



Mountain Villa School

# THE BOARD REPORT

The Allamuchy Township School District



Allamuchy Twp. School

Volume 9, Issue 1

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## Achievement

## College and Career Readiness

These are two of the prominent shibboleths in education today. They serve as the vogue buzz words but do they have real meaning? A recent reflective message from Dr. Lawrence Feinsod, the Executive Director of the New Jersey School Boards Association implores School Boards of Education, and their Association, to be mindful of the reason why they exist. He states: "We exist to advance student achievement through effective local school board leadership. Yes, it must always be about children!" The word "achievement" resounds throughout our educational environment. It is the mantra of Trenton. The media focus myopically on the word. The hot topic of discussion in education is "achievement." It appears to be inextricably intertwined with college and career readiness. They have become the mottoes for educating our children.

These two terse phrases, clearly born of and for the superficial age of social media, fail to answer the fundamental question posed by Dr. Feinsod: Why does our organization (the local Board of Education) exist? The answer is really very simple: educating our community. Defining education is much more difficult. Yet, the great American philosopher of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, John Dewey, helps to lay the foundation for such a definition. Let me offer two quotes from him for consideration:

"Were all instructors to realize that the quality of mental process, not the production of correct answers, is the measure of educative growth something hardly less than a revolution in teaching would be worked."

— John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*

"There is no such thing as educational value in the abstract. The notion that some subjects and methods and that acquaintance with certain facts and truths possess educational value in and of themselves is the reason why traditional education reduced the material of education so largely to a diet of predigested materials."

— John Dewey, *Experience and Education*

Achievement as measured by standardized math and reading tests must not represent the totality of the educative process. College and career readiness must not be the end result of the educative process. Rather, as Dewey would suggest, the educative process, a process that begins in the home and is nourished in our schools, continues throughout life and seeks to develop in all an ability to live in freedom and to identify and experience that which is significant in each person's life regardless of station in life. Schools exist to help prepare people to live life. For some that may be the ability to engage in the orderly logic of math and science. For others, that may be a facility in speaking another language. For some, it may be the ability to appreciate emotionally a piece of music or visual art, whether through performing or observing. For others, it may be the wonder of nature. For some, it may be the exhilaration of turning a phrase in support of an argument. For others, it may be an affinity for compassion and sympathy. For yet others, it may be the development of a deep spirituality. The why of education is as diverse as humanity. Every person has their own genius. The whys of education are as numerous as the different interests of every human being. Ultimately, the school district must provide the non-exclusive environment to nurture the growth of the individual for the short time that the person is in its charge, to prepare a student for life so that the person may grow for an entire lifespan.

The "why" of the Allamuchy School District and for our receiving district, Hackettstown High School, must extend beyond "achievement" and "college and career readiness" as those terms are sophomorically bandied about. A child is with the Allamuchy School District from age 5 through 14 and then until 18 at the Hackettstown High School.

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We foster personal growth hand in hand with the families of our students. While we appreciate and value achievement in math and reading as assessed by the standardized tests, the educative process is much more than that. It is for such a reason that music, art, the environment, nature and character are important in our District. We seek to develop young people so that they may enjoy life, a life of freedom, a life beyond being just a human asset for an employer. In addition to a basic fund of knowledge, we seek to develop fascination, curiosity, appreciation, independence, resilience, reason and character. We seek to develop critically thinking citizens not just educated workers. We seek to nurture each child's very own genius. That is the Allamuchy School District's "why."

"Education is a social process; education is growth; education is not preparation for life but is life itself."

— John Dewey

Francis Gavin, President  
Allamuchy Township Board of Education

**In Our Schools****Mathematics**

Math is challenging, in a good way! All grade levels are now striving to meet the goals set by the new Common Core standards. Our middle school students jumped in with both feet from the very beginning of this school year and are working hard on deeper, richer content than they ever have before. Our eighth grade students are solving systems of linear equations and graphing systems of inequalities and are working toward function notation and eventually will work on nonlinear functions and factoring equations.

All of our students from grade kindergarten up are working on mastering the building blocks that will enable them to master the skills they will encounter in their middle school years. To that end, I would like to challenge our community of families to share ideas for practicing and mastering those basic skills, like addition and multiplication facts. Flash cards are just the beginning! Our children are natives of the electronic age, please share any fun apps that you have discovered that offer engaging practice on their pods and pads and tablets and any other screens!

