



A Message from the SUPERINTENDENT

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AT A GLANCE

District Vision Story Comes to Life

We Welcome Your Feedback –
AdvancED Parent Survey Available

School Improvement Process
Cultivates Connections Across District

Early Childhood Programs Achieve
NAEYC Accreditation

Stopgap Michigan Student Assessment
System in Place for Spring 2015

Winter Has Arrived!

NEF Thanks for Giving Campaign Issues
Matching Gift Challenge

Points of Pride from Across the District

Coffee and Conversation with the
Superintendent

IMPORTANT DATES

Upcoming Board of Education Meetings

Tuesday, December 9, 2014
7:30 p.m.
Thornton Creek Elementary School

Tuesday, January 13, 2015
7:30 p.m.
Hillside Middle School (Forum)

Tuesday, January 27, 2015
7:30 p.m.
Winchester Elementary School

Winter Break Begins
Friday, December 19, 2014
(End of the Day)

Classes Resume
Monday, January 5, 2015

Coffee with the Superintendent
Monday, February 2, 2015
6:30-8 p.m.
Board of Education Office
501 West Main Street, Northville

DEAR NORTHVILLE SCHOOL FAMILIES, STAFF AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The Thanksgiving holiday last week offered a great opportunity to reflect on all that we at Northville Public Schools have to be grateful for, including our innovative and compassionate teachers and staff who open *A World of Possibilities* for all our students; our incredible school families and community members who value the education of our young people in both their words and actions; and, most importantly, our more than 7,000 students who come to school each day ready to learn and share of

themselves. Their voices are an integral part of the learning process, and of our ongoing growth and success as a community.

As we head into the holiday season, and prepare for the upcoming new year, I would like to take this opportunity to share updates in a number of areas and fill you in on some of the great things happening in our classrooms.

DISTRICT VISION STORY COMES TO LIFE

If you have visited our district website (www.northvilleschools.org) lately, you probably noticed a significant change on our home page. Front and center is a large tree with a world globe entwined in its branches (right). This tree symbolizes the exciting and groundbreaking work we have been engaged in across the district over this past year to redefine our vision for what the school district will need to look like five to 10 years down the road in order to maximize the success of our students in the 21st century world.

As you click on this new area of our website you will find the story of how Northville Public Schools is preparing for 2015 and beyond by advancing our strong *Tradition of Excellence* and forging a path forward that will open *A World of Possibilities* for our students as they navigate an increasingly interconnected and digitally-rich world. It is the story of:

- The origins of Northville Public Schools that can be traced back 145 years
- The initiatives currently underway across the district that are inspiring new approaches to learning
- The rapidly changing world our students live in today and how this is shaping the way our learners and schools interact
- Northville Public Schools' focus on crafting a vision that invigorates the culture of our district and deepens our work



- How Northville Public Schools is creating an overarching vision that supports our mission, drives school improvement efforts, and includes a detailed three- to five-year roadmap with specific action items that support progress toward our vision

In addition, you will find our **Key Focus Areas and Strategic Goals**, which we will use to measure our progress in living this new vision as a school community – teachers, staff, administrators, students, families and community members. I encourage each of you to review this new area of our website devoted to our vision work at <http://www.northvilleschools.org/node/6467>, and to check back often as this effort evolves over the coming months. I also invite you to join us on our journey as we continue to advance our *Tradition of Excellence* and open *A World of Possibilities* for each of our students



WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK – ADVANCED PARENT SURVEY NOW AVAILABLE

Northville Public Schools is accredited district-wide by AdvancED, which is the largest non-profit, non-partisan accreditation agency in the world, accrediting more than 32,000 schools representing more than 20 million students worldwide. Northville High School was recently recognized for 75 years of continuous accreditation by AdvancED, which was created through a merger of North Central Accreditation (NCA), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and expanded with the addition of the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC).

In April 2015, Northville Public Schools will host an external review by a Quality Assurance Review Team from the AdvancED Accreditation Commission. The district last went through the AdvancED accreditation process in December 2009.

Northville Public Schools and all of its schools are engaged in an ongoing continuous improvement process, of which all stakeholders (students, parents, and staff) are a part. Through our improvement process, and in preparation for our upcoming AdvancED external review in April, we are offering an opportunity for parents, students and staff members to participate in an AdvancED stakeholder survey. These surveys are a means to involve all our stakeholders in a two-way communication. We will review the results in order to gain a deeper understanding of areas of strength and effectiveness, as well as those areas that possibly need improvement. The surveys have been developed by AdvancED and are centered on the research-based

AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems. We are not able to add specific questions, nor are we able to edit any of the survey content. For more information about the AdvancED surveys, including answers to frequently asked questions, go to <http://www.northvilleschools.org/accreditation>.

