

# Education Update

May 2017

## Renovations and improvements

*School budget includes money for building upgrades, equipment, and new courses*

**T**HE Mount Olive Board of Education recently finalized the budget for the 2017-18 school year. Money has been allocated for new equipment and new courses, and money from the district's fund balance has been earmarked for several facilities improvement projects. The spending plan will add just \$37 in taxes to the average home (assessed at \$316,800). Upcoming initiatives include:

- renovation of the Mountain View Elementary School **library** (HVAC) unit above the library at Mountain View
- renovation to the second and third floor classrooms of the tower section of Mount Olive High School, including new **floors, ceilings, and lighting**
- replacement of an original **heating/ventilation/air conditioning**
- replacement **boilers** at Mount Olive Middle School and Tinc Road Elementary School
- purchase of four new **buses**
- conversion of the wood shop at MOMS into a **lab and makerspace** for classes in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math), including new robotics equipment, computers, and virtual reality cameras and technology
- new **loudspeaker systems** in several classrooms district-wide to support students with special needs
- upgrades to the audio board in the recording lab at MOHS, and additional sections of **audio engineering classes** to meet high student interest

## MOHS field dedicated to beloved softball coach



George Ottavinia stands in front of the sign dedicating the MOHS softball field in his honor

In a surprise ceremony attended by two dozen of his former players, the softball field at Mount Olive High School was dedicated to George Ottavinia, the beloved retired coach and teacher. Mr. Ottavinia coached softball for 17 years, leading the team to several county, conference, and sectional championships. His total of 325 career wins is a MOHS record.

A Flanders resident, Mr. Ottavinia still serves as site manager, welcoming teams and coordinating with game officials.

“George is one of the wisest and friendliest men I have ever met,” said David Falleni, the district’s athletic director. “He has touched the lives of so many Mount Olive students and continues to do so even today. You can see his impact just by the number of past players who showed up for the sign unveiling, many traveling from out of state to be there. He always treated his athletes with respect and told them straight-up what they needed to hear.”

Mr. Ottavinia taught social studies in the district for 18 years before retiring in 1998; he retired from coaching in 2005.

Bill Romano, current softball coach and a member of the MOHS security staff, helped champion the renaming of the field in his predecessor’s honor.

- at MOHS, **new electives** in language arts, a **new engineering course**, and a new Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (**JROTC**) program
- new **elementary science kits** for hands-on labs and STEAM exploration
- 100 new **Chromebooks** for early elementary students
- new auxiliary gym at MOHS and covered **bleachers** for the football field
- **modernization** of the main office area at Sandshore Elementary School
- **repavement** of parking lots and bus loops at all schools

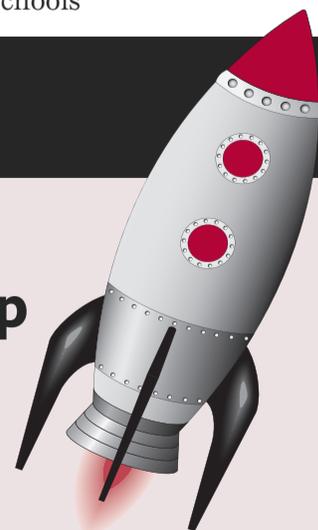
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## LAST CHANCE:

### Registration for STEAM summer camp ends on June 1

For more info and to register go to:  
[www.mtoliveboe.org/summercamp](http://www.mtoliveboe.org/summercamp)





Fourth-grader Matteo Eagleson shops at the Tinc Road spring book fair

## Fair encourages reading

**M**OANA, the Polynesian princess, might have been most popular this year but Captain Underpants and Wimpy Kid were close behind.

At Tinc Road Elementary School's spring book fair, a wide assortment of fiction and non-fiction books was available for every grade level and interest. The fair, which was held in the library over an entire week, had a discounted offer of two books for the price of one and the kids took full advantage of the great value.

Also popular this year were books about

Minecraft, Shopkins, and Dogman (the part canine and part human crime fighter). "Goosebumps," "Harry Potter," "Dork Diaries," and "Star Wars" titles were favorites too, along with non-fiction books about Guinness World Records, dinosaurs, U.S. presidents, and gems and minerals.

The Tinc Road Parent Teacher Organization sponsored the semiannual book fair with the goal of putting affordable, quality reading material into the hands of students. Parent Tara Randazzo worked with Scholastic Books and coordinated the event.



Tyniasha Suku, a fifth-grader at Mountain View, does the Chicken Dance as part of a school-wide exercise session

## Inspiring kids to exercise

**T**HE entire student body of Mountain View Elementary School danced one afternoon in a giant exercise session. The event was part of Project ACES (All Children Exercising Simultaneously), the signature program of the Youth Fitness Coalition.

Students from all over the country and even the world exercised in large groups on this day in what has been called "the world's largest exercise class." Held to highlight National Physical Fitness and Sports Month and National Physical Education Week, Project ACES was created 25 years ago as a

way to motivate kids to exercise.

