

DISTRICT 721 NEWS



This publication is a response to community members' requests for more district news. Content suggestions are welcome!

Mission

To engage a support everyone in high levels of learning.

Vision

To be a premier school district that models excellence and embraces the challenges of the 21st Century.

Values

- Allocate time and support to best practice research and implementation
- Respect diverse thinking
- Model appropriate, positive interactions
- Think globally
- Learn and apply supportive, interactive technologies

Priorities

- High Academic Achievement
- Maintaining Fiscal Integrity
- Effective, Engaging Communication

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Creativity Helps Hunger Fundraiser Over \$1800 was raised for the Peace Center Food Shelf. See article on page 4 for complete story. Left: Jenna, Rachel, Tony Larson; Center: Erik and Heather Novak; Right: Brent and Lauren Kitner

Raven Stream Jumps Rope for Heart

For the first time, Raven Stream hopped on board with the Jump Rope for Heart program. Jump Rope for Heart is a 33-year-old national event from the American Heart Association that engages elementary school students in the activity of jumping rope while learning about healthy living and helping others.

With the help of the AHA Youth Market Director Lynn Sticha, Raven Stream was chosen to have the Jump Rope Team from Park Brook Elementary in Brooklyn Park share their amazing talents during a 30 minute performance. These talented students showed off their skills with short ropes, partner jumping, long ropes, and double dutch. That presentation kicked off the beginning of the Jump Rope for Heart program at Raven Stream.

The program ran for ten school days and took place during the students' physical education classes with teachers Jesse Bastyr and Chris Lonke. During the ten days, staff shared interesting facts about the heart and the importance of physical fitness with the students over the school intercom.

"The program would not have run as smoothly as it did without the help of Ann Buehler, Family Involvement Coordinator," says Physical Education teacher Jesse Bastyr, "who helped organize and collect donations."

At the conclusion of the ten days, Raven Stream students and families raised approximately \$1800 for the American Heart Association.



Record Setters

These students earned top spots for the number of minutes with consecutive jumps without missing.

Back Row: Spencer Kajer, (5th gr., 7:57), Bryce Novak (5th gr., 11:15), Ethan Marek (5th gr., 13:06), Kaitlyn Kasendorf (5th gr., 9:01), and Emma Carlson (4th gr., 8:49).

Front Row: Logan Pumper (4th gr., 9:00), Matt Robinson (4th gr., 11:03), Simon Kajer (4th gr., 13:52), Georgia Trygestad (4th gr., 7:55), Thomas Traxler (3rd gr., 7:00), and Ashlee Hatlestad (5th gr., 7:46).

Raven Stream Implements Reading Benchmark System

As teachers focus increasingly on children's reading progress, Raven Stream has implemented a new set of tools to gather data that will help teachers provide the right instruction at the right time.

The Fountas & Pinnell benchmark assessment system is a series of texts that can be used to identify a student's current reading level and reveal his/her progress over time.

"With Fountas and Pinnell, we can assess reading levels three times each year," says Reading Specialist Kim Strop. "The assessment gives us lots of information—a student's reading level, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension."

Raven Stream Elementary has currently implemented the Fountas & Pinnell benchmark assessment system in grades 1 and 2. Kindergarten will be assessed in the spring, and it will be implemented in grades 3-5 during the 2012-13 school year.



Raven Stream Reading Specialist Kim Strop uses the Fountas & Pinnell assessment system.

Student Art Inspires Giving



Audrey Beissel, Anders Elliot, and Sam Elliot admire the unique bowls.

Fourth grade art students at Falcon Ridge Elementary and fourth/fifth grade art students at Raven Stream Elementary in New Prague recently raised over \$1800 for the Peace Center Food Shelf, using their original art to inspire giving.

This year marks the second for hosting this Creativity Helps Hunger soup night fundraiser in New Prague. Last year marked the first year for this annual event where Falcon Ridge students raised over \$1100. This year Falcon Ridge and Raven Stream worked together. Raven Stream art teacher Kat Krech was excited that her students were able to partake in the event, "This event provides students the opportunity to use their creative talents for the good of the larger community. It provided a great avenue to teach about the positive impact a community has on schools. This program gives children the ability to help support the community around them, just as the community helps them develop and grow."

Students at both elementary schools started making handmade clay bowls two months ago. The process of making the handmade clay bowls takes several weeks. Each student made a clay bowl using a mold to shape the clay. Then, the bowls had to sit out and dry before going into the kiln for the first bisque firing. After that, students carefully glazed each bowl to make it unique and colorful. Students worked carefully to make sure that the insides of the bowls were completely covered in glaze and to ensure the bowls would be water proof and food-safe. After glazing, the bowls then went back into the kiln for the final kiln firing. Once the creation process was over, the students at both schools made a combined total of exactly 400 unique and beautiful bowls. The students were

eager to share their beautiful creations for such a good cause.

The Creativity Helps Hunger soup night offered a menu of chicken wild rice or broccoli cheese soup, crackers and lemonade to more than 150 people. Attendees purchased more than 130 of the clay bowls as well as several silent auction items, including Cities 97 Samplers Volume 21 and 23, gift baskets and gift cards from local businesses, and handmade artwork by local artists, raising a total of \$1,878 for the food shelf.

Retired teacher Kathy Doyle helped people who came to the soup night fight hunger another way, by testing their vocabulary skills at www.freerice.com. The website generously donates 10 grains of rice to impoverished countries for each question answered correctly.

Falcon Ridge art teacher Kellie deNeui says, "Staff and students are thankful to everyone who came out to support the fundraiser and help raise money! The goal for 'Creativity Helps Hunger' is to continue hosting and expanding the fundraiser every year for the Peace Center." She hopes that each year the students will be able to continue to create and sell unique handmade bowls, provide a delicious soup dinner for purchase, and have the experience of taking part in a community service project that raises money for a great cause.

Interested in helping out? Remaining bowls are on sale for \$5 at both Falcon Ridge and Raven Stream. Stop by and purchase one or more!



Alex Scheffler, Lori Wooten and Marge Sticha

Connect Program Addresses Mental Health Needs

The Connect program is a collaborative venture between Carver-Scott Education Cooperative, Scott County school districts and the Scott County Mental Health Center.