Parents of elementary school students can complete the survey online at: <http://www.advanc-ed.org/survey/public/1866352>

Parents of middle school and/or high school students can complete the survey online at: <http://www.advanc-ed.org/survey/public/1520389>

Parents of Cooke School special education center program students can complete the survey online at: <http://www.advanc-ed.org/survey/public/1287111>

The surveys will remain open through December 19, 2014. Your responses are anonymous. If you have children who attend more than one school, please complete a separate survey for each school. Students will also have the opportunity to complete a similar survey during the week of December 15, 2014. AdvancED has separate student surveys for students in grade K-2; 3rd-5th grade; and 6th-12th grade. Your cooperation and support in completing the surveys is greatly appreciated. We look forward to your feedback.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS CULTIVATES CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Critical to our progress toward flexible, learner-centered classrooms and school communities that empower each learner to maximize their potential for success is the opportunity to build on strengths and grapple with challenges – both individually and collectively. Annually, each of the district's school improvement teams (comprised of students, teachers, parents, and educators) come together with our District School Improvement Team over two days in November and December to present their school improvement plans, celebrate successes, struggle with challenges and share ideas.

Once again, as I took part in these daylong gatherings on November 19 and December 2, 2014, I was struck by how this powerful process of bringing all of our school improvement teams together serves as a catalyst for improvement efforts across the district. As early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school and special education center program teams share their successes and challenges, we continue to learn with and from one another in very significant ways. The opportunity to see the progression from early childhood through graduation -- whether it be from Northville High

School or the Cooke center program -- is powerful, as are the common themes that emerge across programs. Of particular note is the growing voice of our students in their classroom and school communities and in the school improvement process itself. Students were involved in meaningful ways in every single school presentation -- whether in person, via video or Skype -- as they shared their perspectives, successes as well as challenges and helped to facilitate learning. The connectedness we share as a district continues to evolve, as does the alignment of individual learning goals with classroom, school, and district goals. Each spring, school improvement teams come together across the district to review and analyze data, evaluate progress toward school and district goals, and identify areas for continued

growth. This work is both challenging and compelling and truly highlights our journey toward *Advancing our Tradition of Excellence and Opening a World of Possibilities for all learners!*



EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS ACHIEVE NAEYC ACCREDITATION

I am pleased to report that all of our Early Childhood Education programs recently achieved another five-year accreditation term through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Each of our four Early Childhood locations was visited in September by NAEYC representatives. These site visits were independent assessments to determine if our Early Childhood Education program meets the standards set forth by NAEYC. During the site visits, data was collected through both observation and a review of the evidence Early Childhood staff compiled during the self-assessment process. All of the information collected was then sent to the NAEYC Academy for scoring. Achieving this prestigious national



accreditation affirms our ongoing goal of providing an Early Childhood Education program that is high in quality and developmentally appropriate for our district's youngest students. Our sincere

congratulations to Early Childhood Education and Extended Day Program Coordinator Eileen Freeman, Assistant Coordinator Joanne Sawicki and the entire Early Childhood team on this incredible achievement!



STOPGAP MICHIGAN STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IN PLACE FOR SPRING 2015

You may have heard that the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has developed a new student assessment system for the spring of 2015 called the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP). This will mark the first time all statewide assessments will be administered online.

The spring 2015 assessment – which replaces the 44-year-old Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test – is a one-year stopgap as MDE rebids its new long-term assessment system for spring 2016. M-STEP will include a summative assessment for third through eighth graders. The Michigan Merit Exam (MME) for 11th graders will continue to include the ACT college entrance exam, along with a work skills component and a summative component aligned with the Michigan content standards.

According to MDE, M-STEP meets all the requirements set forth by the Michigan Legislature, including that it is an online assessment with a paper-and-pencil option; aligned with state standards; expands writing assessments to additional grades; provides an increased number of constructed response questions to allow students to demonstrate higher-order skills; and has undergone a pilot test before statewide implementation.

Look for additional details regarding M-STEP and MME test information for Northville students in the coming months via LISTSERV and on the district website at www.northvilleschools.org as more information becomes available through the Michigan Department of Education.

