



# Citizens For Education



Fall Issue

December 2009

**The objectives of Citizens for Education are to ensure a quality education for all students of the Council Rock School District, to better inform the Council Rock community of educational issues, and to increase the involvement of the community in the decision making processes affecting the quality of education in Council Rock.**

## Spotlight On Citizens For Education

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” - Margaret Mead*

US anthropologist (1901 - 1978)

### **The Mission**

Citizens For Education (CFE) is approaching its 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we would like to share our history, recall our accomplishments and acknowledge our supporters through the many years of our tenure in Council Rock. While our community and school district have experienced many changes through the years, Citizens For Education has stayed true to its mission: *“Citizens For Education is a non-profit, non-partisan community group whose objectives are to insure a quality education for all students of the Council Rock School District, to better inform the Council Rock community of educational issues, and to increase the involvement of the community in the decision making processes affecting the quality of education in Council Rock.”*

### **History**

Through issues that once seemed big and may now seem small and vice versa, the paramount goal of our grassroots education advocacy group has always been quality education and community involvement.

From the “inclusion video” to class sizes to the building of a second high school, Citizens has been a persistent, strong voice as educational delivery evolves and is deliber-

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Council Rock Math Specialists

Citizens for Education recently sat down with Joy McClendon, Director of Elementary Education/Curriculum Services, and Mrs. Charyl Hills, Math Specialist, to understand the role of the math specialist and the impact that resulted from reducing the number of math specialists from 7 to 6 in the Council Rock School District this year.

Math specialists perform a number of responsibilities, including those outlined below.

### **Responsibilities of Elementary School Math Specialists in CRSD**

- Provide math-related professional development for building/district staff
- Provide math-related consultations to staff as needed
- Administer eligibility testing for Math Enrichment
- Teach Math Enrichment, Grades 4-6
- Teach Math Remediation (Math Club), Grades 4-6
- Oversee math pilot programs, and assist in implementing further rollout
- Run Math Olympiad team(s) in each elementary school
- Implement special programs, such as Family Math Night

### **Supporting Classroom Teachers and Students**

Math specialists offer professional development and/or consultations to teachers and assist teachers by conducting math instruction to entire classrooms. This may occur when a particular concept is being taught, a new math

*(Continued on page 3)*

*(Spotlight on Citizens—Continued from page 1)*

ated. Below is just a snapshot of the causes Citizens For Education prides itself on tackling....

**Charter Schools** — When this was propelled through government agencies, Citizens for Education put forth a concerted campaign to thwart any Council Rock tax dollars from being siphoned away from our students and school district.

**Class Size** — As class sizes alarmingly grew, CFE continually brought this to the forefront resulting in a Class Size Committee being commissioned. Two of the committee's recommendations were implemented as District policy. Though mainly concentrating at that time with the elementary level, CFE continues to track class sizes and their educational appropriateness especially at the secondary level.

**Building of Council Rock High School South** — Despite the recommendation that a second high school be built in the mid 90's by both an independent demographer and community investigated Growth Committee, the changing climate of the school board ignored the overcrowding at the high school. By constant leafleting at events, attendance at public meetings, speaking out at School Board meetings and lobbying of elected officials, CFE persistently educated the community about this issue and in turn, the construction of CRHS South was approved and completed in 2002.

**Testing** — CFE was instrumental in the district's abandoning "TOLT" (Test of Logical Thinking) testing which was a "gatekeeper" test used as the sole criteria for placement of students in advanced 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> grade science courses.

**Elementary Music** — In 2001, the District appeared intent on moving elementary instrumental music group practices and chorus programs from the instructional day, to before/after school, or during recess. So that parents could be part of the decision process, CFE distributed 3,000 flyers at school concerts detailing Council Rock's music education and participation. This helped to keep the music program offerings as part of instruction during the school day.

**Middle Level Education** — CFE was a consistent and vocal part of the effort to bring Middle Level Curriculum to Council Rock, moving from a

Junior High curriculum to a team teaching approach. In addition, in 2002, when the Administration planned to change grade configurations and put grades 6-8 into the crowded middle schools, CFE lobbied hard against this plan. As a result, when the change came in September 2002, the Middle Schools began housing only students in grades 7 and 8, therefore better accommodating enrollment.

**Safety Advocacy** — A Safety sub-Committee was formed several years ago, as a response to the district's overdue implementation of the Safety Task Force recommendations of spring 2000. The committee reviewed documents, and interviewed administrators and township officials, ensuring that inspections were more timely and better practices implemented at all buildings. CFE continues to monitor that appropriate actions are taken throughout the district.

**Council Rock North Renovations**— When North's renovations were being considerably scaled back, or not complete enough to ensure the full scope of safety, security and operations as initially proposed, Citizens lobbied at Board meetings and distributed flyers numerous times to the public. This helped ensure needed improvements during the renovation.

**Counseling** — For many years, CFE has kept a strong focus on strengthening all areas of counseling. Many improvements have taken place, including the addition of counselors in the elementary schools. CFE remains committed to lobbying for a full-time, full-year College Placement Specialist to aide both students and the current counselors navigate the ever-changing admissions criteria so CR students are better poised to gain admissions into the competitive colleges for which they are qualified.

**Voter Registration** — In collaboration with the high school Political Science Clubs, CFE conducts voter registration drives every year at each high school. This service helps students who turn 18 during the school year easily register to vote and pick up absentee ballot request forms.

