

M.S.A.D. No. 75 Foundations Newsletter

"News Around the District" Winter 2010

Bowdoin • Bowdoinham • Harpswell • Topsham

M.S.A.D. No. 75 is First School District in Maine to Label Vending Machine Items with Guiding Stars!

Notes from Mike Wilhelm,
Superintendent of Schools

Framing Our Budget Process

The State has cut subsidy to Maine school systems mid-year by \$38 million. As a result, M.S.A.D. No. 75 lost \$413,000 and, consequently, has frozen discretionary spending and not filled openings to cover the shortfall. Next year the State budget shortfall is \$74 million less than this year's budget. The Federal stimulus money, which schools benefited from this year, will also not be available. Taken all together, M.S.A.D. No. 75 is facing a loss of \$1.2 million in State support next year as it begins its budget planning for the 2010-2011 fiscal year. This is a 7.4% loss in State subsidy.

Student enrollment and local property values are two primary factors that influence distribution of the State's funding for education, General Purpose Aid. Currently, the formula is not working in the District's favor. We have seen our student population continue to drop. At the same time, the formula's two-year-old valuations for three District towns increased. The formula provides more money for districts with increased enrollments and falling valuations and less for districts with declining enrollments and rising valuations.

The local economy has also changed the look of the District. Our free and reduced lunch population has reached a much larger percentage. We have gone from 26.8% to 31.8% in just one year. We know that the demands on town general assistance programs have seen considerable increases and that towns are facing the loss of state revenue sharing. Obviously current conditions limit the towns' ability to shoulder additional support for the District.

Over the last few years, the District adjusted for subsidy losses and declining enrollments while working creatively to keep programs intact whenever possible. In 2008-2009 the District lost almost a million dollars in State and federal support and had to cut its budget by \$1.6 million. In 2009-2010 the District benefited from the federal stimulus dollars and was able to keep its budget level. But to do so, it had to cut positions and operational expenses. Positions have been eliminated at all levels, and administrative and support staff jobs have been cut. Over the last three years 30 teaching positions have been eliminated.

The Board of Directors wants its budget decisions to be planful and future-oriented. Facing these difficult times, the Board does not want to jeopardize effective programming and wants to make economic decisions that, in fact, could provide greater educational opportunity. It has embraced three trajectories - promoting greater collaboration with Brunswick, rethinking the District's school and instructional organization, and advancing learning through technology.

• The Brunswick/M.S.A.D. No. 75 Task Force has been meeting for more than a year to see how the two systems' resources could be combined to provide those opportunities. It is currently studying online learning, vocational programming, shared courses, extended-year options as well as other combined services. In order to make some of these options possible, the high school is moving to a block schedule compatible with Brunswick's for next year.

Please see Budget on Page 2

After a year and a-half of labeling food items in the middle and high school cafeterias with guiding stars, the District has now moved to labeling vending machines.



Through our partnership with the Guiding Stars Licensing Company and our work with Canteen Vending Company and their Balanced Choices line of products, we are now able to offer healthier vending items and also provide students with a rating system (1, 2, or 3 stars) to let them know how healthy their choices really are. This is the same rating system students and their families see while shopping at Hannaford Supermarkets. For more information please contact Mary Booth, Health Coordinator, 729-9961 ext. 254 or email: boothm@link75.org.



by Mary Booth

Students Participate in P90X Workout Program

by Ryan Holmes

Since early in the second quarter, nine Mt. Ararat High School students have been participating in the P90X extreme workout program to help them become stronger, faster, and more flexible. In the first week, there was an obvious struggle with the intensity of the program; however, now in the seventh week of this program, there is an obvious difference in every student.

We have seen some positive changes that include major improvements in strength, endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular fitness, to name a few. On top of that, the students have formed a unique bond that has shown a huge increase in self-confidence and leadership among their peers. As they lead by example in fitness, other leadership traits are starting to emerge. They are in the halls talking with other students

discussing the benefits of exercise and watching as other students become absorbed in the influence of these fit students. I see the participants not allowing for excuses by even offering to pick up other students because they don't have rides into school. If you even mention "P90X" around these students, be ready for an hour-long conversation, as they can't stop raving about how much fun they are having and how much more fit they have become in these short seven weeks.

As we continue with this program there seems to be a growing interest as the word spreads around school and other students see the physical difference in the participants. This opportunity could not



have been possible without the help of the M.S.A.D. No. 75 Education Foundation: Trust for Our Future!

With five weeks remaining we look forward to sharing our continued success with the Foundation. If anyone would like to visit or participate with us we are at school every morning at 6:15. There is nothing like a good workout to start your day!

M.S.A.D. No. 75

Bowdoin • Bowdoinham • Harpswell • Topsham

Assistant Superintendent
Sally Loughlin

Business Manager
Steve Dyer

Human Resources Director
Debbie Anderson

Special Services Director
Patrick F. Moore, Ph. D.

Superintendent
J. Michael Wilhelm, Ed. D.