Students now have the opportunity to meet at their school with psychologists and other mental health professionals from the Scott County Mental Health Center. The Connect program provides mental health assessments, chemical dependency screening, support and educational groups for students, support and consultation for families, and short term individual or family therapy. Referrals are kept confidential between the school counselor or social worker, the family, and the therapist providing service.

The Connect program may benefit a variety of mental health issues including sadness or depression, thoughts of suicide, anxiety, withdrawn or aggressive behavior, relationship problems, and suspected risk behavior including frequent drug or alcohol use.

Services may be recommended for a student by parents, teachers, school social workers and counselors. In all instances, a student must have the consent of parents to participate in the program.

The Connect program will utilize the student or family's health insurance if available. If the student or family does not have coverage, a number is provided to answer questions about fees. If a parent would like to make a referral, they may speak with the school psychologist, counselor or social worker in that school.



From Our Health Services Director

Cheryl Malecha

March is National Nutrition Month, which makes this a good time to focus on nutrition and your general health.

Breakfast

Let's face it, mornings are rushed! It is so easy to skip this important meal. But, think of it this way. Not eating breakfast is like using a cordless drill without ever charging its battery. The tool will not work so well this way, and either will we if we skip breakfast. A breakfast consisting of protein and complex carbohydrates is best as these foods digest more slowly and keep energy levels stable throughout the morning. Eggs and oatmeal are good along with a glass of skim milk and maybe some fruit.

Snacks

Snacks can also be a problem if they are not planned well in advance of hunger. Some snack tips for you to consider:

- Keep fruit, vegetables, and yogurt on hand for quick, easy and healthy choices
- Choose higher fiber and/or higher water-content foods. For example, for 100 calories you could have either ¼ cup raisins or nearly 2 cups of grapes.
- High protein foods can help decrease hunger and help you feel full longer. Choose reduced-fat cheese, yogurt, or tuna rather than potato chips.

- Take time to enjoy your food and remember it takes 20 minutes for your brain to recognize that you're full.

Exercise

When it comes to exercise, many of us cringe! We have to change our mindset when it comes to exercise in order to win the battle. Think in terms of activity, instead. Aim for at least 30 minutes (for adults) and 60 minutes (for children) of activity on most days of the week. Try to incorporate some activity into your workday. For example, take the steps instead of the elevator, park in the farthest parking spot from your office, when doing errands walk instead of drive. At home with your children, get outside and throw a Frisbee or ball around, go for bike rides, or put in an exercise DVD and do the workout together. You will be surprised how much more fun this can be. Not only are you exercising together but you are also spending time together as a family.

Time to Prepare

I know that when I have time to prepare, my life goes much better. I eat better, I exercise more, and I feel less stressed, knowing I completed my goals.

Hopefully these tips will help you as much as they have helped me. There will be days when nutrition is the last thing on your mind, but remember to keep moving forward. Progress takes practice.

Middle School Prepares for "SEUSSICAL, JR."

This year the New Prague Middle School will be performing the musical *Seussical, Jr.*, a conglomeration of well known Dr. Seuss stories rolled into one, featuring such characters as Horton the Elephant (Michael McLellan), Gertrude McFuzz (Kayla Bilderback), Mayzie LaBird (Sarah Schoenbauer), The Whos (Charlie Murphy, Bri Meyer, Jacob Washa) and the Cat in the Hat (Josie Herrmann). The 85-member cast and crew include students from grades six through eight.

Students are working hard on learning the music, making props and designing the set. Julianne Scrivener and Jennifer Pickens are working on costume organization. Mrs. Nicole Thietje and Michael Lunder are in charge of choreography.

This year's production will be presented on Fridays, May 4 and May 11, at 7:30 p.m. and Saturdays, May 5 and May 12, at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. in the middle school auditorium. Tickets are available at the middle school office during school hours. Prices are \$8 for adults and \$5 for children.

"The music is wonderful and the kids are working hard to make this a great show," says Thietje. "Hope to see you all there."

Early Reading is Key to Success

The research is in, and all doubt erased. Reading well by Third Grade is critical to children's success in school. National experts, Minnesota legislators, state education staff, and local schools agree, efforts focused on literacy development from birth through Third Grade are well spent.

Last summer, Minnesota legislators made this a priority with two new initiatives. First, each school district is required to prepare a "literacy plan" that documents the district's work in reading instruction. In addition, the legislature has tied funding directly to the proportion of students who are reading well by Grade 3.

"Too often," says Community Services Director Amy Eich, "legislation lags behind the latest research at State and National levels. With this new alignment, we can take this clear, correlated message and make it a local reality."

New Prague Area Schools has embraced this momentum with intentional work to bring attention to this period in child development and develop tools to help parents, care providers, preschool teachers, elementary teachers, and our greater community make the biggest impact possible on children's reading skills.

From birth on, exposure to words and various experiences with those words helps children make the connections that are necessary to build strong vocabulary skills. Approaches as simple as talking to babies, using a variety of sounds, and providing a wide range of experiences can develop knowledge in these fast-growing months. Having children hold and examine books begins a lifelong relationship with the act of reading.



"A child's readiness to read begins long before Kindergarten entrance," explains Lana Puffer, Early Childhood Coordinator. "Research can now suggest to us how to give a child a good start in reading and it begins with parents. Parents set the stage for their child to learn to read. It begins with fun and playful interactions with your child."

As children become more able to form words, conversations are critical for

vocabulary development, and new games join the learning toolbox. Fun with sounds, exposure to tools for writing, e.g., paper, pencils, crayons, and discovery of letters make for great toddler learning. A continued exposure to the printed word, from books to cereal boxes, street signs, and more, helps a toddler see how letters make words and words make meaning.