*(Continued on page 6)*



*(Math Specialists—Continued from page 1)*

curriculum is being piloted, or a new teacher is brought onboard. Math specialists also provide “push in” programs to upper grades and, when time allows, assist in the primary grades (1-3). In the course of a typical day, a math specialist may work with 120 children at one or two schools.

### **Math Enrichment**

Students with innate or divergent math ability can be recommended for Math Enrichment by teachers or parents at the end of third grade, or any subsequent elementary year. These students are then evaluated through a 2-tier test program. The first test is conducted at grade level. The second round is conducted 2-3 levels above grade level via the School & College Ability Test (SCAT). Students reaching preset criteria qualify for the Math Enrichment program. As participants, students are pulled out from their regular classroom math to meet as a smaller group with the math specialist two times per week for the entire school year. These students are also eligible to participate, along with other high-average math students, on Math Olympiad teams run by the math specialist.

### **Math Remediation**

Students in grades 4-6 who are struggling with a particular math concept, or whose PSSA results indicate that additional instruction is required are eligible for math remediation, also known as Math Club. (This includes students with PSSA math scores of Basic or Below Basic, or Proficient with teacher recommendation.) Students receive special assistance from the math specialist during lunch, recess, or before/after school. These students remain in the regular classroom for their math instruction, and can come and go to Math Club on an as-needed basis throughout the year. The emphasis in Math Club is to strengthen the student’s math skills through added practice and individualized or small-group instruction time with the math specialist.

### **New Math Curriculum Being Piloted**

This year a new math program, EnVision Math by Pearson, is being piloted in 22 classrooms throughout the district. The timing of the full

*(Continued on page 5)*

## CR Music Program: The Past, The Present and The Future

As part of last year’s budget cuts, the music teaching staff at each high school was reduced from 3 full time teachers to 2.5. To help explain the elimination of one full position at the high school level, the administration held a parent meeting on June 8, 2009, which included a PowerPoint presentation which detailed music enrollment, student-teacher ratios, and a teacher schedule for South for 2009-2010.

To gain a more in-depth understanding of these cuts, Citizens For Education compared the PowerPoint with other available district documents, which led to many questions. Instead of Citizen’s usual practice of directly interviewing a teacher or department chair for answers, Superintendent Mark Klein requested that we frame questions about music to him in writing. In just a week’s time he graciously gave us answers, in writing, and indicated whether the response came from his office or from Lee Hauslein, the district’s Music Curriculum Coordinator. The written information we received is incorporated throughout this article in quotes.

### **Understanding High School Music Courses**

Council Rock’s high schools offer students seven alternate day course options in Band, Choir, and Orchestra, where participation in after-school rehearsals and public performances are an integral and necessary requirement of the course. The music curriculum also includes nine other course offerings. Students can choose from courses offered five days a week, on alternate days, or for a semester. There are courses for students who have interests that range from playing guitar to musical theater to Advanced Placement in music theory. Because some of these academic courses do not always meet the district determined minimum enrollment, the administration regarded music education as a place to make budgetary cuts.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## From the President's Desk

Citizens For Education appreciates the support of all its members. As you can see from our many articles in this newsletter, we are an organization committed to informing the Council Rock community on issues affecting the quality of education, engaging the community in the educational process and advocating for quality education for all children in Council Rock.

Please check the mailing label for your current membership expiration date. If your membership has lapsed, please fill out and return the membership form on the back page to continue receiving our newsletters, and getting timely information on the many issues that impact our school district.

Thank you!

Joanne Kind Hinton  
President, Citizens For Education

*(CR Music Program—Continued from page 3)*

### **Implementing the Cuts**

To implement staff cutbacks, North's Choir Director, Ed McCall, now spends part of his day at Richboro Middle School. South's Band Director, Christie Milliken, spends part of her day at Goodnoe Elementary School. These cuts at North and South were part of what Mr. Klein referred to as, "A total of 1.5 staff positions (were) reduced for the 2009-10 school year" in music and "total savings salary/benefits is approximately \$120,000.00." To restore the cuts to the high school music program, the district would need to hire a teacher for the 2010-11 school year at a contractual starting salary of \$43,064 with a Bachelor's degree, or \$53,830 with a Master's degree. A benefits package would be added to the salary cost.

### **Music Course Enrollment Numbers**

The June 2009 presentation addressed music class enrollment. Citizens compared the enrollment data from the PowerPoint slides to separate class size data provided to us by the Administration. The chart on page 9 shows this comparison.

*(Continued on page 9)*

## An Overview of Reading, English and Language Arts

To get an understanding of Council Rock's "Reading, English and Language Arts" (RELA) department and to follow up on some previous Reading articles, Citizens met with the Director of Elementary Education/Curriculum Services, Joy McClendon and Elementary Program Coordinator, Patricia Erickson.

### **CR's RELA Coordinators**

Last year, the RELA department was realigned from one full time Curriculum Coordinator to two half-time positions. The position is divided between Peggy Walsh, who coordinates secondary level RELA issues and Pat Erickson, who does the same for the elementary level. Both have considerable experience in these areas. Peggy is a high school English teacher and former department chair. Pat, a Council Rock graduate, is a long time teacher at Sol Feinstone. Both continue to teach at their respective levels for one half of the school day. Citizens will sit down with Peggy Walsh for our spring newsletter. Our conversation with Joy McClendon and Pat Erickson, who both have educational reading certifications, focused on Elementary RELA especially Reading remediation.