M.S.A.D. No. 75
District Office
50 Republic Avenue
Topsham, Maine 04086
Phone: (207) 729-9961
Fax: (207) 725-9354

Website: www.link75.org
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. M-F

Director of Technology
Kerry Gallivan

Director of Facilities
Chris Shaw

Director of Transportation
Bill Donovan

Director of Food Services
Maurice "Moe" St. Pierre

BUDGET

From Page 1

• The District has adopted an organizational approach to educating students that draws on the strengths of all teachers through teacher collaboration and shared responsibility. Called Response to Intervention, the educational well-being of all students is assessed, and resources and instruction are organized and targeted to student needs. As a result, we have seen improved student performance at a time when resources are scarce. We have learned from this effort that student learning thrives when professionals can work together to assess performance, determine strategies, and refine approaches to meet specific targets. Time and availability for teachers to consult and work together with grade level colleagues and specialists is critical. While the District's ability to do this is limited to some degree by school geography and size, the Board has and will continue to look at school configuration to ensure equity of resources and program effectiveness across the District. Its vote to close West Harpswell School was part of this effort.

• At the same time, the District had made an investment in technology that has the potential to offer students and staff educational opportunities and learning platforms unavailable in the past. High school students are no longer limited to the Mt. Ararat curriculum; informational resources are no longer just those contained in library books; and opportunities for sharing educational experiences are no longer bounded by geography or time. While we are just now learning the power of this asset, we can see its incredible potential to personalize student learning.

Even so, the District will have to make difficult and dramatic decisions in order to adjust to fewer subsidies. We will have to look at our instructional programming. We will have to look at our extracurricular programming. We will have to look at changes in our management. We will have to look at changes in our infrastructure. We are no longer in a position to trim around the edges and will be forced to consider all aspects of the District's operation. Class sizes will have to increase, some programs will be downsized or cut, and positions will be eliminated.

The Board's Finance Committee will begin its work in earnest at the end of January. Administration has been asked to offer alternative ways to reduce the budget and to prioritize them. As alternatives are proposed, community input will be sought and seriously considered. The Finance Committee's work will be posted on the District website. It should find its way into the local newspapers as well.

We urge all community members to stay informed and to offer suggestions. If you wish to attend Finance Committee meetings, we have included a schedule on Page 4 in this publication. The schedule is posted on our website as well (www.link75.org). As we move forward, we will be meeting with school parent groups and Town Selectmen. We seek your support and help as we do this critical work in these unprecedented times.

Parent and Student Portal Coming Soon!

by Kerry Gallivan

Parents will soon have instant access to information regarding their children's education through a parent portal on the school website. A feature of the District's student information system, Infinite Campus, enables school administrators and teachers to manage student records; and the Parent Portal allows parents to view copies of them. The website will be available for high school and middle school parents next month. The website will also be available for students to access as well.

Through the Parent Portal, parents can have real-time

access to their children's progress. They can see attendance and grades as soon as they are entered. This system enhances communication between families and the schools, while empowering parents to help their children achieve their potential.

All of this information will be accessible to parents through a secure website which will require a unique username and a password to access. The Parent Portal can be accessed from any computer in the world that is on the Internet. For those who do not own their own computer, all public libraries in Maine provide computer and Internet use free of charge.

Fifth Grade - Kindergarten Partnership at Bowdoin Central School

by George Jenkins, Principal

Each year Kindergarten children make the huge adjustment of entering school for the first time. Everything about school can be intimidating to five-year-olds, from getting on the bus and finding their classroom, to moving around the school. Perhaps the biggest adjustment they make is eating lunch in the cafeteria, as it is very difficult for them to go through the serving line, reach for the vegetables and fruit in the salad bar. Even opening their milk carton is a major endeavor.

Last year, in an effort to help smooth the lunch process, the fifth grade students at Bowdoin Central School gave up their regularly-scheduled lunch time with the Grade four students and switched it to the Kindergarten lunch time. Each fifth grade student was assigned a "Kindergarten

buddy" to help with lunch. Early in the year, the students partnered-up in the lunch line



and went through the serving process together. Then students sat together with their buddies to eat lunch. During that time the students have a chance to get to know each other, and create relationships that are very positive.

The fifth grade students enjoy this leadership role. They take pride in helping out, and the results extend beyond lunch when the students wave

to each other on the bus or the halls. The Kindergarten kids feel better because they get to know the older students and are not intimidated by them.

This year we have continued the partnership with even greater success. Thalia C. states "It's really fun because it's just like having a little sister or brother in school with you." She also said that "I'm also helping my buddy sit on the bus because she wiggles and stands up a lot."

It is safe to say that this program has been one of the most gratifying to watch grow, and at the same time improve the atmosphere of our school. This is a situation where everybody wins and all the kids feel good about themselves. It is a great example of Civic Engagement by our fifth grade students.

