant in two secondary schools. There I developed a passion for teaching English and working with young language learners, in addition to experiencing the daily triumphs and challenges of living in a foreign country and communicating in a second language! When I returned to the U.S. two years later, I began a Master's program in teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages at American University. During the past school year, I completed a practicum experience at Woodrow Wilson High School in Washington, DC, and I did my student teaching semester at Churchill Road Elementary in McLean, VA before graduating in May. In my free time, I enjoy reading, cooking and baking, and kayaking. I'm looking forward to a great year with the Swanson community!

Bizar, Sharon (6th grade Science and Social Studies Teacher, Sea Hawks Team):

I am thrilled to join the Swanson team and to be a part of the 6th grade Sea Hawks! I was actually born in Seattle, Washington and moved a lot as my father was in the military. My teaching career began in the suburbs of New York City after completing my Masters' degrees in Special Education and Elementary Education from Manhattanville College. I have been teaching special education in Arlington Public Schools for 17 years. The past 13 years have been at Glebe Elementary School. I love spending time with my daughter and family, and walking my dog, Rose. I hope to inspire the Swanson students to set high goals for themselves and motivate them to work towards their goals and dreams.

Brosnahan, Justin (6th grade Science Teacher, Clippers Team):

I am thrilled to be joining the Swanson community! Go Admirals! For the past eight years, I have been teaching middle school science in Northern Virginia. I have earned a Bachelor's of Science in Marine Science at Coastal Carolina University and a Master's of Education at the University of Virginia. My family and I enjoy the beach and traveling the globe. My goal is for my students to develop a love of science through exploration and discovery.

Curran, Nicole (Spanish Teacher):

I have been teaching Spanish for nine years in Northern Virginia and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. I earned a Master's in Spanish Language and Culture from the Universidad de Salamanca in Spain and graduated with honors in Spanish from Gettysburg College. After graduation, I spent four years living and working in Seville, Spain. This summer I returned to Seville to complete my certification in AP Spanish Language and Culture. I love sharing my travel experiences to Spanish-speaking countries with students and look forward to being back at Swanson Middle School after a few years in North Carolina!

Gil, Gina (6th Grade Science Teacher, Sea Hawks Team):

I am excited to return to Swanson after 12 years. In that time, I have taught science and math to students in grades 6-9. I taught at Gunston and Williamsburg middle schools and at international schools in Cairo and Copenhagen. I also completed a Master's Degree in Environmental Science and Policy. I enjoy cycling and writing fiction. I look forward to sharing my love of science with the Swanson community.

Herr, Rachael (7th grade English, Voyagers Team):

I am so excited to be a Swanson Admiral! Although I grew up in Northern Virginia, I have been living and working in Pennsylvania for the past three years. This past March I graduated with my M.Ed. from Drexel University, with a concentration in Secondary English. Before coming to Swanson, I worked as a Reading and Literacy teacher with Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia, PA. This school year, I hope to instill in my students a love and appreciation of reading and writing, and cannot wait to help them discover their strengths as students and individuals. Outside of the classroom I enjoy reading, fitness, and cooking (or attempting to!). I am thrilled to be back in the area and to be joining the Swanson community. Looking forward to a great school year!

Kelleher, Linda (6th grade Reading Teacher, Schooners Team):

I am thrilled to be coming home to the Swanson community. While my career with APS began at Wakefield HS, I spent five years at Swanson before my most recent stint at Oakridge Elementary School as the Assistant Principal. As a career switcher, I started as an instructional assistant at Wakefield while I earned a Master's degree in Special Education at George Washington University. I taught mostly Algebra 1, but also taught Senior Project and was the Special Education Department Chair there. After working for the Office of Special Education at the Education Center, I transferred to Swanson as the Director of Student Activities and an Assistant Principal. My love of reading and teaching reading led me to a second Master's degree from the University of Virginia in Reading. I can think of no better thing to teach than reading and am excited to teach it as an Admiral.