### **Elementary RELA Committee**

Mrs. Erickson, who has extensive credentials in Reading, Reading Recovery and as an adjunct reading instructor at Holy Family University, oversees a Council Rock Elementary RELA committee that is made up of 35 teachers and the Literacy Specialists from all 10 elementary schools. The Committee meets the first Monday of every month after school. The committee members represent their schools in the decision making process for RELA curriculum changes and initiatives, monitor pilot projects, and are the conduit for RELA information and feedback between teachers and the district.

*(Continued on page 6)*

*(Math Specialists—Continued from page 3)*

rollout of this program has not yet been decided and is dependent on budgetary constraints. The district is hoping to phase it in at two or three grade levels. However, less than full implementation would mean some students who have been in pilot classrooms this year may switch back to the older math program next year. Reduction in math specialist staffing could hinder the amount of support needed for a comprehensive implementation of the new curriculum.

## History

Council Rock has included math specialists in the elementary schools for over 20 years. The highest number on staff was about 14 years ago, when there was one assigned full time to each of the elementary schools (9 at the time). Since then, the numbers have dwindled. This year, Council Rock reduced the number of math specialists from 7 to 6 at the 10 elementary schools. The chart below outlines how math specialist time has been cut. Per Joy McClendon, the allocation of math specialists to each school is determined by: the number of students being served, the size of groups within a grade level, the professional development goals of the school, and other factors.

### STAFFING ALLOCATIONS AND ENROLLMENTS FOR 2008-2009

<u>School</u>	<u>Math specialist staffing level</u>		<u>Diff.</u>	<u>Grade 4-6 population</u>		<u>Diff.</u>	<u># of students in Math enrichment</u>		<u>Diff</u>
	<u>08-09</u>	<u>09-10</u>		<u>08-09</u>	<u>09-10</u>		<u>08-09</u>	<u>09-10</u>	
Churchville	0.7	0.6	-0.1	295	306	+11	24	24	0
Goodnoe	0.8	0.7	-0.1	353	387	+34	45	42	-3
Hillcrest	0.6	0.5	-0.1	256	272	+16	26	28	+2
Holland	0.7	0.6	-0.1	249	232	-17	40	35	-5
MM Welch	0.7	0.6	-0.1	312	359	+47	42	35	-7
Newtown	0.8	0.7	-0.1	325	308	-17	56	53	-3
Richboro	0.7	0.7	0	220	227	7	36	40	+4
Rolling Hills	0.6	0.5	-0.1	198	194	-4	30	15	-15
S. Feinstone	1.0	0.7	-0.3	370	396	+26	66	67	+1
Wrightstown	0.4	0.4	0	182	178	-4	27	20	-7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>2760</b>	<b>2859</b>	<b>+99</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>-33</b>

## Need for Additional Math Specialists

Math specialists have the ability to pinpoint district and PSSA testing data down to a school's individual classroom. When that analysis shows that a grade level or individual classroom in their assigned school is having difficulty with a math concept, they provide support with professional development to the teacher and/or by giving instruction to the entire classroom. In the 2008-09 PSSA testing, the aggregate elementary scores in Advanced went down in 8 out of the 10 schools and the percentage of students scoring Below Basic went up in half the schools, as compared to the prior school year. **These testing results add empirical evidence to the need for more math support at each school rather than less.** The chart on page 7 details the differences,

*(Continued on page 7)*

*(Overview of Reading—Continued from page 4)*

Currently, the district is piloting a data driven “grammar in writing” program in ten first and sixth grade classrooms. Identical pre and post testing will be given to both students in, and not in, the pilot program, to help measure the program’s success. Thus far, the piloted text is getting rave reviews and the RELA committee is very hopeful that there will be enough funding to do implementation across the district in the upcoming budget.

### Reading Assessments

Council Rock uses a variety of assessment instruments through the elementary years. Some are administered on a regular basis and others used as needed during the school year to check specific skills.

At the beginning of each school year, elementary students, Kindergarten through sixth grade, are evaluated for decoding, comprehension, fluency and writing with an assessment developed by the Council Rock RELA committee in 2001 and revised in 2003 and 2009.

Beginning in first grade, all students are also tested using DIBELS (The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). DIBELS has been empirically validated to be a measure of student progress, as well as a predictor of later reading proficiency. It has been proven reliable in core components of reading such as phonological awareness, accuracy and fluency with connected text, vocabulary and comprehension. It identifies which students are extremely likely to struggle without intervention and what approach is needed to support their success.

Students in grades 3 through 6 are tested with a number of assessment instruments including “Scholastic Reading Inventory” (SRI). SRI is an on-line based comprehension assessment given at least 3 times per year.

### Response To Intervention

Council Rock uses the PA State Initiative “Response to Intervention” (Rtl) strategy to

*(Continued on page 8)*

*(Spotlight on Citizens—Continued from page 2)*

### Acknowledging Support

CFE realizes that success of these and future undertakings are a result of not just the due diligence of its board, but also its members, and like minded school directors and administrators who were willing, despite opposition, to advance a quality education cause. Without this support through the years, many of the above listed outcomes could have turned out very differently.

In today’s difficult economic climate when the Administration and the School Directors have to make tough decisions about the prioritization of expenditures, CFE not only thanks you for your past support but also asks that you help us to continue to be a strong advocate for quality education by reading and redistributing Citizen’s information, writing letters, and lobbying decision makers.

### Looking Toward the Future

You can depend on the CFE organization to communicate about concerns, new initiatives and useful information by publishing two newsletters a year which are sent to our membership and beyond all the way to the White House. At critical times CFE will communicate beyond our membership by distributing mass flyers with vital information at key locations. For expedited communication, we have conducted surveys or e-mailed timely information to those registered in our data base.