Passamaquoddy Storytelling at Bowdoinham Community School

by Diane Stahl, Principal

In November, thanks to the Richard Ferrier Scholarship, Bowdoinham Community School students were treated to a residency with Allen Sockabasin, the author of the Passamaquoddy story, "Thanks To the Animals."

At a whole-school assembly, the students had the special opportunity to hear a fifth grader, Lily Meecham, read this story in English with Mr. Sockabasin echoing in Passamaquoddy. This powerful connection of the two languages enhanced by the beautiful illustrations in this book was an awe-inspiring experience for everyone!



Photo courtesy of Martha Lentz

Then in smaller group sessions, Mr. Sockabasin enchanted our students with his storytelling, music, and shared messages about life and his cultural heritage. He stressed that language is very important to families and cultures.

He also touched on the insensitivity of the cultural stereotypes of Native Americans and the sad effects of any discrimination.

If you would like more information about this book and the ability to hear this story in Passamaquoddy, please log onto www.tilburyhouse.com

Click onto Children's Books on the right side to find the link to the book, Thanks to the Animals.

We are very grateful to the Ferrier Scholarship for the funding to make this exceptional opportunity possible for our students and staff.

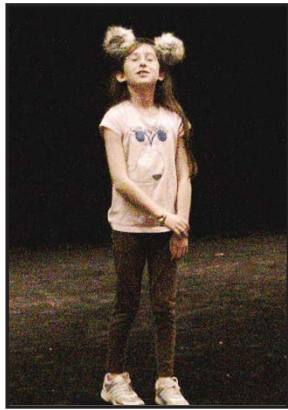
College Connection Program Benefits Many

The following article is by Lisa Bryant, College Connection Student, who benefited from Merrymeeting Adult Education's College Connection Program.

I consider myself a busy person. I'm a single mother, work part-time, coach both high school and middle school cheering and teach an adult dance class. When I learned about the College Connection Program at Merrymeeting Adult Education, I thought it would be too much to handle.

After meeting with the very helpful advisors and looking at the class schedules, everything fell into place. The classes I wanted happened to be on Tuesday, my free day, in Bath at University College. Both the math and English classes were taught at a pace with which I could keep up; and there was time for questions and answers in our small class environment, which I really enjoyed. The College Connection teachers were organized, helpful, and patient. Although no one likes homework, I

found it helpful in my learning process. I was amazed to hear how many students are non-traditional – those who work, raise families and are returning to school; and I felt like I fit in very well. By the end of the 14 weeks of class, I was beginning to feel confident about taking regular college classes. I would recommend this experience to anyone needing refresher courses or getting ready to take the Accuplacer before entering college. It was an eye opener for me.



Macey is Stuart Little
Photo courtesy of Linda Koch
More information on page 6

Two Schools Like One in Harpswell Islands

Sixteen students from the Harpswell elementary schools have begun rehearsing for their spring production. The play, "Gloria of the Golden West," will be performed on Saturday, May 22 at 7:00 p.m. on Harpswell Islands School's stage. The spring musical which has been a tradition at West Harpswell School will now bring eight students from each school plus several "extras" together in this production. This is just one example of how the two schools are working like one. This year the annual Black Cat Ball was an event for the parents and children of both schools. The March St. Patrick's Day Evening will be as well.

West Harpswell and Harpswell Islands School staffs have joined together to study, share and learn. The two staffs come together on delayed-start Wednesdays and staff develop-

ment days. They are strategizing and sharing efforts on the new math and writing programs, looking at student data to improve instruction and progress monitor students, and studying "collaborative problem-solving" techniques. On the opening staff development day, the MEA and NWEA data from the two schools was presented as Harpswell elementary data to better understand how all Harpswell elementary students are doing. Later, the individual school results were presented for planning for specific classrooms. The teachers discovered many similarities and gained much from sharing the information.

In many ways, the schools have increased their capacity to share their work. West Harpswell School has adopted the Harpswell Islands School parent/teacher communication form. Both schools are utilizing a computerized at-risk survey which was developed by

By Michael Estes and Michael Wilhelm

West Harpswell School. This survey is used to select students for the mentoring programs. Together the schools are piloting Ross Greene's Collaborative Problem Solving Process which helps teachers, students and parents look at student issues, identify needs and work on challenging behaviors. This will help us identify lagging skills and unsolved problems that children have.

The school newsletters are now the same, featuring common news items and highlights from both schools. The two PTO's are also working together to share ideas and provide for all Harpswell students.

This coming together has had to overcome some logistical obstacles, but a positive attitude, the realization of increased capacity and the promise of more has helped us join together for the benefit of all Harpswell students.

The District, Students, and Community Working Together

WHAT ARE STUDY CIRCLES?

M.S.A.D. No. 75's Study Circle Pilot was successfully completed on January 5, 2010.

The Study Circle process is a new way of hearing from the greater M.S.A.D. No. 75 community - you.