Meck, Melissa (7th and 8th grade History Teacher, Voyagers Team):

I am thrilled to be joining the team of teachers at Swanson Middle School. I have spent the last several years teaching students from diverse backgrounds and varying abilities in public and private middle and elementary schools in Washington, DC. I have had the opportunity to serve in leadership positions as well, such as Division Head and Chairperson. I recently graduated with a second Master's Degree in the field of education, and look forward to applying my experience and education while supporting Swanson and its students. I thoroughly enjoy my two girls and husband, and I am a passionate advocate for children who are deaf or hard of hearing in my spare time.

Metz, Tammy (Librarian):

I am excited to joining the Swanson family! Prior to becoming a school librarian, I taught middle and high school mathematics. I have spent seven of the last eight years working with students on the Navajo and Hopi reservations of Northern Arizona. In addition to reading, I enjoy playing and singing folk music with my guitar, "Al."

Nemeth, Jillian (Health and Physical Education Teacher):

I am very thankful that I have been given the opportunity to become part of the Swanson Family. I began my teaching career in Columbia, South Carolina as an Elementary School Physical Education Teacher. I am passionate about providing my students with life skills to help improve

their quality of life through fitness, problem solving, communication, goal setting and decision making skills. As a New York transplant, I am very excited to live in the Arlington area.

Pacifico, Susan (Mathematics Teacher, HILT and Grade 8):

I have a B.S. in Math Education from the University of Maryland and a M.Ed in Math Education from George Mason University. I worked for seven years at Washington-Lee High School, the last two of which I also worked in the Division of Instruction as the Secondary Math Specialist. After my daughter was born, I decided to stay at home with her, however I continued to teach online for American Military University and Forest Trail Academy. Now that my youngest is starting Kindergarten, I am returning to the classroom. I am very excited to be back in Arlington Public Schools and look forward to working with the students and staff at Swanson Middle School.

Rauseo, Leigh (French Teacher):

I am very happy to join the Swanson team and share my passion for French language. I have been teaching French to grades 6-12 since 2005. I began my career in San Diego, then moved east to be closer to home. Along with teaching, I have enjoyed coaching various sports and sponsoring school activities such as the Student Government Association and the French Club. Before becoming a teacher, I worked for US Airways as a bilingual flight attendant, spending half of each month in Paris. In my spare time, I love to go out to breakfast and take walks with my husband and daughter. I look forward to working with the Swanson community.

Shelble, John (School-Based Substitute):

I've been a learner all my life, and I've been a teacher too. I've done a ton of wonderful things, but there's more I want to do.

On Capitol Hill for 30 years, still wanting to make a contribution,

I decided to try something new and work instead in education.

I like civics and history, and all kinds of diversity.

Lots of subjects interest me, but instead of making a list of these,

Here's a few things I believe:

School should be cool and learning fun; Self-discipline pays dividends; Hard work brings success; and we all need help to do our best.

That's why I'm here, I must confess.

So I'm looking forward to being part of the Swanson family, To guide, encourage and help our students be the best that they can be.

Stokes-Beverley, Christine (7th grade Mathematics, Captains Team):

I am excited and honored to join the Swanson family! My teaching career began in the Miami-Dade County (Florida) Public School system. Throughout my career, I have taught in the middle school setting by choice! I especially enjoy working with this age group. Before coming to Swanson, I was the Middle School Academic Technology Coordinator at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, DC. In my spare time, I enjoy running, volunteering, and traveling with my husband and two young sons. I look forward to working with the Swanson community.

Watts, Victoria (Health and Physical Education Teacher):

I graduated from Penn State and spent four years as an elementary school PE teacher in Alexandria City. Last year, I taught high school health and PE in Fairfax. I am excited to be teaching middle school health and PE at Swanson! I am a newlywed (we got married in July) and enjoy traveling and training for my first marathon.

