

The Swanson Anchor



November 2015

From the Principal's Desk

We are Swanson Admirals

We are Scholarship, striving to think deeply and to open our minds.

*We are Service, connecting to one another,
our community and to the world.*

We are Spirit, celebrating our successes, our school and ourselves.

We are Swanson Admirals.

Our students and staff recite the above Swanson Statement every day during STAR to reaffirm our commitment to the importance of scholarship, service and spirit.

("Scholarship-Service-Spirit" has been Swanson's motto for the last several decades.)

November brings a renewed focus on service. Veteran's Day reminds us of the service of our military troops and Thanksgiving allows us to reflect on our own good fortune and serve folks in need. Our Swanson students and staff engage in service activities throughout the school year. For instance, the Environmental STAR and SGA students participated in a "Beautify Swanson" effort in the spring, which resulted in the removal of nonindigenous plants and the addition of flowers and mulch to spruce up our grounds.

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From the PTA

Dear Swanson Families

The Swanson community once again showed its compassion and caring. The No Stress Fundraiser brought in \$17,200 in donations nearly \$5,000 more than last year. The funds will allow the PTA to fund important programs including the teacher instructional grant requests. On behalf of the entire PTA leadership team, thank you.

— Noah Simon

November 2015

November

- 10 PTA Meeting
7:00 p.m. Library
- 13 Picture Makeup Day

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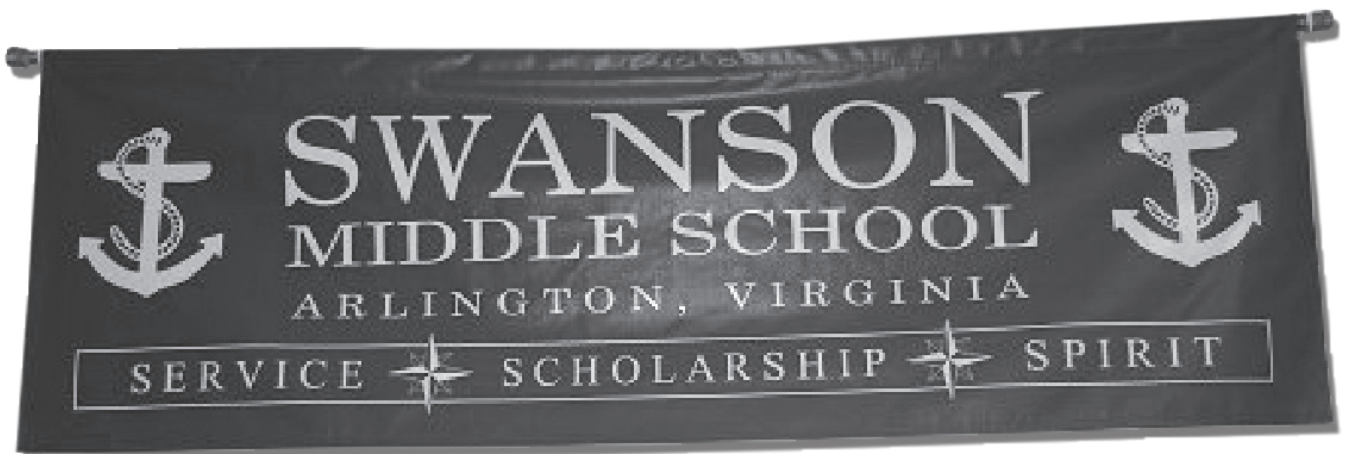
Last school year, our 6th graders raised money to support students in schools in impoverished countries. Student government and Emerging Scholars STAR students coordinated a school-wide collection of nonperishable food to give to area food banks. In doing so, our students learn and appreciate the meaning of “connecting to one another, our community and to the world”. I encourage you to talk with your child about the importance and benefits of service. As Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”



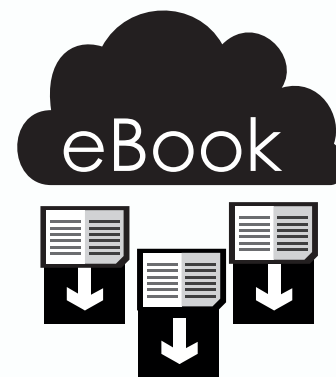
— Bridget Loft

Musical Production Update

As we are still in the process of seeking a highly qualified Theater Arts teacher, it will not be feasible to produce a full musical this school year. Once a permanent Drama teacher is selected, we will work to support this teacher as he/she offers in-class performance opportunities in the spring for students enrolled in Drama courses. We will keep you informed as to the status of these potential spring productions.



eBooks at Swanson



We are very excited to be in the second year of the county-wide Digital Learning Initiative. One component that the library will continue to promote this year is access to eBooks. Students with an iPad or other personal device can access eBooks from a few different places:

Swanson Library (apps: “Brytewave/FollettShelf” and “MackinVIA”). Follett and Mackin are the two major vendors through which we purchase eBooks. Last year all 6th graders were guided through the process of setting up the Brytewave app. This year we plan to do the same, and introduce the MackinVIA app to 6th and 7th graders.