At least it's new in our area; many other communities, like Portsmouth, NH, have successfully incorporated it into their decision-making process for many years. Instead of relying on a public hearing process, which at times is a contentious and uneasy forum for quieter voices, Study Circles create an atmosphere where many people meet in small, diverse groups, where they share information and ideas, take time to listen and understand other points of view, find common ground, and work on doable compromises. The small groups encourage input from all, well-suited because the process is about growing understanding between everyone involved and working on problems together, regardless of viewpoint. It is about finding good ideas and putting them to work.

THE PILOT TOPIC-- 21ST CENTURY LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS:

The Study Circle Pilot involved students, Board members, and community participants. Their goal was to concentrate on good ideas to strengthen 21 Century Learning in M.S.A.D. No. 75. The Board agreement was that the pilot focus on ideas that could be implemented outside the regular school day.

A steering committee developed two meaningful and important "Dialogue Questions" on 21st Century Learning. These questions were the focus of the pilot Study Circle groups and were:

1. How best can we balance and grow healthy interpersonal relationships and skills in an increasingly digital world?
2. How can we ensure that all students are prepared to thrive in a world which will require effective communication skills, both face-to-face and digital?

Participants - students, community members, and Board members alike - view the Study Circle Pilot a success; and their report will be presented to the M.S.A.D. No. 75 Board of Directors at the first February meeting. Participants understand that implementing their ideas may not be easy, but they encourage the community and the District to work together to grow these ideas into good projects.

THE FUTURE OF STUDY CIRCLES:

This successful Study Circle Pilot got our feet wet, but there is still work to do. Future Study Circles will continue to bring diverse groups of community members together to discuss different issues. Working together, these groups will find common ground, identify differences, and increase understanding for everyone involved - District, community, students, multiple generations, families, business owners, etc. are all invited. You can join, too! It's important to share your ideas, whatever they are!

Since diversity is a significant component, the District will actively seek a wide array of participants for future Study Circles to ensure process integrity.

If you are interested in participating, or have a topic suggestion, please contact Dawn Prindall at prindalld@link75.org.

After-School Clubs at Mt. Ararat Middle School

By Dawn Prindall

Thanks to some very dedicated volunteers, after-school clubs have been growing this year at MAMS. Student groups have had a chance to explore their interests and creativity in many ways, and they've had a lot of fun at the same time.



Jennifer Burns, the Making a Difference! Club advisor, shared that "it can be hard to get people out of their routines to see that an activity is for them and will enhance their lives. Clubs broaden the learning opportunities for our children, and students have lots of energy and ideas." Future plans include nursing home visits, and involving kids in researching ways to help the greater community.

Graymatters will soon be an online magazine featuring original student writing, video, art, music, and other media. Tom Allen, a co-advisor for Graymatters along with Susan Carlson, relays that

this club is "controlled by the students as much as possible. Students decide on content; they set the deadlines; they create the website and post their submissions."

These are some of the many after-school activities at MAMS, all hosted by volunteers with financial support of MAMS' families through its Parent Group fund raiser. The reviews are resoundingly happy, and we look forward to more projects and middle school smiles this spring!

Two clubs new on the scene are "The Making a Difference! Club" and "Graymatters." The Making a Difference! Club goal is "to help students learn more about their community and to contribute to the greater community through service projects." Very dedicated members initiated a Food Drive in support of the Midcoast Hunger Prevention Program and delivered several hundred non-perishable food items in December. Kids recruited, collected, collated, and met with community organizers to make their effort successful, even negotiating a special recess for the middle school team which collected the most food. As you can see by the beaming grins in their photo, kids in this club not only learned and contributed, they had fun!



New High School Schedule in Development

By Craig King



Mt. Ararat students participate in a focus group session to discuss the new high school schedule.

Faced with changing conditions, the District has been working on ways to stretch resources and maximize the opportunities available to students. As part of this process, the Board of Directors asked the high school to conduct a study of schedule alternatives and present their recommendations by mid-January. A committee of faculty and student representatives began this work last September. The Committee has explored alternate models and is presenting options to the faculty in mid-January, and to the Board at its January 28 meeting. Once the Board makes a decision regarding the potential merits of schedule options, planning for successful implementation will be underway so that a new schedule can start in the fall.

A lot has changed since the existing schedule was created at Mt. Ararat High School. The current schedule includes seven periods, of which six periods occur daily. Each day consists of six 54-minute classes and class times rotate on a daily basis. The schedule creates barriers to collaborative learning opportunities with other schools and organizations, and also negatively impacts instructional time for students attending Maine Vocational Region 10 School.

The primary goal of the schedule reorganization is to provide more learning options for students. We want to expand the opportunities for our students to learn outside the courses we offer and to have greater flexibility for learning within our classes. A schedule that provides larger blocks of time for learning will allow for more in-depth instruction, more opportunities to engage in project-based learning, and encourage multiple learning opportunities within the same period. We need to re-examine our schedule in light of the recently-revised State Learning Standards that call for career preparation, service learning and civic action. We also want to be able to increase the opportunities for our students to access academic support when they need it during the school day. To adapt to the impacts of declining enrollment, we need to be more fully able to share faculty between the middle school and high school.