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Counselor's Corner

The Counseling Team at Swanson Middle School works with students, families, and other school staff to support the development and achievement of all students. Our counseling staff is involved in many activities that promote the success of students, including:

- Individual and small group counseling
- Crisis counseling
- Classroom guidance lessons

- Student registration and academic planning
- Career development
- Peer relations
- Consultation with parents, staff, and other professionals
- Student-led conferences
- Grade level transition activities
- Special education meetings

Our counseling staff builds trusting relationships with students as they address their individual socio-emotional, academic, and career development needs. We encourage students and parents to get to know and collaborate with their school counselor. We are available 7:30 am - 3:00 pm every school day.

This year's counseling staff includes:

- **Rana Luthra**, Director of Counseling Services
703-228-5535; rana.luthra@apsva.us
- **Judy Jankowski**, 6th grade Counselor
703-228-5509; judy.jankowski@apsva.us
- **Michelle Wilkes**, 7th grade Counselor
703-228-5511; michelle.wilkes@apsva.us
- **Hillary Hawes**, 8th grade Counselor- Hurricanes
703-228-2347; hillary.hawes@apsva.us
- **Laura Goodwyn**, 8th grade Counselor- Tropical Cyclones and Typhoons
703-228-5519; laura.goodwyn@apsva.us
- **Chrissy Reardon**, Counselor - HILT/Minority Achievement Coordinator
703-228-5512; christine.reardon@apsva.us
- **Faye Murphy**, Registrar
703-228-5508; faye.murphy@apsva.us
- **Jackie Torres**, Special Education Administrative Assistant
703-228-5502; jacqueline.torres@apsva.us

Swanson also has many Support and Related Services staff that address various important aspects of students' lives at school. 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

Meet our New Counseling Staff

Rana Luthra, Director of Counseling

I am delighted to begin a new school year at Swanson Middle School! After receiving a Master's Degree in Counseling from Radford University, I started my career in APS at Jefferson Middle School where I have served as a school counselor for the past 13 years. During my time at Jefferson, I have been able to grow as a counselor and assume several leadership positions. Those experiences motivated me to further my education and earn an Ed.S in Educational Leadership in May 2011 from Virginia Tech. When I'm not at school, I enjoy yoga, reading and spending time with family and friends. I am looking forward to being part of the Swanson Family and the opportunity to impart my knowledge and passion for counseling to the students and faculty.

Laura Goodwyn, 8th Grade Counselor, Tropical Cyclones and Typhoons

I am so excited to be kicking off the school year as an Admiral! I received a Bachelor's Degree in English and Psychology in 2008 from James Madison University. I then worked as a research assistant at a nonprofit in DC, focusing on positive youth development, youth mental health and issues that impact at-risk adolescents. It was this work that inspired me to pursue my Master's Degree in School Counseling from the George Washington University, which I received in May of this year. During my graduate program, I completed two internships in Arlington County and loved working with the students, families and staff. In my free time, I love reading, traveling, and trying out new recipes. I look forward to becoming a part of the Swanson family and working together to serve our students.

Chrissy Reardon, Counselor - HILT/Minority Achievement Coordinator

I'm thrilled to join the Swanson Admirals this year! After working in foster care and Special Education, I decided to go back to school for my Master's Degree in Counseling in Development at George Mason. I've worked with students from ages 6-22, but middle school students are my favorite! As a Northern Virginia native, I'm happy to be working near home. In my time outside school, I enjoy traveling, playing sports and spending time with my family. I'm excited to meet all the wonderful Swanson students and families! Go Admirals!

Starting the Year Off Right!

The beginning of the school year is an exciting time. It is an opportunity to have a fresh start, try new things, and set goals for the year. Below are some tips for having a productive start to the school year and ideas for how you can support your child's success:

- **Make a plan:** With the many academic and extracurricular obligations that students have, it is important to think through how they can spend their time most effectively. Help your child develop a specific plan for when they will get homework done each night and how they will prioritize their assignments. Students will have homework every night, so establishing a reliable routine is important for making sure it is always completed on time.
- **Set small goals:** Help your child think through how they can break longer-term assignments into smaller chunks that they work on nightly so they are not scrambling to complete big projects at the last minute. Independent time management is an important skill for middle school students to master. Encourage your child to use their agenda to map out a timeline for when certain components of a project should be complete.
- **Create incentives:** We all know students love to use their phones, iPads, and video games, but screen time can often get in the way of homework time. Establish clear limits for technology use and consider using use of electronics as a reward for completing assignments.