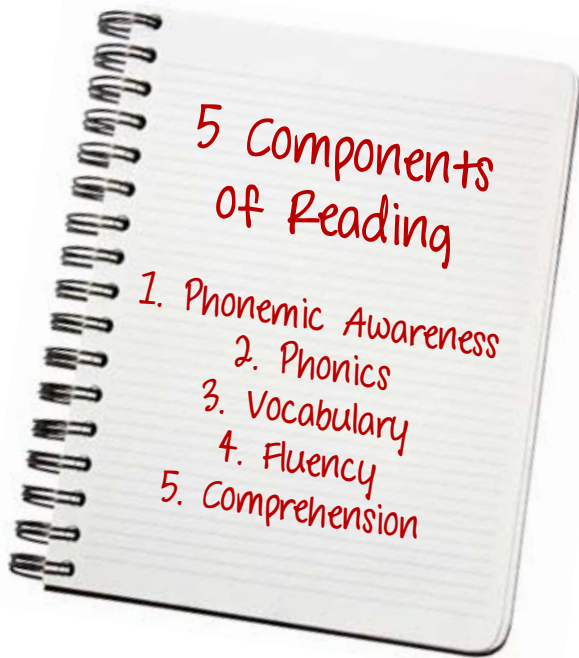
As children enter pre-school age (3-5-years-old), parents, teachers, and the many others who encounter them can provide great contributions to a child's pre-reading skills. Learning to hear and make rhymes and hearing words that begin with the same sound (called alliteration) helps preschoolers develop their ear for language. Recognizing letters, experimenting with writing, and regular exposure to books, magazines, and other reading material are all key to age-appropriate development. At this age, our children are often learning the processes of a school environment, where reading and formal learning meet.

"We recognize the great work our parents, grandparents, daycare providers, teachers, and others do to help our children prepare to read," says Eagle View Principal Brad Gregor. "By working together, we create an atmosphere in which all our children can be successful."

When our children approach Kindergarten today, their preparation can make all the difference in how successfully they make the transition from pre-reader to reader. Children have the most tools at their disposal when they enter school with well developed vocabulary (10,000+ words), knowledge of most of the uppercase and lowercase letters, recognition of as many letter sounds as possible, and experience with writing environments and tools. Having this preparation makes the transition to the rigors of school smoother and helps students to meet their reading goals.

Continues . . .





“Kindergarten expectations today are much more focused on reading and math than in days past,” says Teaching, Learning, & Assessment Director Colleen Cardenuto. “Our preschool and elementary teachers work with parents and other care givers to understand this new reality and provide age-appropriate learning models to give our children the best chance at success.”

In Grades 1-3, students read with a purpose greater than the reading, itself. They work on the five components of reading:

- *Phonemic Awareness* - the auditory ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words (no letters involved in this skill, only sounds)
- *Phonics* - using the relationship between letters and sounds to recognize words
- *Vocabulary* - building an understanding of many new words and their meanings
- *Fluency* - the ability to read with speed, smoothness, and proper inflection, so that meaning is clear
- *Comprehension* - understanding the meaning of reading passages within their greater context

It is critical at this age to develop these abilities, in order to be considered a good reader. Students also work to improve their ability to write. All this is necessary to achieve the goal that stands as a benchmark at the end of Grade 3.

“The national push for improving young children’s early learning experiences is no longer just about preschool,” says Raven Stream Principal Pat Pribyl. “New Prague Area Schools believes that change can happen quickly if it is purposeful, collaborative, and grounded in effective strategies. We strongly encourage all of our district residents to join the effort to help make sure all of our students are successful readers by grade three.”

The State of Minnesota has established learning standards for all children, at each grade level, which are the responsibility of each community to achieve. Local schools are armed with research-based curriculum and an arsenal of instructional experts and support personnel to meet these expectations. New Prague Area Schools is working to provide parents and other care givers, teachers, community daycare and preschool providers, and the greater community additional assistance to help our children become great readers by Third Grade.

“Now the focus is on connecting early childhood education standards and goals to a K-3 system that involves collaboration with community early childhood education providers and ensures that young learners receive high-quality instruction and a strong Pre-K system,” says Raven Stream Principal Pat Pribyl.



**From the National Education Association’s
“Read Across America” Poem**

*You’re never too old, too wacky, too wild,
To pick up a book and read with a child.
You’re never too busy, too cool, or too hot,
To pick up a book and share what you’ve got.*

Panorama Showcases Band Program



Director of Bands Brian Thorstad conducts the Symphonic Band as members of the Wind Ensemble observe.



More than 550 New Prague Area Schools musicians performed for a packed house at the Panorama of Bands concert.

The Panorama of Bands concert at New Prague High School takes place each year on the last Sunday in February. Over 550 instrumental music students in grades 5 through 12 join to perform a concert that showcases the progression of learning to play an instrument. This experience provides an excellent opportunity for students to hear each other

perform at all levels. Beginning instrumentals are often inspired and energized after hearing high school musicians perform. High school students thoroughly enjoy hearing young bands play, as it makes them reminiscent of their experiences when first learning to play an instrument.

In 2010, the instrumental music department began inviting a guest artist to perform with the NPHS Wind Ensemble at the Panorama of Bands concert. This addition to the concert has been enthusiastically received by students, parents, and community members.



University of Minnesota professor Dean Sorenson plays *Blue Bells of Scotland* as guest artist at the Panorama of Bands.

The guest artist program provides a great opportunity for students to work with a professional musician and allows the community of New Prague to hear a world class musician in their hometown. Trumpet and bassoon have been featured in past years. This year, we were pleased to feature University of Minnesota professor and professional musician Mr. Dean Sorenson playing "Blue Bells of Scotland" on trombone.

Each year the Panorama of Bands concert closes with a massed band performance of "Centurion" by Elliot Del Borgo. Over 550 instrumental music students and 1500 audience members help to make this event a wonderful celebration of instrumental music in New Prague. We look forward to carrying on this tradition for many years to come.

Congratulations!

Students Honored for Art



Eighth Grade students Maya Moeller and Courtney Tuma recently received Minnesota Scholastic Art Awards and were invited to display their artwork in the Minneapolis College of Art and Design's Concourse Gallery in January and February. Moeller earned a Silver Key Award, and Tuma a Merit of Honor. Minnesota Scholastic Art Award (MSAA) is a statewide regional affiliation of the National Scholastic Art Awards program. The MSAA recognizes our state's most creative teenagers and offers scholarship opportunities for graduating seniors. It is open to all Minnesota students in grades 7 through 12.

P.R.O.U.D. To Take A Stand

Reprinted from Trojan Times Newspaper, Vol. 16, No. 2

By Mattie Tietz

Did you know that 77% of students are bullied mentally, verbally, or physically? Someone attempts suicide once every minute, and someone completes a suicide once every 17 minutes. Throughout the world, approximately 2,000 people kill themselves each day.