Physical education teachers Sharon Jones and Mike Schwartz coordinated the school-wide activity. During phys ed classes, the teachers taught the students a number of fun dances including the Crazy Chicken, Cha Cha Slide, Cotton Eye Joe, and Tony Chestnut.

When the music started on ACES day, the kids were ready to go. Mr. Schwartz led the group, and student leaders at the front demonstrated the proper steps. The fun lasted for about 30 minutes and took place in the parking lot adjacent to the cafeteria.

## Student wins leadership award

Anthony Rocco, a Mount Olive Middle School eighth-grader, recently received a Morris County Superintendent's Middle School Leadership Award. Presented by the Morris County Association of



School Administrators, the award is given annually to one student from every middle school in the county who best represents the qualities of model citizenship and effective leadership.

Anthony is a member of the school's chapter of the National Jr. Honor Society, the art club, and the Technology Student Association. He also serves as captain for the school's soccer, basketball, and track teams.

The Morris County Superintendent's Middle School Leadership Award was presented to Anthony at a ceremonial dinner held at the Hanover Marriott in Whippany.

## Show choir performs at mall

Mountain View's show choir recently performed at Rockaway Mall as part of the Mall Project, an annual showcase of music, artwork, and class projects sponsored by the Morris County Council of Education Associations.

The show choir performed on the mall's lower level in front of Macy's. The group sang a variety of songs including tunes from popular animated movies such as "Can't Stop The Feeling" ("Trolls"), "Happy" ("Despicable Me 2"), and "Try Everything" ("Zootopia").

## Musician plays in area jazz band

Lucas Harvey, an eighth-grader at Mount Olive Middle School, recently performed as part of the North Jersey Junior Region Jazz Band in the group's annual concert. The saxophonist was one of just 20 students in grades 7-9 chosen for the honor by the New Jersey Association for Jazz Education.

Lucas rehearsed with the band for more than 20 hours over four days for the performance, held at Nutley High School.

## Robotics teams compete in St. Louis

Mount Olive High School's two robotics teams recently competed in St. Louis at the international championship tournament of the FIRST Robotics Competition. The Beta team, composed of underclassmen, advanced and competed in the finals.

About 150 high school students participate on the two teams.

# Technology brings adventures and experts directly to the classroom

“They get to communicate with people who are incredibly passionate about their careers, who’ve devoted their entire lives to various fields. You can’t experience that with a textbook.”

Dani Marangon  
Teacher

FROM movie and film strip projectors to videotape players to multimedia websites, developing technology over the years has been used in the classroom to bring the sights and sounds of the world to students. Now portable video and video conferencing are raising those experiences to a powerful new level, and two teachers have embraced with open arms the opportunities that the technology avails.

Britt Henricksen and Dani Marangon have taken their fifth-grade class at Chester M. Stephens Elementary School around the globe right from the classroom SMART board. The students have been virtual travelers on a host of virtual field trips this year. From the comfort of their desks, and without the hassle and expense of actual travel, the students have visited California Carnivores an hour north of San Francisco to learn about carnivorous plants. They’ve been to Australia to hear a motivational speaker talk about perseverance and dedication. And they’ve been to the aircraft carrier, Intrepid, now the centerpiece of the Intrepid Sea, Air, & Space Museum located on the Hudson

River in Manhattan.

These live experiences allow the fifth-graders to interact with the presenters and tour guides in a personal way that really does simulate the feel of actually being on site. And they introduce students to careers they may not even know exist.

“It all goes back to keeping kids engaged and helping them find their passions,” said Ms. Marangon. “It’s a great feeling to see them get excited about learning new things. They get to communicate with people who are incredibly passionate about their careers, who’ve devoted their entire lives to various fields. You can’t experience that with a textbook.”

## Virtual Virginia

One of the most popular virtual trips was one of the most recent: a trip to the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. Students saw Civil War artifacts and learned important facts and interesting tidbits about the era. Luke Pineda was fascinated by one of the requirements of both the Union and Confederacy for military service.



“There’s a rule that says you have to have two teeth on the top and bottom to fight in the Civil War,” said Luke. “I never knew that before.”

Ms. Henricksen and Ms. Marangon also used the experience at the historical society to teach a lesson about the differences between primary and secondary informational sources.

While several of the virtual trips have been arranged independently by the teachers, many have been part of Field Trip Zoom and Microsoft’s Skype in the Classroom – programs that connect educators with experts and institutions around the world. Both websites offer online catalogs of upcoming virtual trips in a wide variety of subject areas.

Next month, the class will virtually visit the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

# Battling world hunger with math

HONORS math students at Mount Olive Middle School have fed someone in the Third World for more than a month – just by learning. The two classes, taught by Vanessa Ambrosi, competed against each other to see which could solve the most math problems on a website that donates rice to the U.N. World Food Programme for each correct answer.