- **Get to know your child's teachers and counselor:** You and the Swanson staff have the same goal: to help your child succeed. Swanson staff want to work as a team with your family to help your child progress. Use Parent Vue to track your child's assignments and grades. Reach out to your child's teachers and counselor to find out how they are performing in school and if there is anything you can be doing outside of school to reinforce their academic and personal progress.
- **Encourage self-advocacy:** Middle school is a time when students begin to become more independent and make some of their own decisions. Help your children to foster a realistic understanding of their talents and challenges and the confidence to seek help when they need it. Explain that seeking support and asking for what you need is a sign of strength, not weakness or inability, and can help you tackle problems before they become bigger issues. If your child is experience an interpersonal challenge or wants to seek help, consider role-playing how they will approach the situation. Thinking through how they will articulate their thoughts beforehand can help students feel more confident.

High School Information Sessions

In the coming months, APS high schools will hold information nights to discuss admission for the 2015-2016 school year. Dates for these sessions were not available at the time of this publication, but will be communicated to families via the announcements, School Talk and the Counseling Department website.

These sessions provide an opportunity for families and students to visit the high schools, meet with principals, tour the buildings, and gain a general sense of the personalities and offerings of each school. If you are interested in attending a school other than your neighborhood school, please plan to attend the information sessions for **both** your neighborhood school and the school you are considering.

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

Students interested in applying to TJHSST are encouraged to complete applications found online beginning September 22 (<http://www.tjhsst.edu/abouttj/admission/index.html>). All applications must be received by October 17. An information session for 8th graders was held at Swanson on October 7.

Important TJHSST dates:

- October 17: Application deadline
- 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

Washington-Lee High School International Baccalaureate (IB) Program

Washington-Lee High School offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The IB program is an internationally recognized program of studies available to highly motivated college-bound 11th and 12th grade students. Students apply for admission to the IB program in 8th grade and are 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.

Earn High School Language Credits: Credit by Exam

Students, in grades 7-12 who have had substantial experience outside of school listening, speaking, reading and writing in their native language are eligible to earn high school language credits by taking the Credit by Exam for Foreign Languages.

Available in 24 languages, successful completion of this exam can allow students to earn one to two foreign language credits. Exams will be offered from 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm (students must arrive at 3:45 pm) on the following dates:

- November 6 at the Career Center
- November 12 at Washington-Lee High School, room 1011
- November 13 at the Career Center

Students must return their completed application to their counselor by **October 17, 2014** to be considered for eligibility for the exam. Forms are available in the Swanson Counseling Office.

Minority Achievement

The Office of Minority Achievement is dedicated to helping students discover and use resources that will help them achieve personal and academic success. 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, perception and actions.

Some of the programs at Swanson include:

- Lunch Talk about Race and Identity (all grades)
- Latinas Group –“ LYLAS”
- Boys Group – “BoyzIIMen”
- Black/African-American Girls Group - “Sisterhood”
- Asian/Asian-American Group
- College Fairs and College Tours
- Latino Youth Conference
- GMU – Pre Early Identification Program
- Emerging Scholars

Students are welcome to participate in any and all groups. For more information, please contact Chrissy Reardon at Christine.Reardon@apsva.us or 703-228-5512.

We look forward to a wonderful year together!

Strengthening Families Program

The well-received Strengthening Families Program (SFP) will be offered this year at Barrett Elementary School on Mondays, October 27 - December 8 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.com. You may also contact Jennifer Landis at jlandis@arlingtonva.us or 703 228-1108.

October is National Bullying Prevention Month

In observance of National Bullying Prevention Month, the Swanson counseling team will deliver classroom guidance lessons on bullying, harassment 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. The goal of these lessons is to promote positive interactions between students, the values of civility, courtesy, and dignity and effective problem solving without the use of violence or ridicule.