I am sure you have seen posters around the school that read, "P.R.O.U.D.," but do you know what it means? P.R.O.U.D. stands for People Respecting Others and Understanding Differences. This is a brand new student-organized event. P.R.O.U.D. believes that all students, regardless of race, characteristics, ethnicity, or religion, have the right to receive an education and feel safe at school.

The ultimate goal of P.R.O.U.D. is to increase acceptance and awareness in our school. This group offers support and plans to transform our school into a place where all people are accepted just as they are. Although this group just began started this year, it has already grown tremendously! Currently, almost 50 members are interested in making a difference! This group has the potential, with the support of our staff, to do tremendous acts towards anti-bullying. Anyone who is willing to step up and be a leader is welcome to be a part of this group.

It is hard for teens to be themselves when others are influencing them to be someone else. P.R.O.U.D. takes a stand against this and encourages these differences in our school body. This group will be taking proactive steps to make NPHS a more inclusive and welcoming school. A few of the current projects involve creating "toilet-talk" posters, "mixing it up" at lunch, creating a "pledge wall," and creating purple buttons to protest bullying in our school environment. Watch for these positive actions taking place in our learning environment.

The group typically meets the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month after school in room 117. If

you are interested in joining, please talk to Ms. Hengel or P.R.O.U.D. president Anna Loose. Get involved in P.R.O.U.D. and make New Prague High School a better place to learn, excel, and achieve. Be proud of yourself for standing up for others, and make a difference in the lives of others!



Effort Spells Success

Congratulations to the following winners who were among 120 students invited to compete in New Prague Area Community Education's annual Spelling Bee.

First and second place winners from each of the six area schools received a medal and an online subscription from Encyclopedia Britannica. First place winners also received an online language course from Wordspeak.



Eagle View Elementary School

1st Hartman Sadusky

2nd Olivia Doro

Falcon Ridge Elementary School

1st Taylor Pexa

2nd Casey Kotasek

Holy Cross Catholic School

1st Megan Vikla

2nd Josephine Hyde

New Prague Middle School

1st Sam Jirik

2nd Kaylynn Solheid

Raven Stream Elementary

1st Ava Vilenski

2nd Molly Giesen

St. Wenceslaus School

1st Michael Geiger

2nd Luke Schoenbauer

Local Students Earn Top Awards for Research

Three NPHS students and five NPMS students will represent District 721 at the 75th Annual Minnesota State Science and Engineering Fair competition this March.



High School students (left to right) Katie Morris, Brian Prchal, Rena Weis have earned awards for their scientific research papers and projects.

Junior Katie Morris's project "The Effect of Sodium Hypochlorite on the Development of Resistance in *Enterococcus Faecalis*" earned her several awards. Her research paper won a Purple Ribbon and will be part of the State Science Fair symposium. Her project also earned a Purple Ribbon and will be part of the State Science and Engineering Fair. She also earned the Mico Senior High Project Grand Award, Mico Senior High Research Paper Grand Award, Minnesota State University Mankato Biology Award for Senior High, and the IRIS Award for outstanding use of photography, and was selected Second Alternate for the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair.

Junior Rena Weis's work on "Impacts of Varied Biochar and Fertilizer Rates on Zea Mays" earned her a Purple Ribbon for her research paper and project, and several other awards: Society for Invitro Biology, Thin Film Technology Corp. Mankato Area Foundation Senior High Research Project Award, Thin Film Technology Corp. Mankato Area Foundation Senior High Research Paper Award, Mankato Area Pharmaceutical Society Environmental Science Award, Devina May Anderson \$250 Memorial Award (environmental science), and a U.S. Army Award.

Freshman Brian Prchal's work on "Maximize the Methane: An Analysis of Biomass Additives Meant to Increase the Output of Biogas from Cow Manure" earned him a Purple Ribbon for his research paper and project, along with the Mico Senior High Research Paper Grand Award, a recommendation to compete in ISWEEP (International Sustainable World Project Olympiad in Houston, Texas), and an International Renewable Energy Technology Institute of Minnesota \$500 Scholarship.

The following students will represent NPMS at the State Science Fair:

- Lauren Brooks, grade 8, for her research paper, "Up, Up and Away." Brooks also won the Mico Junior High Research Paper Grand Award.
- Vicky Erickson, grade 7, for her research paper, "Which Type of Milk is Preferred?"
- Griffin Macris, grade 7, for his research paper, "Is There a Length of Antenna That Performs Best at a Given Frequency?" Macris was also awarded a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Award, the Middle School Research Paper Grand Award from the MICO Corporation, and a Middle School Independent Research Award from the Thin Film Corporation/Mankato Area Foundation.
- Skylar Orth, grade 6, for his project, "Which Brand of 75 Watt Light Bulb Gives off the Most Energy?" Orth also won the Naval Science Award, Minnesota State University Mankato 2012 Young Scholar Award, and was a nominee for the 2012 Broadcom MASTERS (Math, Applied Science, Technology, and Engineering for Rising Stars).
- Hannah Schoenbauer, grade 6, for her research paper, "Sip All Day, Get Decay."

District 721 teacher Jodi Prchal is the academic coach for the students. "I am so proud of all the work these students put into their projects," Prchal says. "They represented our community and their families so well, and they were rewarded for strong scientific approaches."

Participation in the Science Fair is made possible through New Prague Area Community Education, a department of New Prague Area Schools. Students have been working on a variety of fundraisers to help defray costs of the State Science Fair by working at the New Prague State Bank Popcorn Wagon, by providing crafts at the Dozinky Artist's Alley and Falcon Ridge Family Fun Nights, and through a tip night at Pizza Ranch. Anyone wishing to support these young scientists should contact Jodi Prchal at Falcon Ridge Elementary 952-758-1663.



Middle School students (left to right) Lauren Brooks, Vicky Erickson, Hannah Schoenbauer, Griffin Macris, and Skylar Orth (not pictured) will represent New Prague Area Schools at this year's State contest.

Youth Help Seniors to Sculpt Memories



Sophie Bruder and Jeanette Deutsch

Carrie Riesgraf Bruder Photography
www.crbphotography.com

“Where did you grow up?”

“What was your first car?”

“Tell me something about New Prague you think I would not know.”



