

Education Update

an official publication of the Mount Olive Township School District

May 2016

School budget is at 2% state cap

Includes money for capital repairs and technology; will cost the average homeowner \$60 per year

THE BOARD of Education adopted the budget for the 2016-2017 school year at its meeting on May 9. The \$91.7 million spending plan is at the 2% cap set by the state.

Money is included in the budget for:

- A new computer coding class at Mount Olive Middle School
- New high-tech computer engineering courses and audio/music classes at Mount Olive High School
- One additional elementary teacher and two additional teachers at MOHS
- One full time custodian and a part-time custodian
- Window replacement at MOHS
- Window replacement at Sandshore Elementary School
- Replacement of aging technology
- Renovations to the MOHS team rooms
- Renovations of the HVAC system at MOHS
- Exterior painting at MOHS
- Technology and manufacturing equipment to support MOHS' new maker space
- Upgrades to the MOHS television studio

For the average homeowner (with a house assessed at \$315,400), the budget will result

in a tax increase of **\$60 per year.**

Curriculum Improvements

New engineering/design courses and audio production courses will be offered at MOHS in the upcoming school year – instructional improvements that will make use of renovated instructional areas.

Work is under way at MOHS now to convert the building's former auditorium into an audio engineering studio and a maker space. The maker space will combine high-tech manufacturing and computer equipment in one lab, enabling

students to apply their knowledge to design, prototype, and produce products. Both the maker space and audio studio are on schedule to be completed by September 1.

Another key instructional highlight focuses on science at the elementary and middle school levels. New science laboratory kits will be purchased to make science instruction at those levels even more hands-



SINGING ON TOP OF THE WORLD!

Rachel Mandell gazes out on the skyline from the Empire State Building. She was one of 63 members of Mount Olive Middle School's eighth grade chorus to perform at the iconic skyscraper

on April 21. Under the direction of choral teacher Susan Saposnik, the students sang for visitors who were en route to the 86th floor observatory. After the half-hour-long performance, the students went up to the observatory themselves to take in the panoramic views.

on and engaging.

In addition, the K-5 science curriculum will be rewritten to meet revised state standards. It will focus on more interactive, experiential lessons that cross content areas.

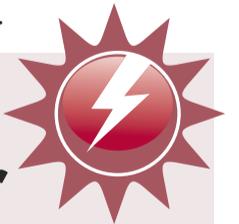
A revised social studies curriculum, rewritten this school year to meet revised state standards, will be implemented in 2016-2017, beginning in September.

Mt. Olive Township School District

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Solar panels will save \$60K per year



Solar panels to be installed at no cost to the district will save an estimated \$60,000 per year in energy costs. The panels will be installed on the grounds of Sandshore Elementary School and Tinc Road Elementary School as part of a contract awarded by the Morris County

Improvement Authority. Over the 15-year life of the program, the savings to the district will be nearly \$1 million.

Engineers surveyed all the district's schools; however, only Sandshore and Tinc Road were considered optimum locations for solar panel placement.

Middle school teacher rocks

MOUNT Olive Middle School's Karen Killen rocks. WDHA (105.5 FM) and the New Jersey Education Association recently honored the sixth grade social studies teacher in the Teachers Who Rock awards. The annual program recognizes educators who make a significant impact on the lives of students.

Stephanie Tarnowski co-teaches classes with Ms. Killen and nominated her for the award. The two teachers have worked with each other for 16 years, first at Tinc Road Elementary School and the last five at MOMS.

"Karen's enthusiasm and incredible work ethic, along with her ability to connect with all students, makes her one of the most incredible educators I have worked with," said Ms. Tarnowski. "She inspires me and our students each day. I absolutely love working alongside her, and I am constantly learning from her. Our students often claim that social studies is their favorite class, and I know that this is due to Karen's dedication and hard work, and her ability to make every single student feel intelligent and



Karen Killen holds her award next to co-teacher Stephanie Tarnowski

cared for."

Ms. Killen first learned of her award when the announcement was made on WDHA. Ms. Tarnowski used a cover story about her son's basketball team being mentioned on the air as the reason to keep the radio on during class.

Ms. Killen received her award at a banquet at Casa Bianca in Oak Ridge with the other New Jersey teachers recognized in the program.

Student artist honored in contest

Mount Olive Middle School sixth-grader Izzie Alvarez was recently named the middle school winner in the annual student art contest sponsored by Morristown's Mayo Performing Arts Center.



Izzie's original artwork, along with the three high school level winners, will appear on program covers this spring.

The performing arts center announced the winners and unveiled giant posters of the winning artwork at a reception in the center's art gallery. This year's theme was "Celebrate the Arts!"



School library steps into the future

From teaching students how to create digital presentations to running an e-book reading club, Roberta Giusto is transforming Sandshore Elementary School's library into a learning space of the future. The library media specialist recently introduced her latest initiative: maker learning.

Maker learning is a relatively new concept in education and represents a true fusion of creativity, hands-on learning, and age-appropriate STEM skills. It uses resources typically regarded as materials for crafts, engineering, design, robotics, and media.