WINTER HAS ARRIVED!

With last winter's record snow and cold still fresh in our minds and the first blast of winter for this year already here, I want to take this opportunity to remind our school families, students, staff and community members of our protocols for calling inclement weather days. First and foremost, the safety and wellbeing of our students, staff and families is paramount in any decision to close schools. When a "snow day" or "inclement weather day" is called, it is done as early as possible (before 5:30 a.m. and often earlier, including the night before in some cases). The decision is made after much deliberation among district officials who monitor road and building conditions throughout the night in consultation with other area school superintendents and with expert advice from a national meteorologist who can help predict a storm's path as much as 48 hours before it reaches our area. The weather conditions and issues taken into consideration in closing schools due to weather include:

- The amount of snowfall and its impact on road (including side roads and dirt roads) and parking lot conditions and the ability to safely transport students to school.
- The timing of a storm and the ability of local road crews and district personnel to clear roads and parking lots in time for the safe transport of students to school.
- Ice or freezing rain and its impact on road and parking lot conditions — as well as the potential for downed trees and power lines — and the ability to safely transport students to school.
- Dangerous temperatures or wind chills that carry a high risk for frostbite in a short period of time. To close school based on cold alone (rather than in conjunction with concerns about road conditions, bus issues or other safety considerations), the actual temperature combined with wind chill considerations are greater (colder) than -19 to -22 degrees below zero. This figure is based on the range of temperature/wind chill that carries a higher risk of frostbite at the 30 minute threshold (for exposed skin). For a detailed wind chill chart go to:
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/windchill/images/windchillchart3.pdf>.



- Building problems such as loss of heat, power or water service.

The quickest and easiest way to learn about school closings is via the district's LISTSERV e-mail service. School closings also are announced on the district's parent notification system (Edulink), which uses the main contact information within MI-STAR to call parents with snow day notifications, student attendance issues, building updates and other important information. Details regarding the Edulink call-out system and the options available for parents can be found at:
<http://www.northvilleschools.org/node/5845>.

School closing announcements also are available on the district website home page at www.northvilleschools.org and the following television and radio stations – WJBK-TV (FOX 2), WDIV-TV (Local 4), WXYZ-TV (Channel 7), WWJ-TV (CBS Detroit), WKBD-TV (CW 50), WWJ Newsradio 950 and News/Talk WJR-AM 760.

Although it seldom occurs, it also may be necessary to close school early due to weather. In the event of an early closure, every effort is made to release elementary students no earlier than 3:15 p.m. (normal dismissal is 3:45 p.m.). This may mean that high school and middle school students are released earlier than their normal dismissal times in order to keep the buses running on time for elementary students. Again, notification regarding an early school closure is made as soon as possible by LISTSERV, Edulink, the district website and local TV and radio stations. I hope you will find this information helpful as we prepare to traverse another Michigan winter and all that it may bring. Stay safe and warm.



NEF THANKS FOR GIVING CAMPAIGN ISSUES MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE

The fourth annual Northville Educational Foundation (NEF) Thanks for Giving Campaign is underway. And in a new twist this year, two generous anonymous donors are matching all gifts up to \$50,000. Donations must be made by January 31, 2015 in order to qualify for the matching funds.

Each year, the Foundation's generous donors help support initiatives across the district that would not otherwise be possible, including *The Leader in Me* in our six elementary schools; International Baccalaureate in our middle and high

schools; Science, Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) initiatives across the district; innovative teacher grants; needed facility improvements; and student and athletic assistance grants. This year alone, Northville Educational Foundation has allocated \$76,800 to the district. Our heartfelt thanks goes out to the Foundation and each and every donor. For more information about the Foundation or its *Thanks for Giving* Campaign visit www.NorthvilleEdFoundation.org.

POINTS OF PRIDE FROM ACROSS THE DISTRICT



Every day in our classrooms, through the arts, on our fields of play and through extracurricular endeavors, our students and teachers from across Northville Public Schools give us much to celebrate. Here are just a few recent highlights.



- Northville Public Schools was recently named to the 5th Annual College Board AP District Honor Roll. This marks the third consecutive year Northville has been placed on the Honor Roll,



which recognizes efforts on the part of school districts to open AP (Advanced Placement) classroom doors to a significantly broader pool of students, while maintaining or improving a high percentage of students earning passing scores of 3 or higher on AP exams. It is a significant achievement to be recognized as one of the outstanding school districts on the AP District Honor Roll. We are proud of the success our students have experienced in the rigorous AP course work and we are gratified by the passion with which Northville High School educators and counselors have embraced the curriculum and worked to reach out to more students with this opportunity to experience college-level learning.