Arlington Public Schools (app: “iBooks”). All 6th and 7th grade APS-issued iPads come with the “iBook” app. The iBooks app allows users to purchase eBooks through its platform. However, it also offers many free samples and entire eBooks.

Arlington Public Library (app: “Overdrive”). Students may go to any public library branch for assistance in setting up Overdrive.

The Swanson Library only supports the eBook platforms in option #1, but will be happy to refer students or parents to information about the other options. 8th graders may also use any of the above apps on their individually-owned personal learning devices. Any 8th grader interested in doing so can visit our tutorial page

at <http://apsva.us/Page/28172> or stop by the library and speak to a librarian.

As with our physical books, Swanson Library eBooks are selected with all grades at Swanson in mind (6th, 7th, and 8th). A book that is appropriate for an 8th grader may not be appropriate for a 6th grader. Last year our eBooks were selected with primarily 6th graders in mind. As each new grade receives iPads and our selection of eBooks increases, please be aware that, unlike checking out a physical book, a student can check out an eBook without ever interacting with an adult.

Because of the range of maturity and reading levels found in middle schools between younger and older students, not every eBook will be the right choice for every student. We have found that by and large children are very good self selectors, and will not take a book that makes them uncomfortable or is too difficult. However, once in a while a child may take a book that proves to be upsetting, or to which you as a parent object. In such a case, you may ask your child to return the book and select a different one.

Thank you for coming on this journey with us! Please contact Tammy Metz (tamara.metz@apsva.us) or Amy Hailey (amy.hailey@apsva.us) with any questions about eBooks.

High School Information Sessions

APS high schools will hold information sessions to discuss admission for the 2016-2017 school year. **These sessions provide parents with an opportunity to visit the schools, meet the principals, tour the buildings, and get a general sense of the personalities of each of the schools.**

Below are the dates and times for the sessions. Contact Gladis Bourdouane with questions at 703-228-7667

	Daytime Sessions	Evening Sessions
Arlington Tech	Nov. 16 at 2 p.m.	Dec. 8 at 7 p.m.
H-B Woodlawn	Nov. 16 at 3 p.m.	Jan. 12, 2016 at 7 p.m. (HS & MS)
Wakefield	Nov. 16 at 10 a.m.	Dec. 2 at 7 p.m.
Washington-Lee	Nov. 16 at 8:30 a.m.	Dec. 1 at 7 p.m. (HS & IB)
Yorktown	Nov. 16 at 10 a.m.	Dec. 7 at 10 a.m.

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 up to four foreign language credits. A self-assessment that can help students understand if they are proficient enough to try to earn credit through a test can be found at the following link: <http://ncssf.org/secure/LFvisedgrid-October2009.pdf>

Tests will be offered on December 4th at Kenmore Middle School in the afternoon and February 1st at Wakefield High School in the morning. Registration closes on November 13th for the December 4th test and on January 8th for the February 1st test. Please complete the online registration at the following link: <http://www.apsva.us/worldlanguages> or see Ms. Reardon in the Counseling Office for a paper copy of the registration form. Please note that parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from the tests.

Color of Leadership: A Female Perspective Conference
The Office of Minority Achievement's 4th Annual Color of Leadership: A Female Perspective conference will be held on November 14th, 2015 at Wakefield High School. The theme of this year's conference is "Get Moving With STEAM!" The conference focuses on developing leadership skills and learning about careers in the science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Interested? Pick up a registration form in the Counseling Office. Questions? Contact Swanson's Minority Achievement Coordinator, Chrissy Reardon at 703-228-5512 or christine.reardon@apsva.us.

November is Career Education Month

Students will soon be working with their counselors to get access to (or get reacquainted with) APS's web-based career information system, Naviance. Naviance helps students and families connect what students do in the classroom to their life goals, including finding colleges and careers based on their personal skills and areas of interest. Students will be completing grade level assessments and exploring the resources found in this powerful tool that they can access from their iPads or home computers 24-7. For more information about logging on to Naviance, see the drop down menu under the Counseling tab on the Swanson website.