Bringing it Home: Talking with Your Child about Bullying

- **Know the signs:** Your child may not always tell you if they are experiencing bullying at school, so it is important to know what to look for. Signs a child may be a victim of bullying include: torn clothing or tattered books, unexplained cuts or bruises, inexplicably taking an alternate route to or from school, sudden onset of school phobia or unexpected shifts in mood. Remember that statistics show us that certain groups of students experience bullying at higher rates, including students with disabilities and special health needs, and may benefit from extra support.
- **Communicate with your child:** Do not shy away from asking your child directly about bullying behavior. They are most likely waiting for someone to help them talk through solutions to the problem. Regularly talking with your child about their day at school can provide valuable opportunities for discussions about bullying behavior. Good questions to start this conversation could be, “Have you ever felt nervous to go to school because of bullying?” or “What do you think parents and adults at school can do to help kids who are being bullied?”
- **Communicate with the school:** Swanson staff are committed to preventing bullying behavior and supporting students who have experienced bullying. If you suspect your child is being bullied, or is exhibiting bullying behavior, reach out to your child’s counselor to discuss how best to intervene and support them.
- **Coach your child on how to respond to a bully:** Encourage your child to respond to a bully in a calm voice and to avoid becoming overly emotional. If possible, the best response to bullies is to laugh off their remarks. If your child feels unsafe, encourage them to calmly walk, not run, away from the situation and tell an adult they trust as soon as possible.
- **Self-Confidence is the best prevention:** Encourage your child to pursue activities they love that help build self-confidence and strong sense of self. Work to provide students with a safe home environment where they feel respected, and model effective conflict resolution and respect. Students who are confident and armed with strong stress and conflict management skills are more likely to brush off or ignore bullies.

Special Education Corner

Arlington Public Schools provides a continuum of services for students with disabilities, preschool through high school, found eligible to receive special education services. The steps to identifying a student as eligible for special education services is a carefully managed process guided by State and Federal regulations. Evaluations required to make this determination are completed only with parent permission. Policies and procedures governing special education services can be found in Arlington Public Schools Special Education Policies and Procedures.

School-based student study committees review available information regarding students who are experiencing problems that adversely affect their education performance. Students suspected of having a disability are referred for evaluation. An eligibility committee at the student’s school reviews assessment data to determine if the student has a disability which requires special education services. When a student is found eligible for special education services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed with the participation of the school staff, the parents and the student (when appropriate). An IEP is a statement of the special education and related services that will be provided to the student which is updated at least annually during a student’s eligibility for special education.

Please look for highlights of topics related to special education services in future issues. You can also view this information on the APS Special Education website: <http://www.apsva.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=2865>

Activities Corner!

I hope that everyone has settled in and is enjoying the new school year. Here are a few updates about the happenings of our sports and clubs!

Sports

Boys Soccer, Tennis, and Dive are well underway. Make sure to come out and support your Admirals! Boys Basketball and Girls Soccer will be starting up in late October, so if you are interested, keep an eye to the

morning announcements and web calendar for tryout dates and the game schedules. A physical exam dated within a calendar year of the sports season must be on file to participate. Good luck and have fun!

Student Athlete Grade Monitoring

Just as in the Swanson statement where Scholarship comes before Spirit, we emphasize the Student in student athlete first! To participate in the interscholastic sports teams at Swanson, you must maintain at least a C in all of your classes, including electives, PE, and ACT II. Grades for our athletes will be pulled once a week. If there are any discrepancies, the teacher, coach, athlete and Activities Coordinator will work together to create a plan towards eligibility.

Clubs

We enjoyed seeing everyone out at our after school activities fair on Thursday, September 11. All of our clubs should have begun meeting, or will start shortly. The best place to find out when and where a club is meeting is the morning announcements. It's also never too late to get a new club up and running!

As always, if you have any questions about Swanson's after school programs, feel free to email me at trevor.holland@apsva.us or call (703) 228-5510.

— *Trevor Holland, Activities Coordinator*



Swanson Middle School

Home of the Admirals

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