I'll get the ball rolling by suggesting two apps, one called "Wings" that my daughter uses to practice her multiplication facts as a customizable bird flying to a series of islands solving math facts along the way. We also use an app called "Math vs Zombies." I find it to be a good fact and skill practice, involving all operations and at a variety of skill levels. Who wouldn't want to use their math skills for something as productive as fighting the zombie apocalypse? Both apps were free in their basic form, while "Wings" required a small fee to open the entire app.

If you have suggestions, please share, you can reach me, Sam Greco, by emailing [sgreco@aes.k12.nj.us](mailto:sgreco@aes.k12.nj.us).

**Reading**

Hi Allamuchy families! My name is Mrs. Fedich and I am the reading specialist for the Allamuchy Township School District. I wanted to share with you some pointers and tips for getting your young learners ready for school.

- Expose your children to environmental text. Environmental text is any type of text that is out in our world. Food boxes, street signs, store signs, etc. I like to laminate cereal box covers and put them on a binder ring and let students read through them, recognizing letters and words. When you are driving around and out shopping, point to letters and store names and have students begin to tell you what those letters and words are. You will be surprised when you do this a few times they will start to call them out and recognize them without you prompting them!
- Read to your child as much as possible. Point to letters and words as you read. Pause and ask your child about pictures on each page or ask them to find a certain letter and help them learn what that letter sound is. This will help with letter/sound recognition and better prepare them for entering school.
- Practice writing letters in fun materials! Put shaving cream, colored sand, flour... anything ... on a plate or a baking sheet with edges and have your child write letters with the index finger of their dominant hand. Guide them in the beginning so they learn their letters early. Then tell them a letter or a letter sound and have them write it with their finger in the material.

If you have any questions, just send me an email at [kfedich@aes.k12.nj.us](mailto:kfedich@aes.k12.nj.us). I would be happy to talk to you!



Students working together!

## **Technology**

The students of the Allamuchy Township School District are immersed in technology in all aspects of their lives, and they recognize the value of technology as a tool for learning. A pilot program is underway in grades 7 and 8 in which students utilize Chromebooks and Google Docs as a way to extend learning beyond the confines of the classroom. Students can collaborate with one another in new ways, and they can communicate with their teachers about assignments for immediate, substantive feedback. As our students come to understand the ways that technology can be used throughout the learning process, they become better prepared for the challenges that college and career will present.

## **Cross Country Season 2013 in Review**

The Allamuchy Cross Country team experienced a wonderful season with an impressive 14 students. They put in a lot of work, training hard every day. The team has shown that you can always improve, especially when you compete with passion, effort, and respect for the sport. Not every student believes they are cut out to be a runner, but with desire and determination many are successful. We would like to send special congratulations to all of our eighth grade cross country runners. Returning eighth graders Zach Kreider and Annabella Rickard ran incredible times, nabbing either first or second place in every event. Richie Hoskins, Rachel Mills, Anselm Nichols, Savannah Doelfel, and Gareth Patterson performed with strong competitive times and determination. Our shining seventh grader Madison Hoskins was all speed and strength as she placed in the top three in every meet. Look out for her next year! Lilliana Decker ran with heart and will power. A good job for all our veteran runners!

## **Thanksgiving Chorus**

Once again, our Chorus was invited to sing with a Mass Youth Choir for the 6abc Dunkin Donuts Thanksgiving Day Parade in Philadelphia. Eighteen students sang with hundreds of students from several states Thanksgiving morning. This high-energy performance provided the students and their families with an exciting and memorable experience to last a lifetime.



Thanksgiving Chorus

## **Veteran's Day 2013**

On November 13, students in K-8 participated in our sixth annual Veteran's Day Assembly. Approximately 65 local veterans from the Army, Marines, Air force, Navy and Coast Guard attended our assembly along with about 200 community members. One veteran, Pete Baglio, noted, "It was heartwarming to hear and see these young students recognize the significance of the sacrifices veterans make for the freedoms they enjoy every day." Rolling Thunder generously donated a Prisoner of War flag, which will now be flown at ATS. Highlights of the event included the chorus singing "Welcome Home," a video with images of local vets, and fourth graders reciting original raps. Every year this celebration grows and is looked forward to by the veterans. Please join us next year.



