Technology breaks through classroom walls

By Katie Miller,
Strategic Communications Intern, VARtek Services

Some people can call in sick and catch up on work when they feel better.

But a teacher’s work can’t really wait.

Earlier this year, ninth grade history teacher Michael Phillips was out of commission for awhile because of a surgery. But students didn’t stop coming to class, and parents still showed up for conferences. So Phillips found ways to use technology to be in two places at once.

Using the online app Paltoons, he recorded an animated version of himself giving an open house presentation, and the school played it for his students’ parents.

“I was able to share...everything we were supposed to have included,” he said.

Tools such as Google Classroom allowed him to post assignments and communicate with students, keeping the class schedule as normal as possible until his return.

Phillips has since recovered. But whether he’s in or out of the classroom, about 90 percent of his teaching involves technology.

“It’s basically full integration,” he says.

Phillips uses a variety of online tools to manage assignments, communicate with classes, and assess student comprehension.

New curriculum promotes good online citizenship

In both the workplace and the classroom, social media, email and cloud-based software are allowing for unprecedented levels of collaboration and communication. Those modes of communication, however, often done from behind a handheld device or computer monitor, are also promoting some pretty bad behavior, from bullying to plagiarism, against a backdrop of a steadily eroding privacy.

As classrooms at Montour increasingly utilize online components, library media specialist Pam DiIanni has been implementing a new curriculum to teach students how to make good online choices and preserve what she calls “a good digital footprint.” The curriculum, made available by Common Sense Media and facilitated by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, leads students through various exercises confronting common online situations with potentially bad outcomes. They learn the difference between plagiarism and innovation, as well as controversy and bullying, and how to protect their privacy.

“How a lot has been for seniors, it also applies to junior high students,” DiIanni says. “It helps them set up a good digital footprint, which is important when they apply to a school or for a job.”

According to high school principal Todd Price, the program is currently being utilized within a business education course. The school, however, is considering expanding the curriculum to make it part of the school’s freshman transition program.

DiIanni says that cyber bullying in particular applies to this age group, as students are starting to exercise more independence.

She says that’s also a good time to start teaching them what to and what not to share online, as the proliferation and archiving of information can have damaging consequences, even once it’s deleted.

One his favorites is Flubaroo, an add-on to Google’s spreadsheet program. It automates the process of grading his online tests and gives instant results, highlighting concepts the class is struggling with.

Technology also is improving extra curricular activities, such as the mock trial team. Participation on the team had dwindled in recent years, Phillips says - but membership is up to nearly 40 kids now because they can collaborate and communicate on Google Drive.

“We can all meet online,” he says. “Everyone can be a part of something even if you can only help out a little.”

Technology in the classroom is about more than convenience and instant results, though, Phillips says. He believes it is shifting the focus from memorization of facts to the process of learning how to research and synthesize information. Before technology was as accessible as it is now, “you had to have a knowledge bank in your head,” he says. “Now...you have to know how to find things.”

If there’s a downside to these tools, Phillips says, it’s that they have created the expectation that teachers are available 24/7, which obviously isn’t practical. Nevertheless, he appreciates how technology expands the classroom and his ability to interact with students.

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By Gina Tirone, Life Skills Paraprofessional

On Oct. 1, the high school Life Skills class hosted its ninth annual Fall Olympic Day for Life Skills students.

Under the direction of Tracy Blyzwick, high school Life Skills teacher, and Gina Tirone, Life Skills paraprofessional, students enjoyed a fun-filled day of track and field-style events. Olympians from Ambridge, Baldwin, Carlynton, Chartiers Valley, Elizabeth Forward, Moon, Sto-Rox, and West Allegheny high schools attended.

This year’s event attracted the largest attendance to date. Group and event peer leaders from Interact and National Honor Society, along with high school varsity athlete volunteers, partnered with the Olympians for a memorable day of events. Students participated in activities such as shot put, long jump, football pass and punt, and an obstacle course.

After an outdoor picnic-style lunch, the events portion of the day wrapped up with an Olympians versus volunteers tug-o-war, with Olympians finishing strong. The theme of the event was, “We are all winners.”

At the conclusion, each student was called by name, and ran through a volunteer gauntlet to receive their Olympic medal. The day was a huge success, as evidenced by smiles on all faces.