John Wagner with Sagan Shetka

Carrie Riesgraf Bruder Photography
www.crbphotography.com

to sculpt “bas relief” plaques (flat on one side, three-dimensional on the other) representing what they love about the New Prague Area. These plaques will be bronzed and mounted on the sculpture “Towering To Our Future,” by Dahl-Shetka. The tower stands in Philipps Park, on the west end of downtown New Prague, and will eventually display 44 plaques by residents of all ages. Plaques by Mala Strana residents and other area senior adults will adorn the north side of the tower.

This project drew the help of Owen and Alex Block, great grandchildren of resident Elsie Smisek; Ava Vilensky, granddaughter of resi-



Cairo Shetka and Robert Javurek

Carrie Riesgraf Bruder Photography
www.crbphotography.com

Area youth asked these and other questions as they supported residents of Mala Strana senior living community in a public art project.

With the leadership of project director, artist, and teacher Kiersten Dahl-Shetka, several young people and adults helped residents of Mala Strana

dent Howard Holm; along with community youth Kaitlin, Hannah, and Sophie Bruder; Claire Hanson; Kaitlin McClellan; Cairo and Sagan Shetka; and Rochelle Widmer, as well as more than 20 adult helpers who are family members of Mala Strana participants, previous project participants, or members of the New Prague Arts Council.



Jeanette Deutsch and Hannah Bruder

Carrie Riesgraf Bruder Photography
www.crbphotography.com

The job of the “mighty helpers,” as Dahl-Shetka referred to them, was to help seniors recall and record memories of what they love about their life in and around New Prague.- From these memories, seniors selected one or more “images” to sculpt into their clay plaques, with the help of their assistants. For example, Robert Juvarek chose to include gas pipe in his sculpture, recalling his work in the Army Corps of Engineers in Burma. Likewise, John Wagner included 15 people across the top of his plaque, representing him, his wife and 13 children, and Helen Kuzelka chose to include a likeness of Dr. Novak, for whom she worked as a nurse.

Participants worked with their helpers at Mala Strana the week of February 20 to talk, decide, and sculpt. On Saturday and Sunday of that week, Dahl-Shetka and helpers prepared the plaques for plaster and wax molds, which will be used for bronzing at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter on an upcoming weekend.

The tower sculpture was funded through collaboration and support from the New Prague Arts Council, New Prague Chamber of Commerce, and New Prague Area Community Education, along with grant funding through the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council from Minnesota’s Arts & Cultural Heritage fund and donations by area residents and businesses. A special thanks to Terry Korbel and Mala Strana campus.



Seventh Grader Claire Hanson and her father Dr. Troy Hanson helped Mala Strana resident Helen Kuzelka sculpt her plaque.

Carrie Riesgraf Bruder Photography
www.crbphotography.com

Simulator Provides Realistic Shaken Baby Conditions



Students in the Child Development I class will soon see a realistic simulation of how dangerous it is to shake an infant. The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) recently awarded approximately \$900 to NPHS Family and Consumer Science Department to purchase a RealCare Shaken Baby simulator and accompanying curriculum.

The life-sized electronic simulator contains electronics that measure the force on the brain when shaken, and students can view LED damage indicators through a transparent skull. A realistic baby cry soundtrack stops abruptly as shaking continues and damage increases. The accompanying curriculum helps students understand Shaken Baby Syndrome and how to prevent it.

Realityworks
Live it. Learn it.

Family and Consumer Science Teacher Julisa Fjeldahl explains, "Since a lot of students baby sit or have younger siblings, and most plan to have children of their own, I want the students to understand that all it takes is one shaking to cause severe brain damage. The simulator," she says, "will help kids see the serious destruction if the child lives through it and sometimes fatal repercussions of shaking infants."

Fjeldahl invites local parent Angela Field into her classroom each year as a guest speaker, to share the story of when her son was shaken by a daycare provider, and the impact this had on their family.

Sophomore Kalli Woyda anticipates a positive learning experience with the new simulator, "It will be so educational for students to hear Angela's true story and see the new Shaken Baby simulator."

Approximately 120 students take Child Development each year, learning about family life cycles, parenting styles, discipline, birth defects, prenatal and postnatal care, labor, delivery, and the development of a child.

Senior Jamie Krall is sure the simulator will make a difference, "It will really make students realize how quickly it can happen and how one violent shake can change a family."

Fjeldahl wrote to the SMSC for this grant support in November and recently learned of the award. "This is a tool we could not afford without this grant. We are so grateful for this support. I cannot thank the SMSC enough for their support of this class and curriculum." The SMSC awarded \$28 million in community contributions in 2011.

Happy Birthday, Dr. Seuss!

March 1 marked Dr. Seuss's birthday, and Kid's Corner Preschool marked the day with "wacky" dress day. Note Ms. Bridget and Ms. Jenny as Thing 1 and Thing 2.



Transition Meetings Help K Transition

It can be an overwhelming step in any child's life to transition into kindergarten. New Prague Area Schools strives to ensure this process goes smoothly by providing parents with plenty of information and holding a formal evening at each elementary building where information is discussed with parents about what to expect in kindergarten.

This time can be even more overwhelming for a parent whose child receives special education services. The early childhood special education teachers, along with the kindergarten teachers and building principals, offer transition meetings for every child who receives special education services.

At these meetings the elementary team explains what a typical school day would look like for the child and the parent can meet the new team that will be working with their child. An additional set of information goes out to help answer frequently asked questions, as well as a timeline of kindergarten events.

After the Kindergarten Registration night and the transition meetings are done, there is an additional opportunity for parents to attend with their child an Open House later in the spring. This is a great opportunity for parents and children to come and orient themselves to the building and the teachers who may be working with their child in the upcoming school year.

The kindergarten transition meetings are listed below:

Eagle View Elementary is March 22

Raven Stream Elementary is March 23

Falcon Ridge Elementary is March 29

Emotional Success Leads to Academic Success

School social workers wear many hats during the course of a school day, but the most important one is to help our students grow socially and emotionally. Students may visit the school social worker's office during the course of the school year for many reasons:

- Work out friendship issues
- Talk about making better choices in the classroom/playground
- Work through sad or angry feelings stemming from family issues
- Explore ways to cope with anxiety, depression, or more severe mental health issues
- Work through teen issues in the secondary level

Most times students just need someone who can take some extra time to help them sort through feelings. Sometimes school social workers call parents, when the student needs a little extra support from home regarding an issue they are working through.