Parents were invited to offer their thoughts and ask questions either in person at the fall parent conference night or online through a link posted on the high school's homepage.

The link on the high school's homepage is still active and parents are invited to give their input by visiting: <http://www.mta75.org/> and click on "New Schedule" on the homepage under "MTA Updates."

M.S.A.D. No. 75 FISCAL YEAR 2010-2011 BUDGET PROCESS SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS Please note meetings will be held at Mt. Ararat High School, Room 201 (Unless Otherwise Noted)

- 26-January (Tues) 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Capital Maintenance Plan Review
District Office, Topsham
- 28-January (Thurs) 6:30 p.m.
Superintendent's Presentation
- 2-February (Tues) 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Maintenance of Effort Budget Overview &
Proposed Budget Adjustments
- 9-Feb (Tues) 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Proposed Budget Adjustment Discussions
- 23-February (Tues) 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Proposed Budget Adjustment Discussions
- 2-March (Tues) 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Review Complete First Budget Draft
- 9-March (Tues) 6:00-8:30 p.m. Continue Budget
Review, District Office, Topsham
- 16-March (Tues) (tentative) 6:30 p.m.
Meet with Town Select Persons
- 23-March (Thurs) 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Prepare smooth budget for public forums
- 30-March (Tues) 6:30 p.m.
Public Budget Forum-Harpswell
Harpswell Islands School
- 1-April (Thur) 6:30 p.m.
Public Budget Forum-Bowdoin/Bowdoinham
Bowdoin Central School
- 6-April (Tues) 6:30 p.m.
Public Budget Forum-Topsham
Williams-Cone School
- 13-April (Tues) 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Finish Smooth Budget Draft
- 29-April (Thurs) 6:30 p.m.
Formal Budget Approval
- 13-May (Thurs) 6:00 p.m.
Budget Public Hearing
- 27-May (Thurs) 6:30 p.m. District Budget
Meeting at Orion Performing Arts Center
- 8-June (Tues)
Budget Validation Referendum

District Art Teachers Featured at the Saco Museum

The Maine Arts Educators Association-sponsored "Practice What We Preach" exhibit at the Saco Museum includes the work of District art teachers who are artists in their own right. Christine Del Rossi, Mt. Ararat Middle School teacher, offers an abstract piece in colored pencil. Maura McHugh, also of Mt. Ararat Middle School, provides a rendering from her series on horses. The exhibit runs from January 16 to March 19 at the museum at 371 Main Street in Saco. For more information go to www.sacomuseum.org/

Teaching and Technology: Integrating a Positive Connection

So, what's the connection between teaching and technology in M.S.A.D. No. 75? For all its complexity, the answer is quite simple. We understand that a new age is upon us and need to make certain that our students—your children—are prepared to succeed.

We recognize that it is necessary to differentiate instruction because not all students learn in the same way or at the same pace. We recognize that the 21st century requires a set of core values to support responsibility and active participation in the democratic process. We recognize that students will meet real-life challenges and must devise a creative solution, often done collaboratively. We recognize that leadership takes many forms and that it takes practice. Beyond recognition of these vital components, we are working together to ensure that our students have access to the skills and tools they need to excel.

Our students, the 'new millennials,' are well-versed in technology. We can now approach instruction with a set of tools that resonate with them. Multi-media presentations and digital portfolios to provide evidence of learning are becoming staples in our schools. It's not unusual for teachers in M.S.A.D. No. 75 to imagine a creative, engaging lesson by calling upon tools available to students on laptop computers. Does this necessarily mean that each and every traditional instructional format is outmoded? Not at all. Maintaining a balance is essential. Below are a couple of examples of how technology does not replace face-to-face communication but enhances our ability to engage our students in real-world experiences with others.

Gifted and Talented through Gateways

Serving exceptionally able students throughout the District is a challenge of geography. We have gifted students in each of our schools, and they seek opportunities to learn with others who share their intense and advanced interests. By housing resources online, we use technology to ensure everyone has access to many of our programs. A program called Blogging Buddies allows our students to share their work and receive feedback from Bowdoin College students. Though we formally identify up to 5% of our students as gifted and talented per the State guidelines, these opportunities are available to all students. This is possible due to our web-based approach to programming. The Gifted and Talented site is called Gateways (www.gateways.com or linked from our homepage at www.link75.org). In addition to resources for students, it also includes learning showcases. There, short video clips of students in the process of learning are featured. The site is under development; soon there will be short videos of careers that tie in with math and science. These types of endeavors require us to master the basics and work together in both the real and digital world.