The Life Skills department thanks all the businesses and volunteers who so generously supported Fall Olympic Day 2014.
Classes utilize Google technology to facilitate interaction with the arts

Following the rollout of Google Chromebooks at the high school this school year, students have been utilizing the new laptops and Google software to facilitate and reflect on a range of subjects, including the arts.

Via an Allegheny Intermediate Unit program called Technology Enhanced Literary Learning, English students have been learning persuasive marketing tactics, while art students have been creating ePortfolios that both record and share their work via the Internet. By creating a venue where work can be shared and experienced, both programs facilitate greater collaboration and learning.

“It takes a lesson and makes students more accountable for learning,” says library media specialist Pam DiIanni about the TELL program.

Since the rollout, DiIanni has been working with English teacher Gina Ligouri to implement an online component for Ligouri’s honors English class, literacy in propaganda and persuasion. In the class, students create persuasive marketing campaigns for the very handheld digital devices they are using. They must research their products, evaluate the authenticity of sources and come up with an original message, with the intent of persuading a school district to buy the devices.

First, students studied various forms of propaganda. They then chose a strategy and collaborated on a message before creating a website via Google Sites. Students even used iPads to film commercials. Ligouri says the program challenged students to be creative while working collaboratively.

“They were incorporating research and discussion skills, while determining the most effective way to market their product using propaganda techniques, she says, “all while using the latest technology within Google.”

In drawing and painting teacher Kimberly Roehn’s art classes, students have been using the Google Portfolio application to construct ePortfolios of up to four years’ worth of work. As students progress through upper level art classes, they’ll be able to add to the portfolios and reflect.

Students create ePortfolios by taking pictures of their artwork and uploading them, along with information about their artwork, to individual ePortfolio profiles. In addition to a picture of their art, students add a title, date and art medium used. Roehn also has her students include positive and negative opinions about their work, to encourage a “critical eye” and thought development with their art.

Roehn says that ePortfolios are convenient, since students and teachers are already familiar with Google programs. Google Drive and Google Classroom are two of the many Google programs being used at the high school. The ePortfolio idea was initiated when Roehn contacted DiIanni.

“It’s an easy process,” says Roehn. “The hardest part was getting it all set up.”

Roehn says the department plans to further develop the ePortfolio idea, with the hopes that each ePortfolio will go live so students will be able to have more control over their portfolios when sharing in the future. The department also plans to have 3-D art classes, like ceramics, included on student profiles. Roehn believes the ePortfolios will help students transition to displaying their artwork after high school in a much less bulky way.

Jason Burik, assistant to the superintendent, says he can’t wait to see the students’ work over time. Burik also sees the benefits of the ePortfolios used in art classes and applauds the utilization of technology by teachers.

“Mrs. Roehn has done an outstanding job helping students create art ePortfolios,” Burik says. “The online tool allows students to capture achievements over time. It also provides opportunities to develop and demonstrate art and technology skills.”

High school awarded grant to upgrade engineering lab

Since 2005, when Montour High School began implementing engineering courses via Project Lead the Way, students have had the opportunity to get hands-on with sophisticated equipment that they could eventually utilize in future engineering careers. With that opportunity, though, has come the challenge of keeping up with industry standards in a nonprofit setting.

“Things are always changing,” says high school engineering teacher Nick Terpack. “On the education side, it can be tough to keep up with industry standards and replace equipment that, every three to four years, becomes obsolete.”

With that in mind, Terpack submitted a grant proposal earlier this year to the PLTW School Grant Competition, which awards money to schools that are implementing PLTW courses via Chevron. In November, Chevron announced the grant recipients. Among them was Montour, which will receive $15,000 to upgrade its engineering lab.

With the funds, Terpack says the school will purchase new digital electronics equipment and additional robotics kits, as well as replace its 3-D printer with one that uses polylactide plastic, as opposed to more expensive ABS. While additional robotics kits will allow for smaller groups and greater individual interaction, a new platform will allow students to prototype circuits and interface with a board via software.

Since 2005, Montour has implemented six courses in engineering, including introduction to engineering design, principles of engineering, civil engineering and architecture, digital electronics, engineering design and development, and a pilot program for a new biological engineering course. The PLTW engineering program at Montour is nationally certified.