During the school year, if you ever feel your child may benefit from having a safe place to talk about feelings, please don't hesitate to call the school social worker at your child's school. Social and emotional success leads to academic success.

For additional resources, you can access our counseling websites at the NPMS and NPHS or the Social Services webpage at: <http://www.np.k12.mn.us/SpecialServices/SocialServices/index.shtml>

School Social Workers:

Eagle View Elementary - Renee Meyers	952 758 6025
Falcon Ridge Elementary - Amy Hennen	952 758 1613
Raven Stream Elementary - Polli Edberg	952 758 1525
ECSE/CEC/6th grade - Renee Hartman	952 758 1728
High School/Middle School - Katie Hennessy . . .	952 758 1212



Raven Stream Social Worker Polli Edberg helps students through a "Worry Scale" to teach them coping skills.

Grant Supports Paraprofessional Staff Development

In conjunction with the district's special education initiatives, the Special Services Department received a \$2000 grant to provide professional staff development for special education paraprofessionals in the latest strategies in student and classroom management and positive behavioral supports and interventions.

The district will provide an opportunity for special education paraprofessional to complete two, one-hour online classes in behavior and classroom management through The Para Educator Learning Network, which has extensive opportunities for ongoing training for paraprofessionals on the most current and innovative classroom management strategies.

"We are trying to work 'smarter, not harder' when it comes to staff development," says Special Services Director Tony Buthe. "Our paraprofessionals have been asking for more intervention-specific strategies to use with our students with special needs, and we always struggle to find time to work with them as a group. This will allow them to learn and expand their knowledge on their own with support from the district."

The paraprofessionals will have access the Para Educator Learning Network through the Masterteacher.com website.

Seniors Share Love of Reading

RavenStreamElementary First Graders have been busy showing off their new reading skills to an energetic group called the "Silver Readers."

"These retired adults have been generous giving of their time and talents to sit and listen to our budding readers," says Raven Stream Principal Pat Pribyl.

"The love, patience and encouraging help they provide boosts our student's confidence and builds a very special bond."

This program got its start through the Fitness Center of New Prague. Raven Stream invited those who participated in the Silver Sneakers fitness program to come to school after their workout, giving a half hour of their time to the children. The program has grown as they invite friends to join the group.

Voracious reading is one way to increase fluency and accuracy in young readers. The conversations between the Raven Stream Students and the Silver Readers help the child to increase their comprehension and inference skills. The smiles and reluctance to leave their reading partners tell this is a win, win situation for both the Silver Readers and Raven Stream First Graders!



Minnesota Reading Corps: Professional Corps in our Preschools

Minnesota Reading Corps is a statewide program to help every Minnesota child become a successful reader. Minnesota Reading Corps members have tutored more than 25,000 preschool and elementary school children since the program was introduced in 2003.

This year New Prague Area Schools has two Early Childhood teachers working as Professional Reading Corps members. Kristen Palma, Eagle View School Readiness Preschool teacher, is in her 14th year with the district. Bridget Barnett, Kid's Corner School Readiness Preschool teacher, is in her 13th year with district. Both decided that incorporating Minnesota Reading Corps into their programs would help preschoolers make a smoother transition into Kindergarten, and the Professional Corps program would help them deliver these services.

"Minnesota Reading Corps has allowed me to provide a Literacy Rich curriculum that is in alignment with the district's Kindergarten benchmarks," says Palma. "The training and support provided by MRC has made the transition into the program relatively smooth and seeing some of my students beginning to read and write has made it all worth it!"

"Becoming an MRC member has challenged me as a teacher," says Barnett. "The extensive training I have received has made me more confident about the curriculum and activities I provide for my students. It also makes me feel more competent as a professional. I want to share everything I am learning with my peers."



Kid's Corner School Readiness Preschool teacher Bridget Barnett helps students with their daily sign-in work.

What does a one year commitment as a Professional Reading Corps member mean?

Extensive Literacy Training & Instruction

Each Professional Corps member attends 32 hours of literacy training prior to the beginning of the school year, along with four, eight-hour Saturday trainings during the year. They are responsible for administering literacy assessments three times a year, providing literacy interventions for students based on outcomes, participating



Eagle View Preschool teacher Kristen Palma holds her "morning meeting" with students, using several Reading Corps principles as she converses with students.

in monthly collaboration meetings with Internal Coach, Master Coach and Literacy Tutor, and having weekly Integrity checks by the Internal Coach to make sure they are implementing the MRC method as it was intended.

Curriculum and Planning

Professional Corps members are responsible for implementing the Literacy Rich Daily Schedule, a research-based instructional method that embeds all the MRC literacy components,

such as daily sign-in for all students, Morning Messages, Strive for 5 (five or more conversational exchanges with individual students), weekly journaling, small group read alouds, theme-related vocabulary introductions, and Big 5 Transitions (literacy transitions including: rhyming, alliteration, letter sounds, letter naming and picture naming).

New Prague Area Schools must apply each year to the Minnesota Reading Corps for funding for any Reading Corps tutors and Professional Corps members. Both Palma and Barnett hope to participate for a second year next year.

Message from Supt

How do you like this winter? I suspect for those of you who have winter hobbies it has been a downer, but for someone from the southern Iowa/northern Missouri area, who has no outdoor winter sports' hobbies, it has been great. My only dislike of Minnesota has been the length of the winters, not the occasional severe cold. I can't complain this year.

We hope the school year has been a successful one for those of you with school aged children. The year seems to be flying by. As I go between the schools, I am pleased by the positive attitudes I encounter. Our staff, both the teachers and our support personnel, are dedicated to insuring your children have a positive experience in our schools. We also appreciate your cooperation in making school a pleasant place to be for your children. I always like to say, "A happy workplace is a productive workplace."

Larry Kauzlarich
Superintendent

Fourth Graders Fired Up about Fit Kids

“Fun!” “Epic!” “Interesting!” These are just a few of the words that Eagle View fourth graders use to describe the Fit Kids program that they have been participating in this year.

Instructors from the Fitness Center in New Prague have been visiting classrooms approximately two times each month since October and teaching students to make healthy choices. The program begins with a focus on what students are already doing to stay active and teaches them to think critically about how excessive TV viewing and overuse of technology can affect their activity level.

Instructors also guide students through the USDA’s updated version of the food pyramid, “MyPlate,” and teach students about the basic food groups, how to read labels, and how to make nutritious choices.