Singapore Connects with Mt. Ararat

This fall a group of visitors from Maris Stella High School in Singapore came to visit us at Mt. Ararat High School. Our ITeam (student technology leaders) provided a formal presentation describing how they have helped to improve uses of the new laptops at the high school. Members described presentations they gave to the School Board and State Legislative Committee. They also showed how they helped District and school technology staff to set up and distribute laptops. They shared how they are continuing to assist teachers and peers who want to learn how to use technologies to support learning. The visitors were surprised to learn directly from students about their contributions to technology leadership.

The Maris Stella team proposed that their students and teachers collaborate with Mt. Ararat students and its teachers on Challenge-Based Learning to solve real problems. The Network Challenge Team will present plans for a challenge-based learning project on network challenges to the high school faculty and work collaboratively with students and teachers in Singapore.

When the M.S.A.D. No. 75 leaders decided to expand the MLTI program to the high school, they hoped to see these kinds of opportunities develop. Some have expressed surprise that the opportunities are coming to the high school so soon after the expansion. Students' experiences during their middle school years seem to have prepared them well to help support these opportunities.

Submitted by Sally Loughlin, Darren Akerman, Steve Spaeth and Lisa Hogan



Faculty from Maris Stella High School in Singapore discuss technology with students in Ms. Donna Dionne's high school chemistry class during a November 2009 visit.

The District Report Card and Our Plans for Improvement

By Sally Loughlin, Assistant Superintendent

As part of the federal No Child Left Behind program, all Maine students in grades 3 through 8 and 11 participate in State testing each year. We share the test results for M.S.A.D. No. 75 students with our community. Called Report Cards, the results from the previous year's testing provide a means of monitoring and planning for our schools and the District. The information is extensive. Altogether there are 89 pages of State reports (our local analysis of these reports notwithstanding). They are most efficiently accessed through our website, www.link75.org (select the report card link). We are committed to providing this information to all interested community members. In addition to sharing this information electronically, we present the information at a televised meeting of our Board of Directors. There are printed copies available through the District Office, and we send each school's report card home to families.

The Report Cards provide a snapshot of important indicators of quality programming and a means of comparing our performance with the State average. Information regarding attendance, high school completion rates and teacher quality credentials are also included in these reports.

Each year Maine defines the percentage of students who must reach proficiency in reading and math in order to make Adequate Yearly Progress, AYP. This target will increase incrementally so that by 2014, 100% of our students must be proficient in reading and in math in order to meet the goals of NCLB. Last year in grades 3-8 the AYP target for reading was 58%; this year the target is 66%. Last year grade 11's reading target was 64%; this year it will be 71%. In mathematics, our target for last year was 50% in grades 3-8. In grade 11 it was 43%. This coming year the targets for math are 60% and 54% respectively.

In order to plan so that ever-increasing numbers of students are proficient at reading and math, we use the information from these tests and many other sources to evaluate progress toward our goals and to set new ones. One approach underway to achieve continuous improvement is called Response to Intervention, RTI. This approach is a team approach to instruction.

It requires us to work together differently in order to prevent students from falling behind. Teams of educators monitor student progress regularly and provide interventions to address needs so that students can maintain steady progress. RTI changes how we organize ourselves. We now recognize the importance of configuring our staff so that we have the capacity to intervene when necessary. It has already yielded promising results at the elementary level. RTI is a State mandate; we are preparing to fully implement RTI by the State deadline. We have embraced this work and consider it worthwhile. In addition to RTI we have focused on the need to present learning in ways that are relevant and meaningful to students in the 21st century. We recognize that the world of today and the future our students will face is different than the context that we knew growing up. We recognize that technology is part of modern life; we are using this tool to engage our students and to prepare them more fully to be the fluent learners, critical thinkers and creative contributors to our society as outlined in our mission statement.

Analysis of the 2009-2010 NCLB Report Card for M.S.A.D. No. 75

Reading

Overall, students in M.S.A.D. No. 75 consistently perform at a level above the State average in all grades tested (grades 3-8 and 11). Seventy-four percent of our elementary students achieved proficiency compared with sixty-eight percent of all students in Maine schools. This achievement reflects significant

improvement when compared to the performance of District peers in the previous year. At the middle level seventy-nine percent of our students achieved proficiency; the State average is seventy-three percent. In grade eleven the District had fifty-three percent proficient compared with forty-nine percent across the state.

We have been implementing a Response to Intervention approach for reading; and we monitor progress regularly and intervene when necessary. We will continue to develop our core reading programs and add to our repertoire of strategies and resources for students who need additional instruction. At the secondary level teachers are using the research on effective instruction for adolescents and are focusing on strategies to increase comprehension and vocabulary development.

The performance of our students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged subgroups are above the State results, and in all cases the students' performance was equal to or better than those of the group in the previous year. However, high school special education and economically disadvantaged students failed to make AYP.

At each level we are addressing students' needs through a number of strategies. We develop personalized learning plans for identified students; and we provide additional supplemental instruction through Title I at the elementary level, community enrichment time at the middle level and literacy labs at the high school level. In addition, we are increasing our ability to work together in teams to understand and address student learning needs. Our Response to Intervention System provides a District-wide framework for reading intervention for all students.