“This year the school district has received over $27,000 in grant monies from private organizations to enhance our STEM programs,” says Dr. Chris Stone, director of curriculum and instruction. “Montour continues to be recognized as the leader in STEM centered-education in western Pennsylvania!”
Montour hosts fourth consecutive PLTW regional conference

For the fourth consecutive year, Montour High School hosted the Project Lead The Way Western Region Conference on Nov. 13. The school opened its doors to 125 educators from across western Pennsylvania to observe and take part in a variety of classroom demonstrations and activities in Montour’s PLTW engineering and biomedical sciences classrooms. Visitors were led through demonstrations largely by students, who gave educators a firsthand look at courses.

PLTW is a national nonprofit that designs curriculums in the science, technology, engineering and math fields. Since 2005, Montour has been implementing PLTW courses at the high school level. The school now offers six courses in engineering and four in its biomedical science program. Last year, Montour began offering PLTW courses to middle school students, and this school year is implementing elementary-level STEM lessons through PLTW to introduce students to engineering and robotics.

“The Montour High School STEM Academy, which includes both the PLTW engineering and PLTW biomedical science programs, has shown to be an exemplary program where students apply engineering, science, math, and technology to solve complex, open-ended problems in a real-world context,” says David Darak, PLTW director of school engagement in Pennsylvania. “Students focus on the process of defining and solving a problem, not on getting the ‘right’ answer. They learn how to apply STEM knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to make the world a better place through innovation.”

Darak says that holding the conference at the high school has several benefits, including allowing educators to attend the annual conference for free and gain an actual classroom experience.

“Allowing the attendees the opportunity to use the actual equipment and software that students are using in the program engages attendees with the curriculum and allows them to become an active participant rather than just a passive observer, which is the norm for many education conferences,” says Darak.

Among the teachers who facilitated by opening their classrooms to visitors were Nick Terpack, Jesse Langman, Megan Foxwell, Janet Soda and Philip Morrow.

“Once again this year we received extremely positive feedback from the conference participants,” high school principal Todd Price wrote in an email to teachers. “They were extremely impressed with our facility, our academic programs and our students. In addition, the participants all remarked about the excellent behavior of our students and how well our school runs. This feedback speaks specifically to the outstanding work that you are doing each and every day with your students and the quality of education that our students receive.”

Engineering students compete at Carnegie Science Center

On Dec. 12, Montour Association of Technology students participated in the Chain Reaction Contraption Competition at the Carnegie Science Center. The MAT team faced off against 34 other schools with a Rube Goldberg device they spent months constructing.

A Rube Goldberg device utilizes multiple simple machines in a complex chain reaction to complete a task.

“The easiest way to think of it is…do you remember that game Mouse Trap?”, says Jesse Langman, high school engineering teacher and MAT team sponsor.

Participating teams were tasked with moving an object, with points awarded for creativity, complexity and ingenuity. MAT chose the theme of “Mario Kart” for their contraption, which they named Mario 500. A marble set off a chain reaction through four different layers in their machine, which consisted of around two dozen steps. Themes throughout the layers were consistent with those from the popular racing video game, in which characters from the Super Mario Brothers games square off in a race.

“Each level had a different theme, like Bowser’s castle, gold mine, rainbow road,” says Langman. “We got really good feedback from the judges and competitors. The judges liked the complexity. The competitors liked the Mario theme.”

In the end, a pulley system hoisted a trophy, another theme from the video game, thereby completing the task for the competition.

Langman says that, despite the positive reaction, the team placed out of the top three, most likely because on their first attempt the machine failed to work. He says it did however work flawlessly on successive tries.
Parody and satire liven up standardized test preparation

This spring, tenth grade English students will participate in the Keystone Literature Exam, and in order to prepare them, high school teachers Gina Ligouri and Rhonda Marasco have taken a unique approach.

Over the past month, they’ve initiated a parody they call “ELA Fitness” to breathe some excitement into preparation for the standardized, statewide tests. A play on ELA, or English Language Arts - a component of the Common Core Standards - and the name of a popular gym, the program requires students to go through “circuit training” while practicing the use of literary terms and devices. The two teachers set up intellectual fitness stations, including “differentiated digs,” “allegorical ab crunches” and “bias burpees.”