- Students and staff at our two middle schools celebrated their Spirit Weeks at the end of October with Civic Concern Drives that netted more than 7,000 food and household items for those in need in the community. Students and staff at Meads Mill Middle School also raised \$130 that was donated to the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute and students and staff at Hillside Middle School collected \$321 for U.S. troops serving in Qatar. In addition, Hillside extended its Civic Concern Drive into November after receiving feedback that more help was needed, collecting an additional 1,000 items. Spirit Week activities included a competition among grades at each school to see which could donate the most items for Civic Concern, along with dress up days, and the annual Hillside and Meads Mill football game. Kudos to all our middle school students and staff for supporting those in need in our community in such meaningful, and fun, ways.

- Work will begin soon on a library for the students and staff at the Cooke School special education center program, made possible through an anonymous direct donation to the Northville Educational Foundation. In addition to the traditional shelves for books, media center and circulation desk, the new library will feature a special cozy corner where students and staff will be able to relax and enjoy a good book. The library includes a large area rug and four extra-large bean bag chairs specially designed for individuals with disabilities. There also



will be a wooden tree in that corner and a nature inspired décor throughout the library that will give students and staff the feeling of being outside. Work on the new Cooke library should begin in December and be finished by the end of January.

- Silver Springs Elementary School recently received a grant for \$1,975 from The Home Depot Foundation for a nature area, outdoor classroom and community garden build. Team Depot will construct benches for learning, as well as picnic tables and a wooden walkway. They also will build garden planters and arbors. Congratulations to Silver Springs school community and Team Depot on this wonderful partnership that will offer new learning experiences for our students and teachers.





- The GRAMMY Foundation recently named **Northville High School** -- along with 120 schools nationwide and five schools in Michigan -- a **GRAMMY® Signature Schools semi-finalist for 2015**. This is the second consecutive year our NHS music program has received this honor. In addition, we are the only school from Michigan to repeat from last year. Created in 1998, the GRAMMY Signature Schools program recognizes top U.S. public high schools that are making an outstanding commitment to music education during an academic school year. In mid-March 2015, the GRAMMY Foundation will announce the finalists for the GRAMMY Signature Schools program. Congratulations to our incredibly talented vocal and instrumental music students and teachers on this outstanding recognition.
- I am very excited to share that two of our **Hillside Middle School seventh graders – Brian Ding and Justin Chang**, along with their teammate Eric Liu from Canton East Middle School – recently took the bronze medal in the elementary open division of the **World Robot Olympiad in Sochi, Russia**. In the competition, the

RoboCruisers E team proposed an experiment titled "An Automated Space Exploration System of Titan." The goal of the experiment is to explore the possibility of living on Jupiter's moon Titan by



designing an automated exploration system which includes a hovercraft (capable of maneuvering across different terrains like sand dunes and methane lakes), a communication system, a data processing system and a logistical support system. Fifty countries competed in the World Robot Olympiad, and this was the first year that the United States was included. To qualify for the international competition, the team took first place in the Open Senior category competition at the national finals, which took place in September at Lawrence Technological University. Way to go Brian and Justin! Also, a special thank you to the Northville Educational Foundation for its support of the RoboCruiser E team.

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT

Finally, I would like to personally invite Northville school parents, guardians and community members to my **next Superintendent Community Coffee on Monday, February 2, 2014, 6:30-8 p.m., at the Northville Public Schools Board of Education Office, 501 West Main Street, Northville.**

These regular coffees offer school families and community members the opportunity to ask questions, offer input and learn more about the school district in a small group setting. I also am always eager to hear from our school families and residents about those issues and concerns that are most important to them. The coffees have an informal format. Those attending are welcome to come and go any time during the specified timeframe.

Whether you stayed home, traveled just down the road or across the country, I hope you had a safe and joyful Thanksgiving weekend filled with fun, laughter and shared traditions and time spent with close family and good friends. As always, I thank you for your continued support of Northville Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Mary K. Gallagher

Mary K. Gallagher
Superintendent



WANTED!
Your Feedback on the
AdvancED Parent Survey!



To complete your student's school survey go to: <http://www.northvilleschools.org/accreditation>