Math

The M.S.A.D. No. 75 students' performance in math is above their peers across the State with one exception, grade seven (-1pt.). Aside from the seventh grade cohort, M.S.A.D. No. 75 students outperformed their District peers from the previous year as well. In some cases the improvement was exceptional and may be the result of initiatives undertaken in our schools last year. We began implementing a new math program in grades 3-5; and the percent of students proficient in grade 3 grew from seventy-two to eighty percent. At the high school, the percentage of proficient students rose from forty-two percent to forty-eight percent proficient. The high school Math Department instituted additional math lab support for identified students, and math teachers have been working with students using their PSAT results to set goals and support improvement.

At the elementary level the identified disability and economically disadvantaged subgroups were more successful than their State peers, and both groups achieved AYP. At the middle and high school levels the two subgroups did not achieve AYP. The initiatives underway to impact student performance include a targeted math class for middle level students and additional small group math labs for high school students. In addition, we are using the math testing data differently (NWEA fall and spring at the middle level and common assessments and PSAT at the high school level). Teams of teachers are working together to analyze results, identify and address areas of the math program where additional instructional options for students are needed. Teachers are engaging students in understanding the results, setting goals, identifying resources and to meet areas of need, and providing the additional time and support to make progress.

Students honored with Invitation to Perform in Washington D.C.

By Rick Dedek, Principal



Woodside Elementary School is so proud to announce that the Woodside One Wheelers, our 40+ after-school student circus arts performance group, has accepted an invitation to perform in the 2010 National Cherry Blossom Festival Parade in Washington D.C. The One Wheelers, now in its fourth full year under coach Eric Pulsifer, includes students from Woodside Elementary School and Mt. Ararat Middle School. From April 8th to April 11th approximately 32 students will be embarking on an amazing enrichment opportunity to our Nation's Capitol.

On April 10th the students will represent Maine in a truly honorable and humbling event. We will ride unicycles down Constitution Avenue amid tens of thousands of onlookers and parade fans. Please come out and support our fundraising effort and enjoy a show at our community performance in March (date and location TBD), or check out our website: WoodsideOneWheelers.org for more information.

Sing, Sing, Sing! A Celebration of Song at Williams-Cone School

By Steve Ciembroniewicz, Principal



The days of early December were filled with song at Williams-Cone School. On December 10th, staff and students gathered in the gym for an afternoon performance given by the Chorus and Special Chorus. This concert was the culmination of hours of practice, individually and collectively, as well as vocally and instrumentally.

Student readers introduced each piece, and the audience listened attentively to a variety of holiday and seasonal songs sung by each group. The Special Chorus opened the program with "The Song That Nature Sings." It told of the wonderful melodies, rhythms and mysteries of nature. "Winter Walk" was next. It was written in the Celtic style and was a really fun song to sing. The Special Chorus ended with a piece called "Old Man Winter."

The Chorus continued with a traditional round called "Sing, Sing Together," followed by "Minka," a Russian folksong. The "Peace Round" accompanied by xylophones and a two-part "New Year's Wish" rounded out the program. A spirited sing-along followed, with all WCS students and staff singing some holiday and seasonal favorites. It's always a wonderful thing when an entire school comes together to sing.

The Chorus and Special Chorus performed that evening for family and friends. It was a great day and a wonderful celebration of learning for all WCS singers.

Parent Partnership Program



The Marchildon Family at Parent Partnership event at the Topsham Public Library

By Jennifer Burns

Parenting is perhaps the most consuming job any of us will have. Working with parenting educator Jennifer Burns from the Hyde Foundation, M.S.A.D. No. 75 is in the second year of offering a workshop series giving parents at each elementary school the opportunity to gain a new perspective and new skills for parenting. The approach of the program, known as the Parent Partnership Program, focuses on giving parents the time and tools to take the long view on their parenting. "Each of us inevitably gets caught in the daily hubbub of our family lives. This program has less to do with a rule-set of parenting, than it has to do with reconnecting with ourselves, our values and our ability as parents to inspire our children to live dynamic lives," reports Ms. Burns, the program presenter. "Within that context we look at effective teaching tools as we take ownership for our role as our child's primary teacher in life."

The workshops have a consistent format. Families gather at 6:00 p.m. for a dinner that is provided. At 6:30 student volunteers from Mt. Ararat High School take the children for an hour of play while the parents stay together for the workshop. The evening ends promptly at 7:30 p.m. This year the program has also sponsored an evening activity in which families worked together as they discussed their family values and created take-home banners reflecting their values. The program content is based on the "10 Priorities," outlined in the book "The Biggest Job We'll Ever Have, The Hyde School Program for Character-Based Education and Parenting" by Laura and Malcolm Gauld. (The priorities can be seen in their entirety on the District's website at www.link75.org.)

Approximately 50 families participated in the workshops held last spring and this past fall. Parents expressed their appreciation of a time to connect with other parents while their children enjoyed the company of the teen caregivers. More information about the workshops can be found through your elementary school office or on the District's website at www.link75.org.