In total, the seventh-graders solved more than 86,000 math problems on Freerice.com. That equates to a donation of 18,000 grams of rice (almost 40 pounds). Students worked on the website at home in their spare time.

“The competition motivated them to further their learning on their own,” said Ms. Ambrosi. “They chose to do it themselves, it wasn’t an assignment. Over just one weekend they earned more than 10,000 grams of rice.”

The winner of the competition was Ms. Ambrosi’s sixth period class which had the three students with the most problems solved. Katie Keegan led the way, solving almost 24,000 math problems. Emma Maggio took 2nd place with more than 19,600 correct

questions. Sienna Volpe was 3rd with about 5,100 math problems solved.

Freerice.com is a non-profit organization that is owned by and supports the U.N. World Food Programme. Advertisers on the site such as Walmart and Dodge provide the funding. (A different banner ad is shown for each correct response.)

Anyone can answer questions on Freerice.com and help combat hunger in the Third World. Besides math, categories of questions include grammar, vocabulary, world languages, world geography, capital cities, human anatomy, and chemical symbols.

Since its inception in 2007, Freerice.com



Emma Maggio, Katie Keegan, and Sienna Volpe completed the most math problems, helping two MOMS math classes donate rice to countries in need

has distributed more than 2 billion grams of rice (4.4 million pounds) to countries where chronic hunger exists. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Haiti, Myanmar, Nepal, and Uganda are some of the countries that have benefited.

# The benefits of student buddying

OLDER students and younger students are bonding, learning, and growing together through a buddy program between two classes at Chester M. Stephens Elementary School. Kathy Fiebel's fifth-graders and Kelly Biagiotti's first-graders are

buddies. Students from each class have been paired together and the older kids mentor the younger ones on various classroom writing assignments. The fifth-graders might provide help with brainstorming ideas, for example, or revising a paragraph, or putting together the elements of a friendly letter.

The classes meet once or twice a month for about 45 minutes per session and students keep the same buddies for the entire school year. Their time together gives the fifth-graders an opportunity to pass down their knowledge and experience, and gives the first-graders individualized help.

The younger students can pinpoint some very specific things they've worked on with their buddies. Zara Lopez learned how to use commas in a series. Brenna Hushion practiced her spelling. And Mark Nugent saw the importance of adding detail in his writing and became more familiar with using the laptops that the class frequently works on.

## More than just help in the classroom

The benefits, though, transcend academics. You can see it from the high-fives

and hugs the fifth-graders get when they pass their buddies in the hallway.

"It's the highlight of their month when they do it," said Mrs. Fiebel about her fifth-graders. "They love it. My kids try to be good role models when they're working with their buddies. They develop a personal connection with them and take their interactions very seriously because they feel responsible for helping them learn. They take a leadership role and try to show the first-graders that reading and writing can be exciting and engaging."

Tutoring a peer engenders self-confidence and helps reinforce a student's own knowledge and skills. When older students see younger ones grow and succeed because of the tutoring, it gives them a sense of personal fulfillment and pride.

"There was a time I was helping my buddy, Ava, and while I was assisting her, she did not need any help at all," said Dylan Malave. "She did what she needed to all by herself. When she did this amazing accomplishment, I knew I was doing something right because before she needed a lot of help with her punctuation and capital letters."

The program provides the first-graders



Kamalah Williams helps Nikah-Marie Holmes with a computer project

with a fun, positive experience with the "big kids" in the school who they know are looking out for them throughout the school day. It also helps develop their interpersonal skills and collaboration skills.

"The bond between the buddies is amazing to watch flourish during the year," said Ms. Biagiotti. "My students get so excited about every piece of knowledge the fifth-graders want to share with them. They're like little sponges, soaking up every last bit of information that they can from their older friends. They look at the fifth-graders as 'school experts' and they admire them so much."

This is the fifth year that the two educators have buddied up their students.



Leah Jones portrays activist Malala Yousafzai

## Watching history come alive

HISTORY came alive at Sandshore Elementary School when the fourth grade presented a living "wax" museum in the school cafeteria.

Students in costume appeared as famous contemporary and historical figures, informing museum visitors about their alter egos' contributions to the worlds of science, human rights, the environment, politics, entertainment, art, and literature. At the touch of a button in front of each display, a motionless young performer sprang to life and delivered a short informational speech.

While the speeches were brief, there was so much learning that went on behind the scenes. The event was the culmination of weeks of reading, research, and writing. Each fourth-grader

read a full-length biography about a famous figure that he or she was interested in, then created a timeline of important events in that person's life and a biographical summary, and then distilled the information down to a speech of two minutes or less.

"Children don't typically read biographies so this was an opportunity to introduce them to a genre they might not be very familiar with," said teacher Lorri Vaccaro. "We also tied it into our discussions on writing summaries."

Many students studied and portrayed famous figures that they personally admired. Among the luminaries chosen were Walt Disney, Albert Einstein, Florence Nightingale, John Glenn, Neil Armstrong, and Alexander Graham Bell.

Michael Cravotta - editor

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