At Sandshore, activities made possible through newly purchased maker kits include building structures with K'nex pieces (rods, connectors, and bricks), origami, computer coding, and making circuits.

"School libraries, particularly at the elementary level, are becoming common learning spaces that allow students to collaborate, access technology and information, and create, imagine, and invent," Ms. Giusto said. "Maker learning teaches kids how to problem-solve and think outside the box."

During a class' library time, Ms. Giusto divides the students into small groups which then work to create different projects. At the end of each class, the groups present their projects to each other, discussing the things that worked well and the things that could have been done better. This sharing is an important step in the process and allows students to learn from each other.

Learning the science of life

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

At Mountain View Elementary School, it was the egg. Actually eggs. A total of 24 of them.

Fifth-graders in the classes of Patrick Murphy and Melissa Ezro are monitoring an incubator and two dozen eggs from High View Farms in Budd Lake. Owner Rosanne Oblen recently brought in the equipment and fertilized eggs. She discussed with students the temperature and humidity needs of the incubator, the different breeds of chickens and ways to distinguish the sexes, and how chickens incubate their eggs on their own in nature.

Ms. Oblen also presented a diorama that showed the development inside the eggs during each day of the 21-day incubation period. The diorama sits behind the incubator on the counter in Ms. Ezro's room so that students can be reminded where the eggs are in the developmental process.

But the highlight for the students was unquestionably the hen and newly-hatched chicks that Ms. Oblen brought along. The kids had a chance to hold the chicks after a brief overview on how to safely cradle them in cupped hands – good practice for when the kids briefly become surrogate mommies and



Molly Kahan checks the temperature on the incubator

daddies.

The project reinforces and enriches the fifth grade science curriculum which has animal reproduction as a major unit. At least one student appreciates the hands-on science opportunity that the project provides.

"I told my mom that we were going to get eggs and hatch them," said Ryan Melendez. "She was surprised because she never did it as an experiment when she was in school. But it's the 21 Century now, you've got to experiment."

Bending THE cycle

"I just want to give kids a chance."

**Mike Tanious
MOHS junior**

Student's website and e-book provide practical advice for kids

MIKE Tanious, an Egyptian-born Mount Olive High School junior, has a message he wants young people everywhere to hear: If I can succeed, you can too. It might take perseverance and sacrifice, but you can do it.

That message has begun resonating throughout the school community and even across the nation thanks to bendthecycle.com, a website that the 16-year-old created. At the heart of the site is Mike's free e-book that provides inspiration and advice for kids aged 13-24, particularly ones who are growing up in lower-income communities.

Far from the pop psychology of motivational books and the fortune cookie wisdom of social media memes, "The Cycle Of Poverty And How To Bend It" is chock full of practical information and hyperlinks to external resources. It's the sort of straight-up info about school, life, and planning for the future that Mike wishes someone had dished out to him when he was younger. The ever-evolving guidebook addresses topics such as living in poverty, standardized testing, health, motivation, jobs, college costs, and typical salaries of various occupations.

Mike's story

Mike's personal story is inspirational. He and his mother, Mervat Maher, emigrated from Egypt when he was still in diapers. It was September 8, 2001 – just days before the horrific attacks that would fell the Twin Towers and change not just America but the entire world.

He and Ms. Maher never really settled down and moved from community to community. Then, three years ago while living in another New Jersey county, Mike became disillusioned with the quality of the school system he was in. Understanding that education is fundamental to bettering your life, he hit the Internet and soon discovered the opportunities available at MOHS. It didn't take much to persuade his mother to leave their old town and head to Mount Olive.

At MOHS, he found teachers who care, friends with similar interests, and a school environment that allowed him to grow and excel.

"Coming to Mount Olive High School was a rebirth for me," Mike said.

With his mom owning and running a small

grocery store, Mike had what might be considered a dream life to those on the impoverished and politically turbulent streets of Cairo where he was born. The family wasn't rich, quite the contrary, but they were happy and making it on their own.

Then things took a turn and what happened next is a reminder that the lives of most of us are just one shaky domino away from collapsing in a chain reaction. Ms. Maher became ill, which forced the family business to close. With no income coming in, Mike had to navigate through the murky waters of public assistance and begin working 30 hours a week to help the family make ends meet – all while enrolled in honors and AP classes at MOHS, participating in an internship, and taking business courses at County College of Morris (CCM).

Those trials and tribulations, which most kids would keep deeply private, made Mike realize that his experiences gave him the power to help young people faced with similar challenges. The bravery to be so forthcoming about his circumstances is undoubtedly one of the reasons why he and the site have been garnering such attention.

With a feature article on the national news site "The Daily Beast," interest from the Ellen DeGeneres show, and school districts wanting to use Mike's e-book as a resource, Bend The Cycle has experienced an incredible amount of success and notoriety in its initial eight weeks of existence.

"I just want to give kids a chance," Mike said. "I want them to take their futures into their own hands and make a difference in their lives. Bend The Cycle can help them and show them how."