The Orion Performing Arts Center presents a tale with a "tail."

"Stuart Little" will be arriving at the Orion Performing Arts Center on Friday, February 5, 2010 to share his many adventures, both big and small. A dedicated cast of middle school actors will bring Stuart vividly to life in this story theatre presentation. The acting ensemble plays many human and animal roles in a series of delightful scenes that make up the marvelous maneuverings of a mild-mannered mouse trying to survive in a "real people's world."

The process of performing story theatre involves the engagement of imagination...lots of imagination...both in the actors and in the audience. Rehearsals have been a time for the cast to experiment and explore all of the possibilities for making theatre with a simple set and with costumes that suggest characters but don't overwhelm them. This production is truly about the "process" of making theatre. Please join the middle school drama company in exploring "The Adventures of Stuart Little."

Performances are Friday, February 5 at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, February 6, at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are \$5.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children or \$12.00 for families.

For more information, please contact Sue Shaw at 729-2951 ext. 7.

M.S.A.D. No. 75 Sponsors Energy-Savings Website

By Bill Donovan, M.S.A.D. No. 75 Energy Manager

Have you been noticing your energy bills going up, but don't know why? Does your energy consumption really double when your college student comes home for the holiday break? How much is that new hot tub really costing you every month? To help answer these and other seemingly impossible questions, M.S.A.D. No. 75 has teamed up with the folks from Good Steward Software to bring you GreenQuest.

GreenQuest is a simple-to-use, personal energy information website that makes it easy for you to track and evaluate your property's energy use, expense and greenhouse emissions. Home-owners, apartment dwellers and small businesses can all benefit from clearly seeing where their energy dollars go.

Why use GreenQuest? If you can't measure it, you can't improve it. The software we use for M.S.A.D. No. 75's Energy program is basically a high-powered version of GreenQuest. By identifying our high usage areas and concentrating our efforts to reduce usage, this district has been able to save over \$2,000,000.00 in energy costs over the past nine years. GreenQuest makes it easy for you to measure your own energy consumption and see how your efforts to conserve are paying off. By entering your utility bill data for up to three utilities, you will be able to answer the following questions:

- How much have I spent on utilities this year?
- How much energy have I used?
- Why has my utility bill increased (higher usage or higher rates)?
- How much does the weather affect my energy usage?
- What is my property's carbon footprint?
- Are my efforts to conserve energy paying off?
- How does my home or business energy usage compare to others in the same category?
- Does my business qualify for an Energy Star rating?

GreenQuest is accessible directly from the web at <http://www.mygreenquest.com/msad75me>, or you can click on the link provided for you on the District home page, <http://www.link75.org>. Either one will take you to the M.S.A.D. No. 75 GreenQuest site where you can enter a few informational items to establish a personal account and get started entering your utility bill data. They will ask no personal information except your zip code. From there, the software will start analyzing your energy consumption, while letting you see the impact of your conservation efforts. Best of all, GreenQuest is provided to you as a FREE service from M.S.A.D. No. 75. With GreenQuest, your world just got a little greener!

Post-Secondary Notes

By Karen Tilbor

All college-bound seniors and a parent should complete their 2010-2011 FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) as soon as possible. Call the Mt. Ararat Guidance Department if you have questions: 729-2951 ext. 3. The website is www.fafsa.ed.gov.

College Goal Sunday – January 31 at 2:00 p.m. University College Bath/Brunswick Register: <http://www.collegegoalsundaymaine.com/registration.php> This is a free workshop to assist students and parents in completing the FAFSA. Bring materials listed on registration web site.

BASAF – Applications for the Brunswick Area Student Aid Fund Scholarship are available in the Mt. Ararat High School Guidance Office. All college-bound students who live in M.S.A.D. No. 75, including home-schooled students or those who attend school outside the District, are urged to apply. Completed applications are due in the Guidance Office by March 15. Students in M.S.A.D. No. 75 and Brunswick are eligible to apply for two years of undergraduate or graduate assistance. <http://studentaidfund.org/>

Financial Aid Counseling is available for the families of Mt. Ararat seniors. Contact Karen Tilbor for more information: tilbork@link75.org/729-2951 x219

Employers who might be willing to participate in a project demonstrating how math is used in careers, please contact Karen Tilbor, Dean of Post-Secondary Planning: tilbork@link75.org; 729-2951 x 219 for more information.

Orion Performing Arts Center Assembly – Monday, Feb. 1 at 8:25 a.m. An assembly about emerging industries in Maine, such as composite technology and wind energy, will be presented to Mt. Ararat juniors and seniors by Dr. Habib Dagher from University of Maine's engineering program, and Glenn Cummings, Maine's former Speaker of the House. Students will learn about pursuing these possibilities in Maine, beginning at the BNAS campus of Southern Maine Community College and continuing at the University of Maine. The public is invited to attend.