Veterans Day Celebration

## **Board Notes**

- In an effort to manage fiscal affairs of the District more effectively, the Board is currently exploring a shared services relationship with Fredon Township for chief school administrator services. Allamuchy has been a local leader in such relationships, having shared superintendent services previously with Green Township and Great Meadows Regional.
- The School Board voted to move the school elections to November. Allamuchy and Greenwich were the only districts in Warren County holding on to the April elections with a resulting expense that was unable to be justified. The Board took action after soliciting input from the public.
- This year Allamuchy will be involved in a statewide test of the new standardized assessment platform: PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers). This computer-based test series will supplant the ASK series of tests and the HSPA. These assessments, by state regulation, will have consequences on various levels, including teacher performance beginning with the 2014-2015 school year.
- The district budgetary planning cycle is rather far along. Even with the moving of the school election to November, the Board will conduct a special hearing on the proposed budget in March. Items of significant concern in this process include the cost of state mandates such as the PARCC tests, high school tuition, special education costs, and the unforeseeable consequences of the Affordable Care Act.

## What's New at Rutherford Hall

Join our monthly eblast and visit the website at [www.rutherfordhall.org](http://www.rutherfordhall.org) to keep current!



Rutherford Hall Holiday Interior

Rutherford Hall is pleased to announce it has been approved for funding from the Warren County Municipal and Charitable Conservancy Trust Fund for \$96,000 in restoration work to the Hall. This grant will continue our work on the roof, and will complete a section of the slope roof (and a return to its original material of slate). This fund, on the county level, is so critical to our work and enables us to use the funds to leverage for additional funds. Best practice in historic preservation requires sites to focus first on their building's exterior shell, making sure it is safe and tight from the elements. In this same vein, we will use a remaining balance on our current WCMCCTF grant to engage in restoration work to the guttering system to make sure water is moving away from the building rather than onto the façade. We also used volunteer labor to remove the carpeting from the main stairway and second floor hallway (totaling more than \$25,000 in savings) and refinished these original wood floors and opened a new conference room on the second floor.

This fall, the Hall hosted the Allamuchy Township Harvestfest, a number of concerts and history lectures, and our Hall of Haunts production which over 800 people attended. We hosted more than 400 people; almost half of which were visiting for the first time, to our Merry Making Weekend in December, and the Hall has generated significant earned income from rentals and corporate meetings. On average 3,600 people are visiting the website monthly and more than 830 people have joined our online mailing list. In addition, The Friends of Rutherford Hall, a volunteer group with over 150 members, meets the first Thursday of every month and welcomes new members. The public's ongoing commitment to the programs and site is critical to the development of new and renewed public funding.

Here are a few upcoming events: Join us!

**January 26, 3-5 p.m., Tea & Talk: The History of Route 80. Free.** This lecture will be presented by Centenary College Professor of History Dr. Raymond Frey. If you are interested in learning more about the design and building of this roadway that changed the Rutherford Estate and Warren County drastically between 1950-1970 join us; the lecture will be followed by tea and cake and touring.

**February 9, 3-5 p.m., Art Deco Valentine Making Workshop lead by Art Magic's Karen Klein, \$10.** Perfect for children over 8 and adults.

**February 16, 4:30-6:30 p.m., Jazz at Rutherford Hall: Tony DeSare returns. \$25 in advance; \$30 door.** DeSare is called the Frank Sinatra of our time.

**February 23, 3-5 p.m., Tea & Talk: The Morris Canal and Allamuchy/Hackettstown by Mr. Lee. Free.**

We will also announce summer camp scheduling in February. See you soon!

## Allamuchy Township Education Foundation

The Allamuchy Township Education Foundation continues to seek ways to bring education-enhancing resources to the Allamuchy School District, and sees 2014 as a year of overall growth. The ATEF is proud to acknowledge that 2013 showed remarkable *fundraising* growth and is anticipating ever-increasing success with the annual Skyland Region Taste of the Town Food & Wine Tasting & Silent Auction. In fact, that momentum has inspired the ATEF and co-host Allamuchy PTO to announce A TASTE OF THE TOWN WEEKEND, Friday and Saturday, April 11-12, 2014. This fun-filled, fundraising weekend begins on Friday evening with the first Burgers & Beer food-pairing event at Rutherford Hall, \$30 per person, 60 tickets maximum. Sample a variety of sliders paired with different seasonal and craft beers from 7:00 – 9:30 p.m.



Merry making Weekend





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### **Allamuchy Township Education Foundation**

Then, prepare your palate for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Skyland Region Taste of the Town Food & Wine Tasting on Saturday, April 12 at Panther Valley Golf & Country Club. Co-hosted by the ATEF and the PTO, like last year, the Taste of the Town is considered a two-part event, with the food and beverage tasting (it's not just wine!) and the PTO's Silent Auction from 7:00-10:00 p.m. At 10:00 the "AfterTaste" Party takes off with music by the Al Lewis Band from 10 p.m.-1:00 a.m. Tickets remain at \$60 per person and can be purchased beginning in late January 2014 at [www.foodandwinetasting.net](http://www.foodandwinetasting.net). A new website and additional information will be announced soon.