Screen Time: When is it Time to Unplug?

With the prevalence of social media and new technological tools, like iPads and cell phones, it is clear that children and teens today spend more time looking at screens than any generation before. The question is, is this a bad thing? Recent research suggests maybe not, as long as the time spent online is quality time and monitored by informed parents or caregivers.

In this new landscape where almost 75% of 13-17 year olds have smartphones¹, simply saying "turn it off" may no longer be reasonable, or maybe even necessary. Just released in October, the American Academy of Pediatrics has developed new guidelines that advise parents on managing technology in their children's lives. Below are some of the key messages adapted from the guidelines that may be helpful as you work to monitor your child's use of technology:



- **Parenting has not changed:** The same rules should apply in real life and in virtual environments. Kids expect and want limits, so set expectations for what technology they can use and for how long. Knowing the friends your children interact with online is just as important as knowing the friends they are spending time with in real life.
- **Role modeling is critical:** Children are looking to parents for an example of safe use. Limit your own media use and show them how to act appropriately online. Considering playing a video game or browsing a website with your kids. You will have the chance to give them your perspective, which can influence how they act when you are not present.
- **Content matters:** The quality of the content children are accessing can actually be more important than simply the number of hours they spend online. Instead of just setting a timer to manage their use, be aware of the sites kids are using and if they are positive uses of time. Organizations like Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org) review games, apps, and websites to help parents and educators evaluate if children should have access.
- **Set limits:** Like any activity, technology use should have limits. Consider if your child's technology use is helping them or keeping them from participating in other activities. Daily "unplugged" play or relaxation time is important for all children. Think about creating "tech free" zones during meal time or when a child goes to bed in order to encourage healthy habits.
- **Kids will be kids:** Children are going to make mistakes when using media. Consider these as opportunities for teachable moments instead of reasons to get unnecessarily upset. However certain behaviors, like sending or posting inappropriate content, need to be handled urgently, but should also be seen as an alarm that a child may be in need of help.

As you monitor your child's online use, always remember to be aware of signs that your child may be a victim of cyberbullying, such as sudden avoidance of technology use, marked anxiety or sadness, or social withdrawal. If your child reports that they are a victim of cyberbullying that is affecting their life at school, encourage them to report the behavior to a Swanson administrator or counselor or to fill out the anonymous online bullying report form found on the Swanson homepage.

¹ Pew Research Center

Community Events

Autism Parent Education Series: Social Skills and Executive Functioning

Topic: Social Skills and Executive Functioning

Date: December 10, 2015, 7-8 p.m.

Location: Syphax Education Center, 2110 Washington Boulevard, Rooms 101/103, Arlington, VA 22204

Simultaneous Spanish language interpretation will be available.

Register online at <http://www.apsva.us/Page/2883> or by phone: 703-228-7239.

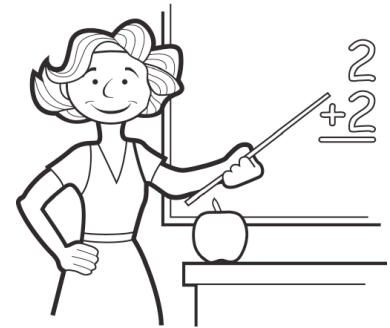
Arlington Special Education PTA (SEPTA) Meeting Dates

*Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Syphax Education Center, 2110 Washington Boulevard, Rooms 101/103, Arlington, VA 22204

November 12, 2015*	SEPTA Superintendent Chat with Dr. Patrick Murphy *(Education Center, 1426 N. Quincy Street, Room 101, Arlington, VA 22207)
December 10, 2015	Executive Functioning and Social Skills Development
February 11, 2016	I'm Determined (self-advocacy); Inclusion; Dental Health
March 10, 2016	Medicaid Waivers
April 14, 2016	Organization for Autism Research (OAR)'s peer education program "What's Up With Nick"?
May 12, 2016	Children's Mental Health
June 9, 2016	SEPTA Leadership Elections/Conscious Discipline

Access the full guidelines at the following link: <http://aapnews.aapublications.org/content/36/10/54.full>

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.”

What are the next steps once my child has been referred to a **Student Study Committee**? The **Second step** of the Special Education cycle (**The Student Study Committee**):

Student Study Committee (SCC)	
What:	The SSC committee reviews the “Referral to a Student Study Committee,” and discusses the information in the referral.
Who:	The SSC is made up of at least three people, including the principal or designee, teacher(s), other staff who have observed or worked with your child, and the person who made the referral. The school can hold the Student Study Committee meeting without your permission but must invite you to attend and will notify you of the date and time of the meeting. Though your attendance is not required, you should attend, if possible, because you have important information about your child to share with school staff.
When:	Within 10 business days of receipt of the referral
What Happens Next:	<p>After reviewing all the information presented, the committee discusses the child’s needs and makes one of the following three recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The child should stay in a general education class. Sometimes specific ideas for classroom modifications and alternative teaching techniques are suggested to the child’s regular education teacher. Sometimes arrangements are made for a child to work with other professionals, such as the reading specialist or school counselor. The child should be given certain tests to find out whether he or she may be eligible for special education and related services. Testing cannot begin until you give your permission. This is done by signing the form called “Request for Parental Permission to Conduct Evaluations for Consideration for Eligibility for Special Education.” Please read it carefully. You will receive this statement of rights at each step as your child proceeds through the cycle. The committee feels they need to gather more information before a decision can be made. In this case, the committee obtains additional information and meets again within a specified time period.

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>

National School Psychology Awareness Week



The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has designated **November 9–13, 2015 as National School Psychology Awareness Week.** This year's theme, "Connect the Dots and THRIVE!" highlights the importance of connecting students to the academic and social-emotional skills they need to promote personal achievement, growth, and resilience, as well as a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

Included within Arlington Public Schools' Strategic Plan (2011-2017) is the school system's desire to engage all students in learning, reducing barriers to achievement, creating ideal learning environments, and meeting the needs of the whole child. As Swanson's school psychologist, I work to support students' needs and to address these goals in various ways. Through individual work with students, whether in an assessment or counseling interaction, I work with students to identify strengths and needs and help to identify strategies to assist students in becoming the best versions of themselves. I collaborate with parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators to address concerns about students' functioning and consider supports that may be beneficial to address students' unique circumstances and needs. My hope is that, in my role at Swanson, I am able to foster a greater understanding of those factors that contribute to academic success and healthy outcomes for all of our students. At this time, recent research findings regarding the significant impact of personal characteristics of "grit" and self-control on success, as well as the positive outcomes of mindfulness practice, are particular interests of mine. Middle school years are encompassed within a rich developmental period of both brain development and the development of an adolescent's sense of him/herself. I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to be involved in this sensitive time period in children's' lives, and to witness and support such remarkable growth!

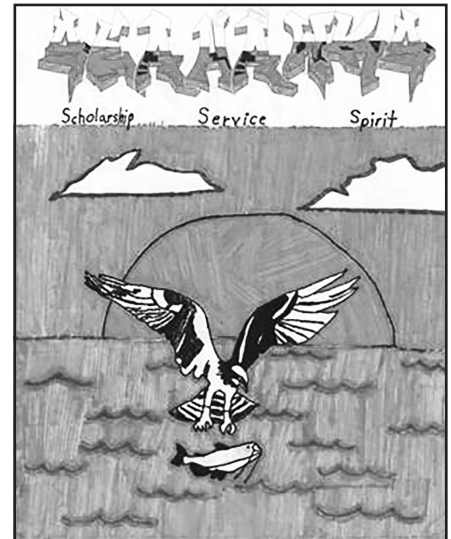
Melissa Deichmann, Ph.D.

Licensed Clinical Psychologist

School Psychologist

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Sea Hawks

The Sea Hawks are quickly wrapping up the first quarter. Where has the time gone!?! The students were able to participate in a get to know you game during STAR. They had a great time running around learning fun facts about their classmates. In science they are starting to do experiments, and in English they are diving into their first novels. Reading is full of book talks, and in Social Studies students analyzed and discussed their way from the Bering Land Bridge up through Colonial America. Math has been working with all fraction operations (Math 6) and wrapping up probability (Math 7). We hope to see a lot of you at Sea Hawk Supper which will be held on Thursday, November 12. Look out for a flyer that will be sent home with more details.

The Sea Hawk Team

The Big Draw



For the first time, Swanson Middle School participated in “The Big Draw” during STAR. Each student was given an alphabet letter to doodle and draw on using any form of supplies. Many STARs asked for more squares to doodle on.

This year’s theme for “The Big Draw” is “Every Drawing Tells a Story.” Over 400,000 people across the world in twenty-six countries held drawing events during the month of October.

The ART STAR will compile all of letters together and collage the squares into the Swanson Statement, Mission, and much more!