If you are not a member or your membership renewal is due (see expiration date on your newsletter label), and would like to support our mission, please fill out the form on the last page of this newsletter. If you would just like to receive any critical information emails, please contact us at [Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com](mailto:Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com).



Citizens  
for  
Education

...a voice for our children!

(Math Specialists—Continued from page 5)

by school, in PSSA results for 2007-2008 vs. 2008-2009 for grades 3-6. Cells that are bolded indicate areas where performance levels have dropped.

### **ELEMENTARY MATH PSSA SCORES FOR 2007-2008 and 2008-2009**

<b>Testing Year</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>% Advanced</b>	<b>% Proficient</b>	<b>% Basic</b>	<b>% Below Basic</b>
2007-2008	<b>Churchville</b>	57.7	28.4	8.6	5.3
2008-2009	<b>Churchville</b>	<b>49.1</b>	35.9	10.1	4.8
2007-2008	<b>Goodnoe</b>	63.2	27.5	6.8	2.4
2008-2009	<b>Goodnoe</b>	69.0	24.0	5.2	1.7
2007-2008	<b>Hillcrest</b>	64.6	28.5	5.1	1.8
2008-2009	<b>Hillcrest</b>	<b>61.0</b>	33.7	4.3	0.9
2007-2008	<b>Holland</b>	59.2	26.1	10.8	3.9
2008-2009	<b>Holland</b>	<b>51.5</b>	34.4	7.4	<b>6.7</b>
2007-2008	<b>MM Welch</b>	64.0	27.0	6.7	2.4
2008-2009	<b>MM Welch</b>	<b>59.8</b>	30.6	7.4	2.2
2007-2008	<b>Newtown</b>	68.9	23.5	3.2	4.3
2008-2009	<b>Newtown</b>	<b>64.5</b>	25.5	5.2	<b>4.8</b>
2007-2008	<b>Richboro</b>	58.5	27.5	9.6	4.5
2008-2009	<b>Richboro</b>	<b>52.9</b>	32.2	9.0	<b>5.9</b>
2007-2008	<b>Rolling Hills</b>	61.1	27.9	8.5	2.5
2008-2009	<b>Rolling Hills</b>	<b>54.4</b>	30.9	11.0	<b>3.7</b>
2007-2008	<b>S. Feinstone</b>	64.4	24.3	8.0	3.3
2008-2009	<b>S. Feinstone</b>	66.7	25.5	4.6	3.2
2007-2008	<b>Wrightstown</b>	69.2	27.2	2.7	0.9
2008-2009	<b>Wrightstown</b>	<b>67.7</b>	25.4	5.2	<b>1.7</b>

On days when the math specialists are split between two schools, the specialist is allotted 30-40 minutes for travel. **Adding math specialist(s) with a goal to reduce travel time will help take resources that are being spent on the road and instead give more time for teachers to be in front of students.** This year every math specialist spends a portion of his/her week (either 1 or 2 days) traveling.

A math specialist's "face time" at each school is important to foster communication among teachers and between math specialists and students. Under the current allocation, Holland and Maureen M. Welch are served by two different math specialists each, for only a day and a half of instruction.

(Continued on page 8)

*(Math Specialists—Continued from page 7)*

Math specialist Charyl Hills is splitting her time between Goodnoe and Maureen M. Welch this year. Based on her experience from when there was one math specialist per school, she feels that having a full time math specialist in every school is ideal because it eliminates the travel between schools and allows each math specialist to fully service and focus on the needs of a particular school.

### Planning for Next Year

It is the goal of Joy McClendon to restore this year's eliminated math specialist position as soon as budgetary considerations allow, hopefully in the 2010-11 school year. With the district in a restrictive budgetary environment, adding back additional math specialist position(s) will take parental advocacy, full administrative support, and School Board approval. **Citizens for Education believes that restoring the math specialist staff back to at least the 2008-09 level of 7 full-time individuals will be a good first step and is in the best interest of CRSD students.**

*(Overview of Reading—Continued from page 6)*

enable early identification and intervention of students. RtI was first piloted in Council Rock in 2007-2008. It is a 3-tiered approach:

- Tier 1 sets a high quality for standards-aligned instruction for all students, who are universally screened 3 times per year.
- Tier 2 is for some students who require additional support. They are given strategic and targeted interventions. Interventions are scientifically research-based and given by a specialist or teachers in the classroom, or in small group instruction, as needed. Tier 2 also dictates progress monitoring of all students to determine academic and behavioral status against grade level benchmarks.
- Tier 3 is an intensive intervention for a few students who are significantly below grade level benchmarks. They can be given individual or small group instruction with additional time and/or resources.

### Reading Intervention

The determination for considering a student's eligibility to receive reading support might be based on assessments including those given to all students or only given to students experiencing difficulty. Support is also given to students following teacher recommendation, as a result of prior reading support or prior Report Cards.

The assessments drive the type of the instruction given to a student, and teachers in Council Rock have an extensive list of approved researched-based interventions for different grade levels. Some examples of Council Rock Approved Kindergarten Interventions are: *Ea-ro-bics* (a multisensory intervention); *Words Their Way* for phonics, vocabulary and spelling; and *Florida Center for Reading Research Materials* for phonemic awareness, alphabetizing, handwriting and fluency.