“The students are ‘training their brains’ through these intense mental workouts just as one would during circuit training at a local gym,” says Ligouri and Marasco. “This play on words motivates the students to work collaboratively during class as they work through each ‘circuit’ or station.”

During the exams, students can be tested on any one of over 100 Keystone-eligible content words that they have to apply and use in discussion and analysis of literature.

As the school year approached Christmas, Ligouri and Marasco also had students singing “12 Days of Keystones,” which involved singing literary terms to the tune of “The 12 Days of Christmas.” The activity was paired with short, daily writing assignments evoking fun and collaboration within the classroom.

“Using creative literary forms such as parody and satire is an effective tool for classroom instruction,” says Ligouri and Marasco. “The nature of these ideas challenges students to utilize higher order thinking skills. These activities guide students into the highest forms of skills and knowledge, such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating.”
Students participate in pilot program at Heinz History Center

Gifted students in grades three through eight participated in a STEM pilot program entitled “Systems Thinking” on Dec. 10 at the Heinz History Center. The pilot program couples thematic tours with hands-on STEM activities that encourage students to feel inventive while deepening their interest in the history and future of innovation.

Students were given a guided tour of an exhibition, Pittsburgh: A Tradition of Innovation, and had to evaluate innovations that progressed the train industry. After the tour, students had the opportunity to use Cubelets to explore robotics and complex systems by examining relationships and connectedness when robotic components are rearranged.

Red Ribbon Week at David E. Williams Middle School

By Student Writer Josh Knapp

Red Ribbon Week is an annual event at David E. Williams Middle School that is sponsored by the Team Leadership Committee - or TLC - under the supervision of DEW’s counseling department, and is intended to encourage kids to live a drug-free lifestyle.

This year, Red Ribbon Week was held Oct. 27 through Oct. 31. Each day, students wore an article of clothing that accompanied the theme for that day. To kick off the week on Monday, students wore red to show their support for a drug-free lifestyle. Students received a red pencil and red sticker.

On Tuesday, students wore tie-dye clothing to “Say Peace Out to Drugs” and received a tie-dye wristband and sticker. On Wednesday, students “Teamed up Against Drugs” by wearing their favorite team jerseys, and received a “Team up Against Drugs” sticker for that day. On Thursday, which was also picture day, students wore bright colors to show that they are “Too Bright for Drugs,” and received a brightly colored sticker. On Friday, students wore orange, not only because it was Halloween, but because they were saying “Boo to Drugs.”

Throughout the week, students and staff were able to sign pledges to live drug free, and they received a red bracelet to show their support. Red Ribbon Week was a great success!
By Student Writer: Alex Mannino

Student Council at David E. Williams Middle School is one of the many student organizations that makes the school thrive. Exciting school activities, such as pep assemblies and Olympic Day, are run by student council, which is organized by eighth grade teachers Amy DiClemente and Angela Fazio. This year’s president is Suong Tran, and the vice president is Noah Kendall. The treasurer is Isabella Szurlej and the secretary is Caroline Dischner.

Student council members are eighth graders at DEW, and were either selectively chosen by their previous seventh grade teachers or required to write and present a speech to classmates. Fifty students were chosen based on the following characteristics: leadership skills, idea creativity, communication abilities and academic performance.

Benefits of participating

Student council helps to build character, leadership skills, decision-making, organization skills and responsibility. Student council members have many responsibilities. Their first responsibility is to either run a select committee or be a part of one. Each committee has a special job that benefits the school. These committees include Pep Assembly, Olympic Day, Fundraising, School Store, Birthday Wishes, Hall Decorating, Public Relations, Technology, Talent Show and Eighth Grade Dinner Dance. These committees help Student Council function efficiently.

The Pep Assembly Committee organizes special assemblies to promote school spirit. This gives DEW a chance to get together and have a great time as one huge school. In years past, pep assemblies have gotten students involved in dance competitions and games.

The Olympic Day Committee coordinates Olympic Day at the end of the year for fifth through seventh grade students. It is a great way to celebrate the end of the school year. This committee organizes different games for younger students.

The Fundraising Committee develops ideas to earn extra funds for the school. They come up with new ways to support DEW Middle School, including obtaining extra supplies and more to benefit the school.

The school store lets students buy school supplies, and is run by students who volunteer their time to work at the store. It is also another fundraising activity.