One Eagle View fourth grader shared, “Fit Kids is awesome because we get to learn about exercise and how the foods we eat affect us. It helps us make good choices in our everyday lives!”

Aside from regular classroom visits, Fit Kids instructors also visit Phy Ed classes three times during the school year where students

have fun learning about various activities such as yoga, Pilates, and kickboxing. The Fit Kids program culminates in May with a Subway party and activity time to celebrate a school year of learning about being and staying healthy.



Students study food labels to better understand healthy food choices, as part of the Fit Kids program.

“Change” Can Make a Difference

This year, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society is conducting its 21st Annual Pennies for Patients® program in schools throughout Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota! In January, Eagle View Elementary School students and staff participated in this educational program.

Each year, more than 12,000 children are diagnosed with cancer – equivalent to two classrooms of children diagnosed each day. More than 5,000 of these cases are blood cancer. Local students learn compassion while working to “change” these statistics through Pennies for Patients.

From January 17 through January 31, students at Eagle View emptied their piggy banks and searched under couch cushions for spare change to donate to this worthy cause. Classrooms sponsored special “dollar” days where students who brought in a dollar for the cause could wear a hat or pajamas on that day. Each day the money was counted and totals were displayed. The classes with the most money donated from grades K-2 and 3-5 were each awarded a special Nintendo Wii event for their efforts.

“Whether the students won the Wii event or not, it was very rewarding for the students to

know they were helping a great cause,” says Eagle View Principal Brad Gregor.

Eagle View Elementary surpassed their goal by raising \$3,890 for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.



Coin Captains

The top contributing classes from Eagle View Elementary display the buckets of coins Eagle View collected for the Pennies for Patients fundraiser. Mrs. Freer’s second grade class collected the most money from grades K-2, with a grand total of \$321.34. Mrs. Hoppert’s fourth grade class generously donated \$371.60, the most from grades 3-5.

Bishop Earns High Marks

As a high school English teacher, Dara Bishop did not expect to be teaching college courses. However, as NPBS began to offer College in the Schools (CIS), where students dual enroll in the University of Minnesota and NPBS for credit, she is doing just that.

"I look forward to starting my day with this class," says Bishop, who currently teaches CIS Literature. "I find myself thinking about it in my spare time, coming up with new discussion prompts and other ways to engage my students."

Bishop recently received stellar feedback from University of Minnesota English Department Professor Emerita Toni McNaron who shared, "Dara is able to combine a tremendous enthusiasm for the subject matter with an absolute demand that students set aside their other concerns and take their work seriously. Her students tell me they work harder because they are taken seriously in her class."

Bishop appreciates the curiosity in her students, "These students are highly interested; overachieving is the norm, not something to be ridiculed. They appreciate the value their peers bring to their learning, and students don't always get that in a regular high school class." She is pleased they will be highly informed for their Freshman year at college.



NPBS also offers CIS Composition, Psychology, and Spanish, as well as courses through Advanced Placement (Calculus, History, Statistics) and Partners in Academic Advancement (Biology) with MSU Mankato.



Return on Investment

College in the Schools (CIS) courses at NPBS return a significant investment in the value of college credits earned.

2010-11 CIS Review

Registrations	U of M Credits Earned	Cost at \$145 per student/course	Value at 2010-11 U of M tuition of \$376.70/credit
76	320	\$11,020	\$120,544

The 2011-12 program will complete this spring. This year, NPBS has had 95 registrations in CIS, predicting an even greater return on this investment.

NPBS also has 149 registrations in Advanced Placement courses and 31 registrations in the Partners in Academic Advancement program with MSU – Mankato.

Food Service Studies New Regulations

In late January, First Lady Michelle Obama and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack unveiled new standards for school meals that are designed to improve the health and nutrition of children who eat school meals. Broadly, the changes require daily access to fruits and vegetables, increased offerings of whole-grain-rich foods, low-fat or fat-free milk options, calorie limits and portion sizes based on the age of the children, and lower saturated and trans fats and sodium.

New Prague Area Schools Food Service Director Robert Foix is currently studying the new regulations, to determine what changes are required. Several of the new requirements are already in place; others will be in place by next school year.

"We will need the help of parents to make this work," says Foix. "Children are used to the choices they have had in the past, so they may need some help to make new and better choices."

"NPAS has shifted to low-fat and non-fat milk choices, all breads are whole grain, and we offer fresh and canned fruit daily," says Foix.

In the past, students could combine a fruit and vegetable to count a serving. This has changed with the new regulations. "Our biggest challenge will be that students need both fruits and vegetables

with their meal, and the portion they must take has gotten larger," explains Foix. "We will need parents' help to encourage your students to consider more fruit and vegetables in their meals."

The new regulations still focus on "offering" versus "serving," where students can select three out of the required five items. "This will help control waste and food cost," says Foix.

Looking forward, a few tasks remain. Food Service will have to offer legumes as an option, lower sodium levels, with a first reduction target in 2014-15, and watch calorie levels for next year's lunch program.

K-Grade 5 550-600 Calories

Grades 6-8 600-700 Calories

Grades 9-12 750-850 Calories

"For our youngest students, where this is all they will know, it won't be so difficult," says Foix. "It's our older students who have to learn all new habits, where we'll have our most resistance. We'll do our best to help students and parents understand what we're doing and how it fits with the new regulations."

Report Cards Go Digital at NPHS

Parents log in regularly to see their children's grades online. Students log in to do coursework and check their grades. Over the last few years, the high school has been working toward this paperless plan, publicizing the change at all conferences and on the high school website.

Beginning in the fall of 2012, NPHS will make all student report cards available online only, in an effort to save money, paper and staff time. On average, about one-third of high school families attend conferences. Following conferences the mid-term reports that were not picked up were always mailed home. End of trimester grades have also been mailed in the past. Cost for these mailings measure nearly \$800, postage.

All NPHS parents and students have codes to access student records online, and next fall families will be able to access these grades prior to conferences as well as at the end of term. Families who would like paper copies for their files are able to print copies.

Families who don't have computer or internet access at home can access the grades at school. Parents who do not know their family access code can contact Cheryl Turek in the guidance office at 952-758-1211.


Questions regarding mid-term or final report cards are welcome at the high school office at 952-758-1200.

Spring Fever?