There are many Interventions listed for Grade 1, but *Reading Recovery* is the short-term, early intervention that serves the lowest achieving first grade students. The district has been using *Reading Recovery* since 2000. Citizens did an article about Reading Recovery in its Spring 2006 newsletter and will do an update in Spring 2010.

Council Rock strives to keep students in Grades 1 and 2 who need remediation in their classroom as long as they can. In grades 1 and 2 there are Title 1 tutors available in 8 of the 10 elementary schools. The Title 1 funding is based on the amount of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Two years ago CR purchased the program "Making Meaning," which teaches further comprehension in grades 4, 5 and 6. With older students there is more emphasis on a "pushing in vs. pulling out" model for reading support, when appropriate.

For students in 1<sup>st</sup> grade who do not sustain gains after receiving *Reading Recovery*, or for students in all other grades whose testing,

*(Continued on page 15)*

(CR Music Program—Continued from page 4)

The bolded, gray highlighted numbers show where there are discrepancies between the two sources of administrative data. “C” means that two classes are combined and the teacher provides differentiated instruction to meet student needs.

NORTH	PowerPoint		Class	Power-Point	Class
			Data	Projected	Data
	2007	2008	2008	2009	2009
Marching Band	76	48	48	67	69
Symphonic Band	50	29	56	38	45
Concert Band	75	51	51	33	44
Chorale	87	56	56	39	34
Symphonic Choir	128	124	124	107	116
String Orchestra	22	22	22	20	17
Symphony Orchestra	67	53	53	38	49
Music Appreciation	0	8	8	0	0
Music Theory	16	18	18 “C”	19	15
AP Music Theory	8	12	18	9	17
Music Tech	15	15	12	12	16
Musical Theater	0	0	20	17	19
Honors Music Arranging	7	5	“C”		16
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	551	441	486	399	457
<b># of Teachers</b>	3	3	3	2.5	2.5
Teacher Load	187	147	162	159	182
SOUTH	PowerPoint		Class	Power-Point	Class
			Data	Projected	Data
	2007	2008	2008	2009	2009
Marching Band	36	52	32	44	65
Symphonic Band	38	28	27	21	0
Concert Band	30	20	28	28	24
Chorale	52	78	66	37	32
Symphonic Choir	86	73	97	73	79
String Orchestra	0	0	0	34	32
Symphony Orchestra	96	92	91	50	50
Music Appreciation	30	20	17	0	
Music Theory	25	19	20	18	13
AP Music Theory	11	18	16	13	13
Music Tech	26	43	33	18	17
Musical Theater	0	0		0	0
Honors Music Arr/Improv. “C”	Missing from PP		14	Missing	10
Intro to Guitar	Missing from PP		26	Missing	25
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	430	443	467	302	360
<b># OF Teachers</b>	3	3	3	2.5	2.5
<b>Teacher Load</b>	143	Not valid	155	Not valid	144

Although there are many discrepancies between the two sources of Council Rock data, most are statistically insignificant. Because of the nature of scheduling, it is not expected that projected

(Continued on page 12)

## Class Scheduling Decisions: To Run A Class or To Not Run a Class

The 2009-2010 budget challenges led to changes in enrollment minimums needed for a class to run. Until this year, if a minimum of fifteen students registered for a class, the class would run. This year, the enrollment minimum rose to eighteen students, causing some classes that have run in the past to be dropped.

Most times, the public, and the School Board, is not aware of courses that are cut, unless their child is directly affected. The School Board approves the courses that are to proceed, but not those that are dropped.

Early in the scheduling process it is determined which classes are under-enrolled. Once that is known, the principal, in conjunction with the scheduler and subject curriculum coordinator, will speak to the Directors of Secondary and Elementary Education to decide whether the class should run under-enrolled, such as some AP classes or a second or third year of a language, or whether the course should be discontinued. The final administrative decision comes from the Superintendent, who then presents the list of actual courses that will run for the year to the School Board for a vote. Should the same course be under-enrolled two years in a row, the administration will determine whether the course should be permanently removed from the Program Planning Guide.



This year, at Richboro Middle School, German 1 was dropped for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. It was indicated that there were thirteen students enrolled, which did not meet the minimum to conduct the class. Since the teacher, who was a .2, part time teacher last year, left the district, and one class would mean a .2 staff member in an area that is difficult to find qualified teachers, it was decided to simply drop that

*(Continued on page 13)*

## Sol Feinstone Welcomes New Principal John Harlan

The Council Rock School District welcomed Mr. John Harlan as the Principal of Sol Feinstone Elementary in March 2009.

Mr. Harlan graduated in 1994 from Wilkes University with a degree in Business. After working as a salesman for a year and a half, Harlan he realized he wanted to pursue a teaching degree. He went back to school at East Stroudsburg University to obtain a K-6 teaching certificate. In 2005, he furthered his education with a master's degree in Education Administration from Rider University.

After receiving his teaching degree, Mr. Harlan taught second grade in South Brunswick, NJ for a year and a half. In 1998, Harlan received a call from Sol Feinstone Principal, Bob Winters, regarding an open teaching position in the school. Both men grew up in the same area, attended the same schools and had a mutual friend. Mr. Harlan had great respect for Mr. Winters and considered him one of his greatest role models. This began Mr. Harlan's tenure at Sol Feinstone.