The ATEF continues to look for volunteers to contribute time and talent to a cause that helps to enrich the education of the students of our community and to preserve the history and integrity of Rutherford Hall. The Board of Trustees has a few vacancies; project- and event-specific committees are also in need of help and can provide a good introduction to the ATEF. During 2014, the ATEF will focus on three major fundraising events: the Taste of the Town to support the schools' technology initiative and the Annual Golf Classic that supports a cultural or historic preservation need at Rutherford Hall. A new third event is being planned for the fall to support other education initiatives.

The ATEF's plans also include:

- Sponsoring student programs and helping with district needs that can enhance teaching and learning and enrich daily curricular studies;
- Incorporating the environs of the Allamuchy Farms Campus—home of Mountain Villa School, Rutherford Hall, and Allamuchy Pond—into some aspect of the arts, whether visual, musical, or literary for the benefit of the students and the community at large;
- Investigating the world of grants and seeking fundraising opportunities that exist outside of Allamuchy;
- Establishing outdoor learning sites at Allamuchy Farms.



Again, in order to succeed for the good of the district, the ATEF needs "people resources." If you are eager to volunteer your time and talents for the benefit of our school district and Rutherford Hall and its grounds, please attend the ATEF's meetings held on the second Tuesday of the month at the Allamuchy Township School on Johnsonburg Road at 7:15 p.m, in room 149. PLEASE BE AWARE that after the January meeting, the ATEF will meet quarterly, except for committees working on specific projects and events. Check the school's website for meeting announcements. The ATEF's own website is under construction: [www.atefoundation.com](http://www.atefoundation.com). For additional information, contact ATEF president Sal Corino 646-319-6446.

### **PTO Update**

The PTO has been busy doing what it does best: doing those extra little things for the students and their teachers that mean so very much and that enhance the day-to-day learning experience for everyone.

Two Scholastic Book Fairs ran, one in the fall and one at Mountain Villa for the holidays, and the Holiday Shoppe allowed the little shoppers to experience the thrill of secret, self-less shopping. Teachers are making good use of the generous teacher grants allowed them, bringing such education-enriching programs to the students as:

- books for Battle of the Books, a county wide literature-based competition
- student wind turbine kits
- supplies for the kindergarten program
- "Be the G" bracelets for all of the students and staff which identify support for the district's anti-bullying program
- animal food and supplies
- Rachel's Challenge Assembly for Grades 5-8, a program advocating kindness as an end to bullying, inspired by the journals of the first victim of the Columbine shooters
- a document camera
- supplies for Life Skills
- other subject- and grade-specific assemblies throughout the year.

Coming in the spring is the popular Buy-One, Get-One FREE Scholastic Book Fair for all grades.

The PTO also threw in some fun time, too, by hosting its annual Halloween Family Fun Night.

The second half of the school year will be busiest for the PTO as it readies for its big fundraiser: the Silent Auction at Allamuchy Township Education Foundation's 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Skyland Region Taste of the Town. The food- and beverage-tasting event will be held at Panther Valley Golf & Country Club on Saturday April 12, 2014. Interested sponsors and donors to the PTO's silent auction can contact Kara Fragale at 908-813 -8687.

The township is asked to support other fundraisers the PTO sponsors that require no out-of-pocket costs: Box Tops for Education, Labels for Education, Tyson, Target RedCard, Terracycle, and ShopRite gift cards. Please check the PTO page on the school's website for more details.

**Allamuchy Township School District**  
PO Box B  
Allamuchy, NJ 07820

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# Allamuchy Township

SCHOOL DISTRICT

PO Box B  
Allamuchy, NJ 07820

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

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### Upcoming Events

January 20: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, School in Session

February 17: Presidents Day, School Closed

March 27-28: Drama Performance ATS Gym. *Peter Pan, Jr.*

April 18-25: Spring Break, School Closed

Congratulations to the Warren County Grade 5 Battle of the Mind Champions: Sven Grabar, Emily Peshkopia, Neha Hosangadi, Nicholas Colavito, and Audrey Lehneis!

The New Jersey Agriculture Society funds the garden at ATS where our K-5 students partake in different interdisciplinary lessons. Annually, during the spring, our third graders enter a poster contest. Alexa Kozimor was not only the 2013 third grade Allamuchy winner, but also the third grade statewide winner. Alexa and her family attended a reception in Trenton this fall where she received a gift card, certificate, and medal from the state.



Battle of the Minds!