Raven Stream Elementary
PAC Plant Sale

Wave Petunias, Begonias,
Geraniums, Impatiens and more!
Patio Pots and Hanging Baskets

Taking orders now through March 30
Pickup is May 8



Board Hears Audit Results

The district's Fiscal Year 2010-11 audit, covering the period July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011, concluded in December 2011 and was presented to the School Board at its December 12 meeting.

An audit of the district's finances is required by law, and is conducted in the months following the close of each fiscal year. Results are presented to the School Board to assist them in setting financial policy.

An audit confirms the finances of the district, as understood by the district's administration. Results of this year's audit were positive. The unassigned general fund balance—that amount available to spend without restrictions—grew to \$3,248,173 which exceeds the Board's fund balance goal. The food service and community services funds saw a moderate increase in fund balance last year and are financially stable.

The fund balance has grown in the last two years due to several factors. First, enrollment has increased at a faster rate than projected. That is very good news for our district as statewide the trend is declining enrollment. Second, school districts have received federal grants to provide additional funds during the economic downturn. These grants will no longer be available after this school year. Last, expenditures have been contained through a series of budget adjustments. In Fiscal Year 2009-10 expenditures grew 1.6% and in Fiscal Year 2010-11 expenditures decreased by .8%.

"Looking to the future, we are very pleased that our community voted last fall to increase our operating levy starting in Fiscal Year 2013-14," says Finance Director Sandy Linn.

"With the State of Minnesota projecting a budget deficit over the next biennium, increases in education funding will most likely be minimal at best, and the operating levy provides a portion of stable funding."

- Finance Director Sandy Linn.

In addition to this, enrollment is projected to grow an average of 1.3% for the next five years. "Being on the growth side of enrollment," says Linn, "is more helpful for financial management than a district that is losing enrollment. We are also continually looking for ways to reduce expenses and find ways to use our resources more efficiently."

The district continues to maintain its long-standing commitment to academic excellence and education opportunity for students within a framework of fiscal responsibility. Both the presentation to the board and the full audit report are available for viewing on the district's website.

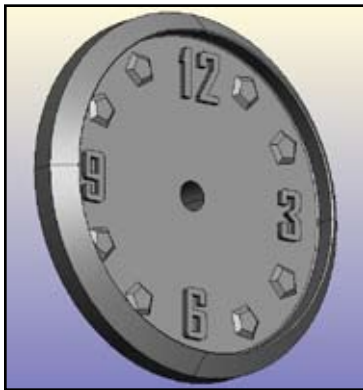
As always, if you have any questions, please contact the school district office at 952-758-1702.

Technology: A Class of Creativity

Written by T.E.D. students: Abby Teply, Taylor Hartmann, Emma Kiihn, Tatum Kubes, Maya Moeller, Jenny Schoenbauer, Sydney Haines, Alex Morris, Shelby Hartmann, Payton Schultz, Madison Solem, Megan Connelly, Sasha Beseke, Natalie Hayden, Kari Steen and Emma Busch

Imagine yourself in a world without technology. Nearly every job as we know it would be non-existent. Everything we do would be much more difficult and require more time to accomplish the tasks. As middle school students, life without technology is hard to imagine. This is why we recognize how fortunate we are to have technology in our schools and the opportunity to grow and learn through the experiences we have in our Technology, Engineering and Design (T.E.D.) class at New Prague Middle School.

In our T.E.D. class we learned about many things and faced many challenges. Pro-Desktop is a C.A.D. (Computer Aided Design) program that can be used for many things that involve building and construction. It allows us to draw shapes and designs, then create a 3-D model of the objects, just like engineers do today. We started out with simple shapes, like a cube with holes in it, a goblet, and a doughnut. Slowly we worked toward more advanced drawings which required us to focus closely on the details.



Logan Warner created this likeness of a clock, using Computer Aided Design.

We learned about and experienced Google Apps which offers the use of several productivity tools, such as spreadsheets, presentations, documents, forms and drawing. It also includes access to Gmail, calendars, and sites. We explored the many different formatting features we could use on Google Docs. We also learned about other useful advantages of using Google Apps, for example, we can share a document that we made with others for the purpose of collaborating, and/or allow them to edit or comment on our work. This feature makes doing group projects in school, or in your career, much easier and more convenient, thanks to "cloud computing." Cloud computing means that your work is saved "online" and you can access it anywhere in the world as long as you have Internet access.

We created an E-Portfolio website using Google Sites. Our E-Portfolio is where we share what we have learned throughout the year and showcase our work from T.E.D. class. Each year we will expand our E-Portfolio website to share another year of our learning in T.E.D. class.

We learned a variety of things about designing and constructing CO2 cars. CO2 cars are small cars that we made out of balsa wood

and powered with CO2 cartridges. We started out by designing our car using an online software program called White Box Learning. All students started out with a template of a wood block and turned it into our own unique design. When we felt our car was to perfection, we would view a data specification sheet on the computer that would evaluate our design and show us if our car met the requirements. If it didn't meet all the specifications, we would edit the design of our car until it complied with the requirements. We printed out the drawings of our car.

Finally, when the car met the requirements, we could race it virtually. The test runs from the virtual race would often require modifications to the car to improve its performance. Once we were satisfied with the design of the car and speed results from the virtual race, we competed against 4 other qualifying cars. We gathered data from each race, noting the finishing times and the mass of each car, and used it to create a spreadsheet. We then had to use our spreadsheet data to create a chart showing the relationship between mass and time.

Next, it was time to move on to the wood shop. We cut out the car with band saws and scroll saws. We also used a drill to make holes for the axles. Then we used a file to make the shape of our car perfect and then we sanded it to make it smooth.



Elizabeth Sticha designs her CO2 car.

We then reached the final steps. First we primed our cars, then we painted, and then we put clear coats on. We then assembled our



Wyatt Midtvedt's finished CO2 car.

cars by putting on axles, wheels, and washers. Finally, what made it all worth waiting for, we got to race it down the track.

Technology, Engineering and Design is a very meaningful class for preparing us for our future. Technology is becoming more and more advanced, so our teachers are doing their best to engage us in a variety of experiences so we can become life-long learners. They teach us the importance of problem solving and developing skills so we can be successful in life. They introduce us to new software and programs so we can do more with computers. And finally, they give us a glance at possible careers of our future.