Mr. Harlan taught at Sol Firestone for nine years before becoming interim Principal in June 2008, following the departure of the previous principal, Patricia Pladsen. In the meantime, a full job search to fill the position took place. Over the next few months, the district reviewed the credentials of many candidates and conducted many interviews. After several rounds of interviews, Mr. Harlan was very glad to have been chosen as the Principal at Sol Feinstone in March 2009. The transition was easy for Harlan, as the Sol Feinstone Community already knew him and respected him. He felt immense support from Superintendent Mark Klein and Joy McClendon, Director of Elementary Education/Curriculum Services, in his new position.

As Principal, Harlan has a hands-on philosophy. He writes a weekly newsletter about what is happening at the school and submits an

*(Continued on page 13)*

## In the Numbers: Staff Websites

Communication is critical to the success of any organization. It is an ongoing challenge for Council Rock to keep the community informed about news, information and issues. Having current and easily accessible information available at the Council Rock website is an essential part of successful communication. To that end, in mid-October, Citizens For Education assessed the staff websites at every building to determine if information was current.

Current websites are those that have relevant, up-to-date information. They are divided into two categories: those that include homework assignments and those that do not. (It should be noted that not all staff websites are for classroom teachers, so a homework designation would not be appropriate for all sites.)

Non-current websites are those that do not have up-to-date information. They are divided into two categories: those that are outdated (meaning they contained "old" information that was no longer relevant) or are entirely blank.

The data is as follows:

School	Total Number Staff Websites	% Outdated	% Blank	% Current no HW	% Current with HW
CRHS N	154	12%	24%	24%	40%
CRHS S	151	15%	30%	22%	33%
HMS	57	21%	4%	21%	54%
NMS	77	41%	4%	25%	30%
RMS	53	26%	19%	17%	38%
CE	53	6%	9%	58%	26%
GE	39	5%	3%	64%	28%
HCE	44	0%	18%	52%	30%
HE	34	0%	9%	85%	6%
MMW	41	0%	0%	56%	44%
NE	47	21%	6%	45%	27%
RE	44	11%	7%	82%	0%
RHE	30	0%	0%	80%	20%
SFE	48	6%	2%	88%	4%
WE	28	21%	0%	47%	32%

Overall, 79% of the district's staff websites are current. However, the breakdown by school level gives a more thorough picture of staff utilization of websites as an informational communications tool.

**Elementary Schools – 12% non-current / 88% current**  
**Middle Schools – 38% non-current / 62% current**  
**High Schools – 40% non-current / 60% current**

Maureen M Welch and Rolling Hills are the only two schools in the district where 100% of the staff websites are current. Citizens commends the staff at Maureen Welch and Rolling Hills. CFE hopes that their example and the data in the chart above will motivate a district-wide initiative to bring all staff websites up to date.

(CR Music Program—Continued from page 9)

numbers would be exact in early June. The biggest discrepancy in North's 2008 data is in the case of two classes entirely left out of the presentation: one section of Symphonic Band with 27 students (there were two sections at North, but only one was accounted for) and Musical Theater with 20 students. The PowerPoint was also missing two of South's classes in the data for 2008 and projections for 2009. Class size data Citizens received from the administration showed both *Introduction to Guitar* and *Honors Music Arranging/Improvisation* as classes that are currently running, however they were not included in the PowerPoint. Not including these classes makes any calculations for a teacher's student load invalid in the PowerPoint presentation.

### Student-to-Teacher Ratios

The June 2009 PowerPoint listed the following information regarding student/teacher ratios of music teachers and "other" teachers:

Average Load – Music Teacher – 136:1  
 Average Load – "Other" Teacher – 130:1  
 ("Other" is defined as teachers of Math, Social Studies, Science, and English.)

Using either the district's PowerPoint data or other class size data provided to Citizens by the administration, the average load for music teachers differs greatly from what the administration stated last June. Even using the district's PowerPoint data for 2008, with missing classes for South & North, when all the students from the PowerPoint are added, the student-to-teacher ratio is 147:1 for both schools.

Using the 2008-09 class size data that was available to the administration when it was making decisions last year, the music teacher's average student load is different from what was presented in June. North had 486 students taking music classes and three teachers, for an average of 162. South had 467 students and three teachers, for an average of 155.

### CR Music Teacher Schedules and Preps

The June 2009 presentation included the proposed 2009-10 schedules for Council Rock South's music teachers. (There was no schedule information shown for North.) This slide revealed

that the majority of a music teacher's schedule is comprised of single section courses, and the variety of those courses requires different preparations.

South's Department Coordinator, Chris Simon, who has a period for coordinator preparation, is teaching five different courses: two sections of *String Orchestra*, two sections of *Symphony Orchestra*, *Music Theory 1*, and *Improvisation* and *Honors Music Arranging* in the same period.

Corey Axler, who taught 212 students last year, teaches five different courses this year: *AP Music Theory*, *Intro to Guitar*, *Music Technology*, two alternate day sections of *Chorale* and three alternate day sections of *Symphonic Choir*.

Christie Milliken spends only three out of her maximum five period teaching day at Council Rock South. In one of those three, she assists the CARES team, which helps students at risk access school and community services. It was proposed that she teach three different alternate day courses in her remaining two periods at South: two Sections of *Marching Band*, one section of *Symphonic Band*, and one section of *Concert Band*. She is only at South for one half of the day and is still teaching 89 students. According to Mr. Klein, she still must "have the contractual amount" of travel time to get to Goodnoe, eat lunch, teach students at Goodnoe, travel back to the high school for a full prep period, and then lead after-school band practices.

Last year at North, when the district was making staffing decisions, Mr. McCall taught 208 students for 4 preps in *Chorale*, *Symphonic Choir*, *Music Appreciation* and *Musical Theater*. This year, by the district's projected estimates, he was scheduled to teach 146 students in *Chorale* and *Symphonic Choir* in his part time capacity at North.

The fact that this year, Mr. McCall and Ms. Milliken have to prepare for many different courses at both the high school and their second assigned school (Richboro Middle and Goodnoe) seems counterintuitive to Mr. Klein's

(Continued on page 14)

*(Class Scheduling Decisions—Continued from page 10)*

class. Citizens For Education is concerned that this created a lack of parity between our middle schools. Eighth grade students at Holland and Newtown Middle Schools had three languages to choose from, while Richboro Middle students had only two. Next year, German will once again be offered at Richboro Middle School through the program planning guide, and will run as long as enough students enroll.

This situation also caused the other two languages, Spanish and French, to have higher class sizes, as shown by district class size data. This decision affected not just those students who would have preferred to take German, but the students who are in higher class sizes because of this decision. This illustrates how unintended consequences can affect far more students than it might appear on the surface, when the curriculum changes, because of a class that is no longer being offered.

While it is understood that smaller schools may have lower enrollment in classes, that should not preclude those students from having the same experience, and choices, as students at larger schools, especially in the core subject areas. Citizens hopes that the administration will look closer at these disparities if they continue to emerge, and make decisions to ensure that all students in every school have equal opportunities. Citizens also encourages a change in policy so that the School Board is made aware of courses that are being dropped, as well as those that will run.

*(John Harlan—Continued from page 10)*

article in each Owl Hoot, the school's newspaper. You can find him greeting his students at the door each morning. His focus is to do whatever is best for students. Building respect and relationships with students is important to him. He also tries to have the students present something at each month's PTO meeting to get everyone involved and further build a sense of community.

Being a strong believer that if the child is successful socially, academics will follow, he has created an atmosphere of respect at Sol Feinstone. Harlan has renamed the hallways with words like "Listen Lane" and "Appreciate Avenue" and installed stop signs in the hallways, which allow hallway rules to become second nature. Sol Feinstone Family Groups were established within classrooms. They meet monthly for special activities to give each classroom a sense of unity. If the students share, respect and listen to each other, they will be socially and academically successful.

On the Academic front, Mr. Harlan has initiated a new reading and math program. The reading program, "Four Block," allows students, in an hour time period, to practice different aspects of language arts. In "MIC Maps" (Math Investigation Center), students work independently on subjects at their comfort level. Whether advanced, proficient or below, each student gets to work on subject matter independently, allowing the teacher to focus on students in smaller groups.

Mr. Harlan's long term goals are to continue to promote social and academic programs. He plans to use available data more efficiently, such as data from PSSA, and incorporate it into daily instruction. He feels that technology, like Smart Boards, should be used to their maximum potential in the classroom. He believes all these initiatives will continue to make Sol Feinstone an excellent place for students to thrive within the Council Rock School District.

Citizens for Education welcomes Mr. John Harlan to the Council Rock community and wishes him well as the Principal of Sol Feinstone Elementary.

<b><i>Citizens For Education</i></b>	
<b>Treasury report 11/07/08 to 11/17/09</b>	
Opening Balance 11/07/08.....	\$2140.40
Withdrawals .....	\$ 357.13
Deposits .....	<u>\$624.00</u>
Current Balance as of 11/17/09.....	\$2407.27

*(CR Music Program—Continued from page 12)*

written response to the question “How many preps do Mr. McCall and Ms. Milliken have?” His response was, “Their schedules and preps are comparable to all other secondary school teachers.”

### **Scheduling and Tracking Music Participation**

Despite the fact that “tremendous effort goes into working with students to try to make schedules fit” in music, Citizens has received anecdotal feedback from parents that this year, because at least one of the three teachers is only in their high school for part of the day, students have dropped out of music because of scheduling conflicts. Other students are taking a different music class than that of their after school co-curricular (i.e., they are in the orchestra but could only fit band class in their schedule, etc.)

Citizens understands, as Mr. Klein stated, that in a “schedule that is as complex as each high school, it will be always impossible to meet every student’s need,” and “to characterize these difficulties as uniquely a music issue would be wrong.” Nevertheless, since it is impossible to meet every student’s needs when a teacher is in a building for a six period scenario, how much harder must it be if a teacher is only part of a 2.5 teacher department and is only available for two or three periods daily?

To what extent the teacher cuts will affect participation in Council Rock’s music program is going to be hard to assess. The district does not conduct formal surveys on why students drop out of music, nor does the district track retention levels of music students as they move through school levels or even through grade levels at the high school.

### **Benefits of Music Education**

The benefits of music education must be considered when proposing cuts to the program. Although Citizens did not ask in time to get a response before deadline on whether the district tracks the correlation between music students and academic success, it has been often observed that high achieving students are very often in music. **Research suggests that music programs help to create brighter students, and making**

**music has been shown to develop skills such as math, reading and critical thinking.**

The importance of music is reinforced by its designation as a core subject under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. This means music teachers have the same requirements for professional development as teachers of Math, English, Social Studies, and Science. Council Rock music enhances the quality of life in the community at school assemblies, local parades and concerts. Council Rock’s high school music performance groups enhance Council Rock’s reputation when they win competitions, perform outside of Bucks County, and travel internationally.

### **Assessing the Budget Cost/Benefit of CR’s Music teachers**

Citizens is suggesting that the assessment of a music teacher’s worth for budgetary funding should take into consideration, along with the benefits of music education, the total amount of students taught, the amount of total preps, and average student load. Council Rock high school music teachers often teach classes that have one section, and most teach at least four different courses. **The amount of comprehensive and extensive preparation that goes into having more curricular courses than other teachers should be considered when evaluating a music teacher’s workload.**

No matter how you evaluate it, **Council Rock high school music teachers have an average student load that is more than the 130:1 cited by the district for teachers of Math, Social Studies, English and Science.** Furthermore, taking the periods per day that the music teachers are assigned to teach music classes (without the Department Chair’s prep or an assignment to CARES), there is an even larger student load. For instance, dividing North’s Department Chair, Mr. Bogle’s 2008 load of 123 students by the four periods he teaches, results in an average of over 30 students per period.

*(Continued on page 15)*

*(CR Music Program—Continued from page 14)*

**Citizens believes when doing a cost/benefit analysis, the district should not only look at the enrollment in each music teacher's course, but also the total number of students taught, divided by the number of periods a teacher is available to teach.**

### **Monitoring Music's Future**

**Citizens believe that if the district considers the total amount of students taught by the few teachers in the music department, the teacher's average student load, the amount of preps and the great benefits of the music program, the restoration back to three music teachers in each school should be a high priority when planning next year's budget.**

Citizens will continue to monitor Council Rock's music programs, seek statistical information from the district, and will write a follow up article in our spring newsletter. Contact us at [Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com](mailto:Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com) to share information about an individual student's experience with music or music scheduling and we will try to incorporate some of this feedback in our next article. In the meantime, our readers are encouraged to be a voice that advocates for the restoration of three full time music teachers at each high school. Please communicate with the School Board members whose names and contact information are on the [crsd.org](http://crsd.org) web site under the School Board tab.

*(Overview of Reading—Continued from page 8)*

teacher recommendation, or state assessments demonstrate needed intervention, student intervention can take the form of a pull out reading support program by the literacy specialist called "Reading Club" or, if needed, a one-on-one program.

### **Tracking Individual Students**

In addition to looking at aggregate data, Council Rock keeps longitudinal data on individual students through a program called "Performance Tracker." Teachers enter RELA assessment scores for students in K, 1 and 2 after individual assessments are completed. The assessments of students in grades 3 through 6 are scanned elec-

tronically from a bubble sheet into "Performance Tracker." This electronic scanning is not yet operative for grades K, 1, and 2. Individual scores, which include state and other assessments, go with every student in CR through grade 12. Additionally, since assessments are standards-specific, Performance Tracker can provide analysis of these assessments.

### **Tracking Council Rock Student Reading**

The No Child Left Behind Act requires that Council Rock be tracked for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The State's measure for how well students are achieving in reading is through the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, better known as PSSA. The 2008-09 targets for reading were 63% Proficient or Advanced. Under the law, all students must be proficient in reading by 2014.

In the 2008-09 PSSA "all students" category, Council Rock elementary students are more than meeting the federal achievement goals. Proficiency levels were as follows: 88.1% in grade 3, 87.4% in grade 4, 78.4% in grade 5 and 82.8% in grade 6. A three-year look at how the same set of students (with some variables as some students come in and other leave) from 2005-06 to 2008-09 shows continued gains.

### **Elementary RELA Summary**

Breaking down the leadership of RELA into the 2 levels of instruction for Elementary and Secondary seems to have paid dividends to the elementary program. Not only has the elementary level continually raised PSSA reading scores, they are also well on track to meet AYP goals. This is empirical evidence that the well-balanced standards based curriculum is serving students with a broad foundation in reading competency.

The outstanding results are a tribute to the classroom teachers, the literacy specialists and the leadership of Joy McClendon and Pat Erickson, whose depth of knowledge, dedication and enthusiasm contribute to success. Citizens recognizes and commends the good work they and the teachers, under their leadership, do that benefits Council Rock Students.

## Don't Miss the Important Info in this Newsletter

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Spotlight on Citizens For Education .....	1
Council Rock Math Specialists .....	1
CR Music Program: The Past The Present and the Future.....	3
From the President's Desk.....	4
An Overview of Reading, English and Language Arts .....	4
Class Scheduling Decisions: To Run A Class or To Not Run a Class.....	10
Sol Feinstone Welcomes New Principal John Harlan.....	10
In the Numbers: Staff Websites.....	11
Citizens for Education Membership Form.....	16



### Membership Form

Membership funds enable us to produce our newsletter, inform on and advocate for quality public education! If your membership is current, feel free to pass this form along to a friend.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail Address (please print clearly):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Indicate your preference for receipt of our newsletter**  **mail**  **E-mail**

*\*\*\*Selecting E-mail delivery will extend your 3 year subscription to 4 years!\*\*\**

**Please send a check, made payable to "Citizens for Education", for the total amount chosen to:**

**Citizens For Education**  
**PO Box 1301**  
**Newtown, PA 18940**

**3 Years for \$25.00 (or 1 year for \$10.00) \***

**Additional Donation (indicate amount) \_\_\_\_\_**

Circle one:

**New Member**

**Renewal**

\*Joining now entitles you to membership through October 2012 (3 year membership), or October 2010 (1 year membership). Membership entitles you to receive our newsletter published semi-annually and voting privileges at our general membership yearly planning meeting, held in the fall.

\*\* Already a member, but need to update information (current address, phone #, e-mail, etc.)? Please contact [Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com](mailto:Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com).