The Birthday Wish Committee is a part of the school store. Students can buy birthday wishes for their friends, and the birthday wish committee goes around the school singing and decorating that student’s locker for the day.

The hall decorators’ job is to decorate the school with posters and more to let the school know about upcoming events. It also makes the school look festive.

Public Relations Committee lets people know about upcoming events, and it is their committee’s job to broadcast student council by writing articles, going over the loudspeaker, taking pictures, and more.

The Technology Committee is in charge of improving the use of technology and learning new ways to use new technology.

The Talent Show Committee is responsible for the talent show at the end of the school year. It is on the last day of school, and it gives students the opportunity to show off their talents.

The Eighth Grade Dinner Dance Committee is in charge of coordinating a dance at the end of the year. It gives eighth grade students one final opportunity to participate in a school event before leaving DEW for the high school. This dinner dance takes place the day after the last day of school on the Gateway Clipper. It is an exciting event for eighth graders, and it is the committee’s job to make it special.

Finally, all Student Council members are assigned a homeroom for which they are responsible. Student Council committees help make the school a fun, educational, and exciting place. It makes DEW thrive, and they work very hard to make everyone’s school year a pleasant experience.

Go to: www.montourschools.com For the latest District News
Fifth grade students at David E. Williams Middle School have been participating in the Fairchild Challenge throughout the 2014-2015 school year. The challenge is a standards-based environmental educational outreach program, which was created to get students interested in exploring environmental issues in the community.

Challenge 2 provided students with the opportunity to explore the theme of people and edible plants. Students had to create an original photo essay comprised of three photos, as well as type a 150-word essay explaining how their photo essay illustrated relationships between people and edible plants.

Additionally, students listed the scientific and common names, as well as the native regions for featured plants. DEW selected essays completed by McKenna Robinson and Dylan Sparkenbaugh to represent the school in county competition.

Dylan, whose photo essay shows potatoes going from store to table, also went on to win third place in the Phipps Fairchild Challenge. He will be recognized at an awards ceremony this spring and has been invited to appear on the WRCT radio show The Saturday Light Brigade.

DEW students crash the theater business

Fifth grade accelerated math students recently engaged in a movie marathon, but not the type that one might think. As a culminating activity to a long division unit, students were provided with an eight-page packet entitled “Movie Marathon,” in which they had to complete various long division problems related to operating a new movie theater.

All aspects of building a new theater were considered when students completed the packet. Students had to name and design the theater, determine the number of theaters and number of seats, restrooms, cost of movies, workers’ pay, concession prices, arcade prices, and even the number of toilets in each restroom!

Many problems involved division with two and three-digit divisors and up to six-digit dividends. As a culminating activity, students had the option to create a poster, pamphlet, or flyer. They could also make a commercial, create a model, or design a PowerPoint presentation.

All extension activities were designed to promote the new theater by providing statistics from the packet. Students shared these extension projects with their classmates and a bulletin board was designed to showcase many of these projects. Perhaps someday students will utilize the skills they learned from the project and build their very own theater!
Seventh Grade Soc Hop

By Student Writers Isabella Mannino and Eliza Zwik

On November 3, seventh grade students participated in an annual Soc Hop, an event that took place after each student had read the novel “The Outsiders” by S.E. Hinton, which is set in the 1950s. Students and teachers were permitted to dress as a member of one of the two rival groups in the book, the socs (SO-shs) or the greasers.

“The Outsiders” is about 14-year-old boy named Ponyboy Curtis. He believes he is an outsider because he cannot choose between right and wrong in society. Ponyboy and his two brothers, Darry and Sodapop, live by themselves because their parents died in an auto accident eight months prior. Ponyboy, along with his brothers and friends, are all “greasers,” one of the poorest classes in town. The greasers’ rivals are the socs, who are the “west-side rich kids.” After meeting the love of his life, Cherry Valance, Pony realizes that there is more to life than social classes; everyone is the same.

To help fundraise for the Soc Hop event, there was a weeklong “Penny War,” during which students brought in coins and dollar bills. There was a bucket for each homeroom, and the students could place coins and dollar bills in their bucket, or another homeroom’s bucket, to “bomb” them. At the end of one week, the top two homerooms won a party.

