

## Newsletter 08-10 June

The weather is finally allowing us to believe it is June, even if everyone I talk to seems incredulous that it is. Where did the school year go? Wasn't it just Thanksgiving? I keep telling myself it is not age that makes the years seem to go by so quickly...it is not age, it is not age.

As we close this year, I know there is stress and concern about what we did not accomplish or some of the decisions that were made that will have a major impact on our future. While each is a reality and not be ignored, I want to go back to what I talked with our staff about last August when we opened the school year. "Let's get excited about and celebrate what we are doing, and not focus only on what we are not doing." This year our students, staff and parents have certainly done a lot, distinguished themselves in so many ways. It is important that we do not overlook these accomplishments, that we celebrate them and congratulate everyone who contributed to them. There is a lot to get excited about. As I do each June, I want to share a representative number of our points of pride; please know there are many more of which we are equally proud.

**Note:** For child safety, our policy is not to publish student names or pictures on our website. Since this newsletter is posted on our website and that of the schools, I want to uphold the existing policy. We are currently reviewing this policy in light of the pervasiveness of the internet in our lives. Until the policy is reviewed, I will adhere to it and not include student names. Ugh. I apologize for this and it should not diminish in any way the contribution of our wonderful students.

Sudbury students continue to excel on the state MCAS test. For the tests given in 2007, the Nixon 5<sup>th</sup> grade ranked second in the state in the English and Math tests, and their 4<sup>th</sup> grade ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in English and 5<sup>th</sup> in Math. The Haynes 4<sup>th</sup> graders ranked fourth in math and their 3<sup>rd</sup> graders ranked fifth in reading and math. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Curtis ranked eighth in the state's English MCAS test.

Our students and schools have become the primary contributor to the Sudbury Food Pantry. With the leadership from staff and students, 29,935 food items were donated this year. Wow!

A Haynes 5<sup>th</sup> grader and participant in the after-school Math Club, that we initiated to challenge our strongest math students, earned a perfect score on the Math Olympiad test.

Loring 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders along with their teachers cleaned the yards of over 20 senior citizens as a community service project this year. The Loring 3<sup>rd</sup> graders initiated a

Valentines for Vets project, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade raised over \$4,000, which was equally split between St. Jude's Hospital, Christopher's Haven and Children's Hospital.

All Nixon students celebrated Earth Day by cleaning the grounds of the school.

Four 5<sup>th</sup> graders from Loring were nominated to attend the Junior Youth National Leadership Conference this summer in Washington D.C.

A Noyes 5<sup>th</sup> grade student won 3<sup>rd</sup> place at a national piano competition.

Eighteen students from Nixon had their poetry selected for publication in *A Celebration of Young Poets*. Their teacher Anderson Manuel was cited for his quality of instruction by Creative Communication, Inc. and the class and school earned the "Poetic Achievement Award" based on the high percentage of quality pieces submitted.

One of our Loring third grade students created an Indiana Jones costume out of construction paper, wrote a script for a movie to go along with the costume and is hoping it will be captured on IMovie.

Two service-minded 7<sup>th</sup> grade students started a community service project called Curtis Angels on Earth. This year ECMS students were encouraged to make valentines for an elementary student who lost a brother, and purchased two Wii systems for Children's Hospital in memory of a sibling of an ECMS student.

Noyes teachers, Shannon Famigletti and Katie Carpenter spent two weeks in China learning about the culture and heritage. Throughout the trip, they would "podcast" back to their students and regularly sent pictures and email descriptions of their journey so the students could follow them and ask questions of what they were seeing.

The Curtis school community was educated by two 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls about Doctors Without Borders and the problems in Darfur. These student-leaders led fundraisers to support their respective causes.

Nixon 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, Melissa Morabito, was one of six educators in Massachusetts honored by the Golding Foundation for the Excellence in Education award.

With the leadership of Counselor Ann-Noelle McCowan, nine girls from grade 6 and 7, participated in Raytheon Girls Leadership Summit.

Eleven ECMS band, orchestra and chorus students were selected to participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> annual Eastern District Junior High Music Festival. They were selected following a rigorous audition process and from nearly 1,500 music students in the Eastern District.

I had the privilege of observing six 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at Haynes and eight at Loring conducting interviews of the finalist for the principal position in their schools. I had the

opportunity to debrief with these students following each interview and was impressed with their insight, honesty, and understanding of what makes a good leader. I have often said if we had to keep only one aspect of our extensive selection process, I would keep the student interviews.

Sudbury was again well represented at all levels in the regional Destination Imagination competition. We had one group of K-2 students, five elementary teams and four middle school teams. Three of these teams qualified for the state competition. One of the elementary teams (managed by Marybeth Sherrin) finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state Obstacles competition.

The ECMS 6<sup>th</sup> grade Continental Math League team place first in the regional Pythagorean Division.

The Curtis Science Olympiad Team placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state competition.

Ten Curtis art students were honored by having their work displayed in the Boston Globe Scholastic Art Awards program with four of the students receiving Gold Key Award, Silver Key Award or Honorable Mention recognition. The artwork of eight additional students was selected to represent ECMS at the 2008 Youth Art Month Exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum.

The PTOs again were champions for kids and schools. Their effort to make our schools a better place to learn and work is inspiring. This year three PTOs conducted auctions with the proceeds going to support the district's technology plan. Every PTO helped us bring ActivBoards into the classrooms at a much faster pace than the district's budget would allow. The co-chairs and the officers and boards of the PTOs at all five schools are to be commended and thanked for their leadership, dedication and commitment of time. We are fortunate.

In many ways, the same can be said about the Sudbury Educational Resource Foundation (SERF.) This Foundation, through their leadership and Board, has become an integral factor in making SPS a special place to teach and learn. They continue to provide exciting opportunities for our teachers to take a risk, extend their knowledge or improve their teaching ability. Grants, such as the purchase of new percussion equipment for the band and orchestra, or 10 electronic keyboards for the Noyes music program, are just a sample of what helps set our schools apart from the rest.

Noyes artist and teacher Colby Caravaggio is working on a mural in the Noyes cafeteria that will bring to life the characters from several children's books that are familiar to students. Colby also donates some of his wonderful ceramic pots to be auctioned off at the annual Back to School Night. This year over \$1,500 was raise and contributed to Autism Speaks.

Loring 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, Mary Taylor, has been invited by the director of MathForum at Drexel University to be a presenter at the annual National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in Washington DC next April. She will be speaking about problem solving in a diverse classroom.

The Noyes Student Council and staff Leadership Team dedicated themselves to “Going Green” this year. They conducted a very successful Snack Trash Challenge (the goal being progressively fewer trash items resulting from the student’s daily snacks) and will be selling canvas grocery bags to encourage others to use less paper and plastic shopping bags. The logo on the canvas bag was designed by a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student.

In her first Boston Marathon, Noyes teacher Cristy Cararra completed the route with a sub-3 hour time.

Emily Dolan, Julie Whitehead, Kim Swain, Josh Baumer and Jeanmarie Skahan, teachers at Haynes School, have dedicated themselves to the before-school tutorial support for our students who live in Boston. They developed this program that has recently been incorporated as the MAST program across the district. Their continuity of effort and dedication to the success of all students have given these students a sense of belonging, a sense of being cared about and an awareness that they are being held to, and can meet, high expectations.

Laura Burney and Amie Abdal-Khabir, teachers at Loring and Nixon respectively, were honored for their talents in teaching, using the ActivBoard and being teacher leaders, by being invited to participate in two ActivBoard User Conferences in Atlanta, GA.

ActivBoards were certainly a primary theme throughout the year. It has been exciting to see teachers stretching their own capabilities to bring teaching and learning to life in their classrooms using the ActivBoards. Teachers Megan Bowhers, Kate Rosenbaum, Liz Kerrigan, Amie Abdal-Khabir, Amy Durkin, Michelle Zinner, Hans Kalkofen, Mary Taylor, Laura Burney, Linda Goldner and Sara Fischer all presented at Open Houses or at the Evening of ActivDiscovery led by Technology Curriculum Specialist Donna Criswell and hosted by SPS for educators and parents across the region.

Donna Criswell also developed an online, graduate level course on technology integration with 17 SPS teachers enrolled and participating on their own time.

Dr. Robert Mealey, along with two of his ECMS students were featured on NPR and NBC’s Today Show for the innovative use of SmartMusic, an interactive, computer-based practice tool for musicians.

Paula Feynman was one of ten statewide 1<sup>st</sup> place winners of the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education. Paula is a Curtis science teacher and was cited for her Loosestrife Project that was originally funded by SERF.

Much has been written about the end of '30-year' educators. New entrants to the profession are leaving for a myriad of reasons and a number are entering later or as a second career. We unfortunately have to say goodbye to four of our finest, most experienced educators. Anne Rich, Noyes School teacher (33 years in SPS), Bev Hollis, Curtis reading teacher (35 years in SPS), Michelle Barrie, Loring special educator (32 years in education) and Jean Foster, Curtis science teacher (24 years in education) have decided to retire. We are happy for them of course, but their loyalty to our community, the quality of teaching they have provided to our students and the leadership and institutional memory of our school system cannot be quantified nor can they be replaced. Saying these wonderful teachers will be missed seems too weak a sentiment. Nevertheless, they will be missed.

We will also miss the contributions of 12-year school committee member, Bill Braun. Bill's contributions were so integral to making SPS the school district it is today. His leadership was second only to his character, integrity and focus on what was best for the students in our schools. Everyone from superintendents to teachers to school committee members to town officials, were better in their roles because of Bill Braun—and I will be first to attest to that.

As we all prepare to move on, be it from 5<sup>th</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> grade to high school, kindergarten to "the grades", or the school year to summer mode, I hope we can all find some time to reflect on the things we *are* doing that make a positive difference in the lives of others, that we can find time to get some R & R, that we can make time to let our kids be kids—unstructured and free to be creative, explore and have fun, and that we can make time to tell our hard working students and staff thank you for all they are doing. Summer is here and I know at my age that it will go by even faster than a school year—but the good news is that fall brings the opportunity to again work together with the students, parents and staff of SPS. See you in September.