The future

No one can be sure what the future holds for Bend The Cycle. It's in the process of becoming a registered non-profit organization and recently distributed its first donations – \$200 to a school in Camden for STEM supplies.

Down the road, Mike and Abdul Saeed, a member of MOHS' Class of 2015 who serves as the organization's manager of social media, would like to see the website serve as a forum where young people can share experiences about all facets of life.

The message of education as a key to bending the cycle of poverty, however, will remain the cornerstone. The fact that the message is trumpeted by an immigrant and his right hand man who spent his middle years in Pakistan, however, should not be lost on anyone.

"In Pakistan, I saw kids begging on the side of the road and digging through garbage to find something to eat," Abdul said, who is studying business at CCM. "These kids would give anything for one day in the educational system we go through for 12 years. We are that privileged. We just take education for granted. I can't see people giving away the gift that they've been given. Education is the key to it all and we have to get that message across."

Danielle Kulawiak and Susan Steinhardt, MOHS language arts teachers known for their caring and professionalism, serve on Bend The Cycle's board of directors.

Mike Tanious and Abdul Saeed



Around the world through the arts

THE SIGNPOST at the entrance directed visitors to France, Germany, China, Japan, and more. That was the first indication that the art show and third grade recorder concert at Chester M. Stephens Elementary School was something special.

This year, the annual event featured a multicultural theme and took visitors around the world through art and music. Among the artworks were painted elephants from India done by first-graders, Japanese landscape scrolls by second-graders, African masks by fifth-graders, German cuckoo clocks by fourth-graders, and Polynesian tapa cloths by third-graders.

“Our school is made up of students from so many countries,” said art teacher Denise

Palmisano. “Learning the significance of art and music throughout the world teaches appreciation of other cultures, people, and ways of life. That’s so important in our 21st Century global society.”

“**Learning the significance of art and music throughout the world teaches appreciation of other cultures, people, and ways of life. That’s so important in our 21st Century global society.**”

Denise Palmisano
art teacher

The third grade recorder concert featured several international selections including a version of the British “Greensleeves” and a Scottish tune named “Scotland The Brave.” Third-graders introduced the songs and provided commentary, including a history of the recorder which reached its height of popularity during the Renaissance.

The concert ended with “It’s A Small World” and “Ode To Joy” by Beethoven – music that underscored the theme and spirit of the evening.



Catalina Mangone shows off her Japanese scroll

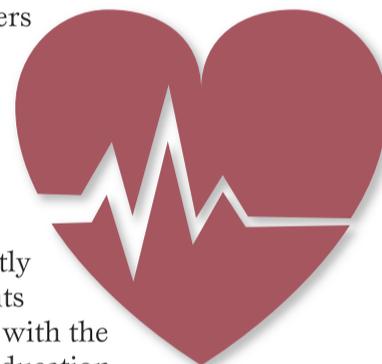


Josh Lischy and Lily Darnesto stand in front of the fourth grade’s map of New Jersey

Learning a key to stayin’ alive

The fifth-graders at Sandshore Elementary School can save your life, thanks to school nurse Suzanne Herbst.

Ms. Herbst recently taught the students hands-only CPR, with the help of physical education teachers Kit Thompson and Doug DeMarco – and The Bee Gees.



After describing the causes of a heart attack and the damage one can do, Ms. Herbst showed how music can save lives. She screened a fun informational video from the American Heart Association that provided an overview of hands-only CPR and taught that the right tempo of CPR chest compression should be 100 to 120 beats per minute – a perfect rhythmic match to Bee Gees’ hit “Stayin’ Alive.”

Then it was on to practice using CPR training mannequins purchased through a grant from the Sandshore Home and School Partnership. The fifth-graders learned the proper kneeling stance, correct hand placement, and the right amount of force for effective chest compression.

“After a cardio-pulmonary event, the sooner you start CPR the higher the survival rate,” said Ms. Herbst. “When it happens, most bystanders don’t know what to do or are afraid they may hurt someone. Kids are fearless. If we give them the tools, they could potentially save a life.”

‘G is for Garden State’

WORKING with Doris Ettlinger, a New Jersey resident and illustrator, fourth-graders at Tinc Road Elementary School recently created a mural of the State of New Jersey. The mural is a six-foot-tall map labeled with the names of the counties and illustrated with famous landmarks and important geographical features. Interesting elements include horse farms, zinc mines, the state capitol building, and the USS New Jersey battleship. Students created the individual pieces, including self-portraits, and Ms. Ettlinger combined them all into the mural.

Ms. Ettlinger has produced numerous award-winning children’s books, including “G is for Garden State” which the students read

before creating their artwork. She’s been visiting Tinc Road for the past eight or nine years, discussing her work as an artist and helping fourth-graders create New Jersey-themed murals.

“When the kids look at the final project, they say look at all that’s here, look at the state’s diversity in recreation and geography,” said Joy Spevak, fourth grade teacher.

Creating the mural helps reinforce New Jersey history and geography – a major social studies topic for all state fourth-graders. It’s also the perfect tie-in and segue to an upcoming districtwide fourth grade research project that combines language arts, social studies, and technology.

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