The day began with seventh grade students watching the film “The Outsiders.” The movie is based on the book and stars Tom Cruise, Patrick Swayze and Robert Lowe. Afterward, students went to the gymnasium to participate in their Soc Hop. Many activities had a 1950s theme.

Toward the beginning, students had a chance to get a picture taken with a friend at a table while drinking root beer floats, or behind a car picture. There were also hula-hoops, twisting and a car hop competition.

In the car hop competition, students, along with peers in their homerooms, had to carry a tray with a plate, silverware and a cup on it across the gym. Groups that dropped an item on the ground were eliminated.

For another activity, baby pictures of seventh graders were pinned to a posterboard, and students had to guess who they were.

At the end of the Soc Hop, students had a chance to enjoy their own root beer floats prepared by parent volunteers. Overall, students had a great experience being “in the 1950s” for a day. A special thanks goes out to reading teacher Kathleen Smith for coordinating the event.

Winners of each event were as follows: hula-hoop (Mara D’Amore and Justin LaBrie); twisting (Isabella Mannino and Nick Alexander); car hop (Laura Milanovich’s homeroom, Sarah Malinsky, Danny Pintar, Adrianna Jurgen, Nicholas Reconnu); penny war (first place, Milanovich’s homeroom; second place, Diane Panucci’s homeroom); best dressed greasers and socs (greasers, Chase Bernotas and Mackenzie Simcox); socs, Allison Vickers and Reno DiCesare; baby game (Arina Dillinger and Diamoni Boyd).
Spartan Athletics News

**Girls basketball team plays in Cleveland Cavaliers arena**

A lot of high school and college basketball players dream of one day playing on the court of an NBA or WNBA team. On Nov. 29, members of the girls basketball team got to do just that when they took on Carlynton in a pre-season scrimmage at Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland. The court is home to the Cleveland Cavaliers NBA team.

The game, which was initially to be played at Montour, moved to Cleveland thanks to two Montour graduates. Chris Schons, who works in ticket sales for the Cavaliers, mentioned the idea to Nate Milsom, who is currently the athletic director at Carlynton School District. After graduating from Montour, both attended Robert Morris University, where they were roommates. Via the Court of Dreams program, high school teams are invited in to play on the court, provided they can sell 200 tickets, which are also good for an evening Cavaliers game.

“We had no problem selling the tickets,” says Milsom. “It was a great experience for the girls to get to play on the big court.”

Montour girls basketball head coach, Jim Trovato, who is in his first year with the team, says the trip ended up being a good bonding experience, and gave them a chance to see where they needed to improve after only two weeks of working together as a team.

“Playing a team like Carlynton gave us a good gauge of where we stood and what we need to work on,” he says.

Among those this year’s team can count as players are 10 members off the recent WPIAL-winning soccer team, along with a number of players from the section-winning volleyball team.

Trovato says he hopes that success carries over onto the court.

“Winning breeds winning,” he says.

Though the team didn’t get to meet any Cleveland Cavaliers players directly, Kevin Love and some others from the team did come out to warm up as the high school teams were finishing their scrimmage, Trovato says.

“I think they were surprised by just how big they are,” he says.

Recently, the team visited a more local venue for a good cause. On December 21, the team visited the Masonic Village in Sewickley to bring some holiday spirit to senior citizens.

“At the beginning of the season we talked about how we wanted to give back to the community,” says Trovato.

Prior to coming to Montour, Trovato was an assistant at Riverside and Quaker Valley.

“Our kids are great kids,” he says. “The parents and students have all been very supportive.”

**Krull signs with Canisius**

On Nov. 20, Billy Krull signed with a NCAA Division I baseball National Letter of Intent and received athletic and academic scholarships to Canisius College, where he will play baseball. Canisius is noted for their sound principals of quality and integrity in academics and excellence in athletics.

Throughout school, Krull maintained a 4.5 GPA in honors classes and will be a four-year varsity letterman in baseball after this spring season. He also plays summer travel baseball for Creekside Fitness in the Youngstown league.

For the signing, Krull was joined by his parents, Bill and Tammie of Robinson Township, grandparents, William and Brenda Temple, sister, Tiffany Powers, nephew, Nevin, Principal Todd Price, and Coaches Glenn and Dale Vietmeier, along with his varsity teammates.

Krull is a catcher for the Spartans and looks forward to being a Canisius Golden Griffin in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference.