



Citizens For Education



Spring Issue

May 2014

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.

Introducing Tech Corner

Tech Corner is a new feature column in the newsletter. It highlights new and innovative uses of technology and the Council Rock teachers who make it happen.

Goodnoe's Tuesday STEM Club

For the inaugural article of "Tech Corner," Citizens For Education had an opportunity to visit and speak with students in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Club run by teachers Mrs. Maryann Molishus, Mr. Noel Marcus, and Ms. Lauren McCulley at Goodnoe Elementary School. The STEM club members include approximately fifty 4th and 5th graders. This STEM Club is one of three at Goodnoe.

STEM Clubs are an international movement to provide students the chance to explore aspects of science, technology and math outside of the normal curriculum based instruction. The learning takes

(Continued on page 4)

The Big Yellow Buses—and More! Council Rock Transportation

Some elementary and secondary students who reside in Council Rock (CR) may get to school by walking or biking or riding in a car, but if they take a bus and their school is no farther than 10 miles from a Council Rock boundary line, transportation is provided by the Council Rock School District's Department of Transportation.

The Council Rock (CR) Transportation Department scrutinizes every detail to route and transport 13,334 students - one student at a time. In the 2012-13 school year:

- 8,151 were CR students who live farther than 1.5 miles from their school
- 3,363 were CR students who live within 1.5 miles, but were transported because they live on or had to cross a roadway designated as hazardous by The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).
- 1,625 were non-public school students (673 go to school within CR boundaries, 117 are transported to New Jersey)
- 195 are students who Council Rock bused even though they are classified by the State as walkers (live within 1.5 miles and do not have to walk or cross a hazardous road) and therefore are not part of the calculation for state transportation subsidy. (See Safely Transporting Students on page 9)

Student transportation and bus routes are regulated and structured following federal and

(Continued on next page)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Big Yellow Buses—and more!.....	1
Tech Corner—Teacher-Driven Uses of Technology.....	1
Three New School Board Members.....	5
Andy Block	5
Denise Brooks.....	5
Safely Transporting Students as State Subsidy Declines.....	9
School Safety Implementation	10
In the Numbers—Bus Ride Times	11
Focus on Middle School—Points of Pride	12
Council Rock's Planning Committee Update.....	14
Middle School Class Sizes.....	14
High School Activities.....	15
Citizens Membership Form	16

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(The Big Yellow Buses - continued from page 1)

state law, district policy, and school guidelines including:

- The Pennsylvania School Code does not require that school districts provide transportation, but if they do provide it, the district is obligated to transport all students that meet the requirements, including non-public pupils who go to non-profit, non-public schools. Those schools must be accredited by the PA Department of Education (PDE) and located no more than ten miles from the district boundary, measured by the nearest public road.
- The Federal “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (IDEA) overrides state law so children with special needs can be transported differently with no mandates on distance traveled or time limits for which students can be on a bus.
- The Federal “McKinney-Vento Act” of 1987 defines homelessness and also ensures homeless children transportation to and from school, free of charge, to attend their school of origin (last school enrolled or the school attended when they first became homeless) from their temporary residence, regardless of where the family resides. (CR currently has 20 homeless students)
- PA law allows a school district to ask a child, regardless of age, to walk up to a mile and a half to a bus stop, but CR School District Transportation Policy 810 modifies the maximum bus stop distance to a mile for secondary students and a half mile for elementary students.
- PA gives school districts a subsidy for busing secondary students who live farther than 2 miles from their school, and elementary students who live farther than 1.5 miles. CR Policy 810 reduces the state distances and provides busing for secondary students who live farther than a mile and elementary students if they live farther than a half mile. The district does not get any subsidy for bused students whose distance from school does not meet State requirements.
- PennDOT certifies the capacity of buses. It is based on 13 inches of seating space per student. Each bench seat is 39 inches which calculates to 3 students per seat. This works for most elementary aged students, but is unrealistic for secondary students. Council Rock adjusts assignments for those students so they

can accommodate a more realistic 2 students per seat.

- There is no state regulation on the length of time a student spends on a bus, but CR Policy 810 dictates that no child should ride more than 75 minutes each way. (For information on the length of time students spend on a bus, see In the Numbers—Bus Ride Times on page 11)
- Some individual schools publish a transportation policy on their web site and/or in their Parent Handbook to inform parents about a variety of transportation subjects, such as how to elect walking or biking, expected bus conduct and disciplinary consequences.

Council Rock transports students to over 90 different schools within and outside of Council Rock boundaries, over an area of 700 square miles

- 16 are Council Rock Schools
- 5 are non-public schools within CR boundaries
- 30 are non-public schools outside of the district boundaries but within the 10 mile limit
- 39 are non-public schools within the 10 mile limit outside CR boundaries where even though 2 or fewer students are enrolled, CR is legally required to provide transportation.

Council Rock also transports to and from day care facilities within Council Rock boundaries; kindergarten students at mid-day; students for school trips, sports, clubs, and co-curricular activities; and secondary shuttles:

- Day Care Facilities - 257 students attend 20 different day care facilities within Council Rock's boundaries
- Mid-Day Kindergarten - Council Rock runs 19 kindergarten buses at mid-day. They transport AM kindergarten students home, PM kindergarten students to school and 6 students who attend the morning Kindergarten Enrichment Program provided by *Champions* at Holland, Newtown and Maureen M. Welch elementary schools to their assigned school (the rest of those 72 students remain at their home school). At the end of the day, all kindergarten students are integrated and bused with the rest of their school's student body.

(Continued on next page)

(The Big Yellow Buses - continued from page 2)

- School Trips, Sports, Clubs, and Co-curricular Activities – approximately 2,000 bus runs are scheduled yearly.
- Middle School Shuttle – middle school students who take 1st period honors classes at the high schools are shuttled back to their respective middle schools.
- High School Shuttles - there are 6 shuttle buses to and from MBIT, and shuttles in each direction from both high schools before school starts every morning to move “out of bounds” students (see “Out of Bounds” info below) and South swimmers from North to South. There is also a shuttle in each direction after 1st, 2nd, and 4th period for students taking courses at the other high school.

Council Rock transports most students using 150 buses provided through a contract with First Student along with 8 CR-owned nine-passenger vans and a 7 passenger Dodge Caravan

- Ten of the 150 vehicles can be rotated or serviced without disrupting transportation. Of the 150, 4 are wheel chair lift buses with bus monitors (aides) on board and 17 are the smaller buses designated by the letter “V” that have a full time bus monitor (aide) on board. The “V” buses transport 218 students whose IEP (Individualized Education Program) includes transportation as a related service.
- Eight nine-passenger vans, owned and operated by CR, transport an additional 15 special needs students who have IEP’s that require transportation as a related service.
- Last year Council Rock added a Dodge Caravan that carries Special Ed students along with regular education school mates.

Students transported on Council Rock’s behalf by other agencies:

- The Bucks County IU (BCIU) transports one student to the Overbrook School for the Blind in the Overbrook section of Philadelphia, one student to the Deveraux School in West Chester, as well as those students who live in the CR sending area but are educated at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit and go to 10 different job training sites.

- The Chester County IU transports one student who is in a residential home in Chester County to a school in Downingtown.
- Three students are transported by ambulance. Two are taken to a school in West Philadelphia, just beyond the University of Pennsylvania, and one is transported to Newtown Elementary.

According to CR Policy, CR walkers are those who are not provided busing because they are secondary students who live within 1.5 miles of their school or elementary students who live within .5 miles and can use routes that are not listed by PennDOT as hazardous. The number of walkers and their schools are in the chart on the right.

<u>Walkers School</u>	<u>#</u>
Churchville	97
Goodnoe	22
Hillcrest	0
Holland	60
M. Welch	0
Newtown	0
Richboro	0
Rolling Hills	172
Sol Feinstone	0
Wrightstown	27
Holland Middle	25
Newtown Middle	0
Richboro Middle	20
North HS	0
South HS	95
TOTAL WALKERS	518

By administrative decision there are 241 students in the 2013-14 school year who are bused even though they are classified by the state and CR Policy as walkers. Their transportation does not qualify for any state busing subsidy. They are:

- 79 students at Hillcrest
- 162 students at Maureen Welch

CR students are assigned to their school according to school sending boundaries with the exception of students categorized for busing purposes as “out of bounds.” This includes:

- Students who enroll in the late summer after their elementary school’s grade section is capped and are assigned for one year to the closest school that has space.
- Some Special Ed students who receive their education at the school where their specific program is housed, regardless of their address.

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(The Big Yellow Buses—continued from page 3)

- Northampton students who were attending CRHS North, before all of Richboro Middle School students were redistricted to CRHS South in 2012, will graduate from North in 2015. For the first two years they were bused directly to North. This year, these Northampton Students who attend North are bused to South in the morning and from there they are shuttled to North.
- The number of “out of bounds” students changes from year to year. The following is the number of elementary level “out of bounds” students and where they are bused for the 2013-14 school year:
 - ⇒ 56 to Goodnoe,
 - ⇒ 29 to Churchville
 - ⇒ 27 to Holland Elementary
 - ⇒ 23 to Newtown Elementary

The CR Transportation Department develops the safe pick up and drop off of 13,334 students, and the routing of their buses to and from 90 schools, always with an eye to safety and with the help of a computer software program called “Edulog”, a product of *Education Logistics, Inc.*

Even though the district uses Edulog, Mr. Jack Pinheiro, Supervisor of Pupil Transportation, (who Citizens interviewed for this article) and Charles Rehm, CR’s Transportation Coordinator, do not rely entirely on computer generated bus routing. They scrutinize every computer generated route and then use their 39 combined years of experience, geographical expertise, records reviews, data analysis, and common sense to oversee and improve the Edulog suggested bus routing of CR buses.

While still keeping most student’s ride times well below the district maximum (as seen in the In the Numbers chart on page 11), Mr. Pinheiro and Mr. Rehm have consistently improved the computer generated routes for both safety and efficiency.

Citizens For Education would like to thank the Council Rock Transportation Department and all of the transportation employees for their hard work and the important service they provide to the families and students who live within the Council Rock boundaries.

(STEM Club—continued from page 1)

place without any pressure of being tested or graded. Goodnoe’s membership is open to all students and aims to motivate and build confidence in those who struggle with STEM subjects, and provide an outlet and place for collaboration for those who already show aptitude.

Planning for the STEM club at Goodnoe started with staff and parents over the past summer, although, due to the weather constraints, it did not start meeting until February of this year. While the future operational details of Goodnoe’s STEM clubs are still being tweaked, this year the one in this article meets one day a week on Tuesdays for about 6 weeks. The 5th graders are meeting in lieu of recess, and the 4th graders in lieu of eating lunch in the cafeteria. Students submitted applications, and because of the volume of interested students, there are plans to accommodate another set of students for a second session directly after the current one is finished. The other two Goodnoe STEM Clubs meet on Fridays with their teachers, Mrs. Pat Millen and Mrs. Joanne Lawall and membership comes from the students in their classes.

The Club in action during their second meeting enthusiastically worked together, using 4 specific hands-on educational activities: *K’NEX* Educational Kits, *K’NEX* Computer Design Software, *Scratch*, and a 3--D Printer.

- ***K’NEX* Educational Kits** - The majority of STEM Club members split into small groups to build with *K’NEX* Educational Kits that included a motor. Most *K’NEX* Kits were provided by the Intermediate Unit, supplemented with a few additional kits purchased with funds from Goodnoe’s building budget. Students worked in teams of 4 and at the end of the meeting one team displayed their collaborative design of an environmentally friendly people-mover, inspired by this year’s challenge in a State wide *K’NEX* competition. One couldn’t help but be caught up in the excitement as the student-designed and built people-mover went across the classroom floor.
- ***K’NEX* Computer Design Software** - A few other students were working with a *K’NEX* product with an “Education Computer Control Interface.” Using the software included, students can write

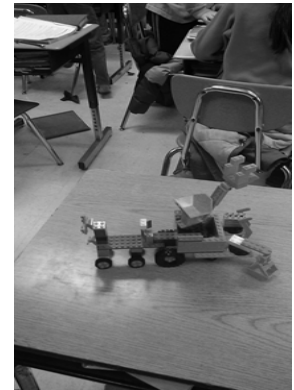
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(*Stem Club—continued from page 4*)

programs to control on-screen *K'NEX* models, download it into the interface's memory and use it to operate student built *K'NEX* models. Once again, we saw students working collaboratively to make their models work.

- **Scratch** - At least three club members were using the few laptops available for a program called *Scratch*. *Scratch* is a free programming language developed at MIT where students can program interactive creations by simply snapping together graphical blocks, without using any traditional programming languages. *Scratch* helps students learn to think creatively, reason systematically, and work collaboratively. The three students who were using *Scratch* helped one another with their programs. Students can save their work and build on it during the next club meeting.
- **3--D Printer** - The STEM Club also has the use of a 3D printer on loan from the school's provider of printers. 3D printing is a key technology in STEM education. It has the ability to allow students to solve real problems with physical solutions. It also provides teachers with 3 dimensional visual aids that can be used in the classroom, particularly to illustrate complex concepts. Fifth grade student, Marissa Cohen explained how the printer is used and the end results of her project. She made a door stop with 3D raised letters/number of "A13" (to identify the classroom) on the top hoping it could be a practical prototype for use in Goodnoe's classrooms, but soon realized it was hollow and wouldn't work. She is now trying to solve her problem using the software for the 3d printer to make a heavier door stop. She designed other projects which could also be used by her fellow students in the classroom.

STEM inspires independent and collaborative learning. An example was a self-initiated project completed by a 4th grader, Audrey Robb after her first STEM meeting. Interested in lunar vehicles and space probes, Audrey did independent research online to design a space probe. Because she didn't have *K'NEX* at home, she proceeded to build her version by using Lego's, and proudly showed and explained it to teachers, visitors and fellow STEM members. Audrey included several features, such as magnetic eyes, a compartment for spare parts, a device to help the probe stay afloat in water, and an arm to pick up samples. In every STEM Club activity, the one constant factor was the collaboration of students working together to achieve their goals. It provided an excellent atmosphere where each student is a vital part of the group.



Goodnoe's STEM Club Teacher, Mrs. Maryann Molishus not only fosters the cooperative, non-competitive interaction of Goodnoe's STEM Club members, she also brings the fruits of her own quest for continual learning. Mrs. Molishus spends her own money to go to teaching and education workshops, and her staff website is filled with resources for students and parents, as well as for other teachers.

Mrs. Molishus has been awarded, recognized, and honored beyond Council Rock for being an outstanding teacher. As a "Star Discovery Educator" she has attended, at her own expense, week long residential teaching workshops on digital education and stays in touch with teachers she has met from all over the country. In 2008 she was awarded the title of "Milken Educator." This prize has been called the "Oscars of Teaching" and includes a \$25,000 gift. In 2009 she was named Holy Family University's "Teacher of the Year."

Citizens For Education would like to thank Mrs. Molishus for her talents, her dedication to teaching and her innovative uses of technology that have benefited so many students. The honors that Mrs. Molishus has received are dwarfed by all the rewards the many students get from having her as their teacher.

Three New School Board Members

Significant change has come to the Council Rock School Board with the December 2013 swearing in of three new school directors: Andy Block, Denise Brooks, and Mark Byelich. It is very unusual to have three new members join the board at the same time; not since the 1990's has there been this kind of turnover in an election cycle and Citizens For Education reached out to each new board member to request an interview. The articles for Andy Block and Denise Brooks are included in this newsletter; Mark Byelich declined the interview request, though Citizens hopes to interview him for a future newsletter.

Andy Block

Upper Makefield residents have new School Board representation for the first time in ten years with the election of Andy Block. Citizens For Education recently sat down with Andy Block to learn more about him and his vision for Council Rock. When approached to run for School Director last year, Mr. Block spoke to many people to get a perspective on how his experience and vision might benefit the students and taxpayers in the Council Rock community. After much thought, he decided to run and then won on both the Democratic and Republican tickets in the primary election in May. The General election in November made it official. After he was sworn in, in December Mr. Block was elected Vice President of the Board of School Directors by his fellow board members.

Mr. Block spent most of his youth in Hockessin, Delaware. His family moved to Washington Crossing in 1983, when he was 13 years old. He attended Council Rock High School in grades 9 and 10. At that time, the High School was so overcrowded those grades held their classes in Newtown Junior High School. After those two years, his family moved back to Delaware where he graduated from high school and then went on to Penn State, main campus. He graduated from there with a degree in Economics and a minor in Business.

Mr. Block's professional career started at Ernest & Julio Gallo, spending a few years in South Florida and Memphis. Recruited by Guinness, (now Diageo North America), he was in their employ for 12 1/2 years during which time he lived in Indianapolis; Morris Plains, New Jersey; San Francisco; and Stamford, Connecticut. It was in New Jersey that he met his wife, Claudia. In 2003, their son Jake, now a 5th grader at Sol Feinstone, was born. Given the opportunity to transfer to the wine division of Diageo,

(Continued on next page)

Denise Brooks

Citizens For Education welcomes Denise Brooks, who was recently elected to the Council Rock School Board representing Region 3 (which includes Districts 1, 11 and 15 in Holland and Richboro). Mrs. Brooks is not new to the Council Rock scene; she has spent more than 16 years actively volunteering in the Council Rock School District and she noted, "Dedicating my time and energy to the school board feels like the natural next step to my many years of service to the community." She is eager to bring her professional experiences and strengths to the role.

Mrs. Brooks graduated from Brandeis University with a B.A. in English. While there, she chaired the Programming Board, which was responsible for on-campus entertainment. That experience led to her being hired as an Account Executive for MGM/United Artists in New York City. In that role, she was responsible for promoting movie viewings at colleges, hospitals and prisons. After two years at MGM, she moved to Griffin Bacal Advertising, also in NYC, where she held the positions of Executive Assistant to the President for two years and Human Resources Director for five years. She married fellow Brandeis alum, Lewis Brooks in 1985, and in 1988 the couple moved from Queens, NY to Holland, PA, commuting daily to their jobs in New York City.

Before making their move from Queens, Mrs. Brooks and her husband did their research and decided they wanted to live in Bucks County, specifically in the Council Rock School District because of its strong academic reputation. In 1994, Mrs. Brooks was asked to move to a start-up company called LiveWire Research that conducted online market research using brand new digital technologies. She has been with LiveWire for 20

(Continued on page 8)

(Andy Block—continued from page 6)

he considered it contingent upon being allowed to live where he chose. Having experienced firsthand the quality of a Council Rock education when he was younger, he wanted to settle his family in Washington Crossing. The family relocated there in 2003 and has been there ever since.

In 2007, Mr. Block left Diageo to work for T-Mobile, where he managed multi-million dollar budgets and numerous employees. From there he returned to the wine industry to run the Eastern Region for Rodney Strong Family Wine Estates, a family owned premium wine company based in Sonoma, California, where he is currently employed. When asked about hobbies he stated his son and his activities, and “foodie” experiences. The Food Network is the most popular channel in the Block house, where the entire family typically experiences this hobby.

Wishing to continue to make a difference and have a positive influence in his community, Mr. Block was active in the Patriot FC Soccer Club, serving as a Board Member and eventually President. Becoming a School Board Director seemed like a natural fit, as his mother was a teacher and his wife teaches pre-school. With the knowledge that his predecessor, Dr. Paul Anagnostakos, was not seeking re-election, Mr. Block decided to run for the position, not seeing anyone else with his qualifications and expertise “addressing a 200M+ budget and complex organization” to add value to the School Board. His goals as School Director are to “motivate the front line [staff] for continued educational improvement” by providing the tools needed. His energies will be focused on developing a comprehensive, measurable Strategic Plan that details specific objectives of “where we are, how that stacks up to regional and national benchmarks and where we want to be.” If we are not there, he will look to understand why and what will be done? He intends to play an active role in developing an “Academic Scorecard” based on benchmarks that are important to the Council Rock constituencies. Another goal is to provide visibility to the public regularly, to help the community understand the complexity of a premium school district and proactively demonstrate the value they are getting for their tax dollars.

Mr. Block sees the main challenges ahead being the pension dilemma, the needs of our many facilities, and future leadership. “PSERS, we are

stuck with. All we can do is the math.” He views CR as planning the best they can for this expenditure in the budget. The only course to alleviate the pension burden is for the School Board and the community to get more engaged with state legislators. Our facilities are in need of improvement and renovations, however, he would like to have a complete plan before approving large expenditures. He is anxious to see the outcomes presented by the Planning Committee. In addressing future leadership, he states that “our biggest asset is our people” and in order to preserve that the School Board needs to ensure that the “path is sustainable” looking into the future. On a lighter note, he jokes that a challenge is the “unbelievable amount of reading necessary in order to be as informed as you need to be.”

Steering the “community, administration, and staff through the challenges in front of us while preserving a quality education” is his goal. He intends to form personal relationships with principals and staff throughout the district, not just in his region.

Mr. Block sees his school board colleagues as “a diverse group and he can learn from every single one of them.” The School Board should be “governing, not administrating.” He intends to regularly go back to the community via PTO meetings, community forums, etc. and see “what the public wants.” He is not afraid to make unpopular decisions if they are the right decisions and add value. “It’s easier to be a good school director when things are tough, it’s a lot harder when things are running smoothly because you have to find ways to continuously improve.”

Citizens For Education wishes Andy Block the best of luck as a Council Rock School Director.

Did You Know that starting with the class of 2017, completion of a Graduation Project will no longer be a requirement for high school students at Council Rock? This is due to state and school district policy changes.

(Denise Brooks—continued from page 6)

years and is now the Director of Research for their consumer division. Her background in research and marketing will serve her well on the school board as she has extensive experience in budget management, strategic planning, and data analysis.

In her position at LiveWire Research, Mrs. Brooks was able to divide her full time job responsibilities between telecommuting and working part time in New York City while raising her two children, Eddie and Hannah, who are both graduates of Council Rock South. “My children received exceptional education in Council Rock. Having experienced the school system as both a parent and a volunteer, from kindergarten through high school graduation and into college, I have acquired a great deal of valuable experience that will serve me well on the school board.”

Mrs. Brooks’ flexible work schedule allowed her to immerse herself in all things Council Rock. Involvement with CR schools began in 1996 when her oldest child started kindergarten and she was elected to the Hillcrest Elementary PTO Executive Board, where she served for two years. After her family moved from Holland to Richboro, where they reside today, she served for six years on the Executive Board of the Rolling Hills Elementary Home & School Association, including four years as President, and was also President of CR South’s PTO for an additional six years.

Mrs. Brooks also served on numerous school district committees such as the Superintendent’s Advisory Committee for 12 years, the 1997 Redistricting Committee, the Growth Committee, the CR South Principal Search Committee, the Backpack Committee and the Middle Level Committee. Throughout these years she has also regularly attended CR School Board meetings and Academic Standards meetings. Mrs. Brooks currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Council Rock Education Foundation and has been a past board member of Citizens For Education.

Mrs. Brooks is excited as she begins her term as a CR School Board member, including her role as the recently named chair of the Board’s Academic Standards Committee. She values the diversity of thought and experience among her fellow Board members, stating, “The fact that everyone comes from different backgrounds with different strengths

and skills makes for a great board. Issues will get looked at through different eyes to get various perspectives. This is a wonderful thing and makes for a great process.”

Accessibility, responsibility and transparency: These words sum up how Mrs. Brooks intends to approach her new school board position. She wants to be as visible and as accessible as possible. As part of her outreach to the community, Mrs. Brooks attends PTO meetings at her constituent schools (Richboro Elementary, Rolling Hills Elementary, Richboro Middle, and CR South) and plans to reach out to the Northampton Businessperson’s Association and the Northampton Senior Center to get a full understanding of the issues and concerns of all members of the community. She also attends Northampton Board of Supervisors meetings when possible.

While Council Rock is viewed as a highly successful school district, Mrs. Brooks feels there is always room for improvement. The school board recently had a retreat to unify around specific goals in several areas including Academic Standards, Finance and Facilities. The development of a District Scorecard is one of the board’s top priorities, and as chair of the Academic Standards Committee Mrs. Brooks will play a key role in its development.

Her primary focus right now is the work being done by the district Planning Committee that will commit Council Rock to a long term plan with respect to educational delivery, finances and facilities. The goals established by the Board at its recent retreat will also be a key focus. Mrs. Brooks is committed to being considerate of all sides of issues and representing everyone in Council Rock. She also looks for ways to involve the community in the process and decisions of the School Board and values listening to all input. Mrs. Brooks aims to actively contribute to the continued success of CR and to be open and accessible to all thus making CR a better place for everyone.

CFE would like to thank Denise Brooks for taking the time to meet and discuss her new position.

Is your membership expiring in October 2014?

Avoid the rush! Renew now!

Use the membership form on back cover.

Safely Transporting Students as State Transportation Subsidies Decline

The challenge for the CR transportation department, led by Supervisor of Pupil Transportation Jack Pinheiro and Transportation Coordinator Charles Rehm, is to maximize the state subsidy while maintaining a safe environment for students.

Council Rock (CR) transports 13,334 students to over 90 schools, over 770 square miles each day (see The Big Yellow Buses on page 1). The buses and vans traverse nearly 2.5 million miles per year and use 300,000 gallons of diesel fuel. For 2013-14, the total cost for transportation is approximately \$10.3 million. About \$9 million of that total is paid to First Student, the district's bus contractor.

The percentage of CR's cost for transportation that is state subsidized has been steadily decreasing. The loss of state subsidy increases the share of transportation cost paid by the local taxpayer. The subsidy is paid in the year following when the costs are incurred. Below is a chart of the transportation cost, the state subsidy, the percent of the transportation budget that is subsidized, and percent change in subsidy year to year.

Operational Year	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11
Payable in Year	2013-14	2012-13	2011-12
First Student Payment*	8,893,596.00	9,158,880.18	8,338,004.83
Total State Subsidy	1,918,286.86	2,009,003.75	2,069,063.02
% of costs subsidized	21.6%	21.9%	24.8%
% change year to year	-4.7%	-3.0%	-10.0%

*buses used for field trips are covered either in the building budgets or through the parent organizations and buses used for athletics are covered in the athletic budget.

The formula for determining the state subsidy is complicated and, much like our state basic education subsidy, relies in part on the real estate market value of homes in the district. In other words, because the CR community includes homes with higher property values, CR's state subsidy is lower. As part of the calculation, CR also receives an additional \$385 per student for non-public school students that Council Rock is required to bus; however there is no additional subsidy for Special Education student transportation, which often carries the highest cost.

Over the past decade Jack Pinheiro and Charles Rehm have kept students safe and ride times reasonable (see In the Numbers on page 11), while finding routing efficiencies that have decreased transportation's bottom line. The number of bus routes has decreased from 185 to 130. This year, locking in a bulk price of diesel fuel at a good price point contributed to lowering the cost of transportation by \$300,000.

Mr. Pinheiro shared some forward thinking ideas to improve bus operations:

- The ability to go to a greener fleet of buses (i.e. natural gas)
- Owning our own bus lots. This would allow CR to put in natural gas refueling stations as well as automatic bus washing and snow removal devices.
- Staggering the starting times of half the elementary schools would save money by lowering driver down-time in the morning.
- Since half of CR's population is in the secondary schools and half in the elementary schools, starting the high schools at the same time as the middle schools would yield efficiencies in routing and in the amount of hourly driver wages.

Some budget cuts in transportation were made a few years ago when the district experienced millions of dollars in budgetary shortfalls due to the downturn in the economy. The 5 pm buses were cut from the budget, and the district went to a model of providing after school high school busing only at 4:15 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays (with drivers having prior elementary runs, it is sometimes closer to 4:30). Parents are now responsible for the transportation for students involved in music, athletics and other

(Continued on page 11)

School Safety Implementation

In the aftermath of the Newtown, CT school shooting tragedy, school districts across the country have been implementing additional safety measures in their schools. Council Rock is no exception. Citizens For Education sat down with CR Superintendent Mark Klein to talk about the security measures put into place in Council Rock.

Currently 14 of the 15 CR schools have office areas designed or redesigned so that visitors must pass through the office area before being permitted into the rest of the school. CR North will be the last school to undergo renovation to the main entrance area. Once in the office area, visitors are now required to swipe their driver's license through the RAPTOR visitor management system. If the visitor is cleared through the RAPTOR system, which scans criminal activity databases, they receive an adhesive badge with their driver's license picture on it and purpose for visit, which is required to be worn while in the school. Then an office staff employee will buzz them through the secure door so they can proceed into the school building. The RAPTOR system will also alert the CR staff if there is an issue with the visitor and he/she will not be permitted to enter the school. First time visitors without a license will not be permitted into the school. Once a visitor has successfully been cleared to enter the school, their information is stored in the system and they do not need to swipe their license each time they visit that particular school. So, frequent visitors to that school, such as PTO officers and volunteers, will not have to swipe their license at every visit.

As with any new system, says Mark Klein, there have been a few minor glitches but these have been quickly corrected. Because CR has one point of contact with RAPTOR problems, they are resolved in a timely manner. There will also be upgrades to the system as time goes on.

A key fob system has also been installed in all 15 schools. A key fob is a small security hardware device with built in authentication used to control access for security purposes. All CR staff members have one and it allows them to swipe their key fob to enter only the school in which they work. In the schools where modulares are still in use, a staff member can take a group of students back into the school building from the modulares using his/her key fob. There are also key fobs on lanyards that the students can use if they need to leave the modular to get into the building for any reason (rest rooms, nurse, etc.). Recess aides also have key fobs on lanyards for students to use if they need to return to the building. No door is ever left unlocked.

All key fobs are programmed to allow a staff member access to a certain building/buildings only during set times. For example, a teacher would not be able to gain access to his/her school at 2:00am or gain access to a school in which they did not work. CR Security employee, Matt Barrett, is responsible for all the key fob programming. Each key fob has a registered number. If one is lost Matt can easily have it deactivated and a new one issued. So, if someone found a lost key fob they would not be able to gain access to any CR school building. All key fobs are turned in at the end of the school year unless the staff member is a 12 month employee. New key fobs will be issued at the start of each new school year.

Another facet of the increased security measures has been the installation of cameras in all schools. Each school has 8 or 9 cameras placed in various locations throughout the building. The two high schools have considerably more cameras. Principals or designated employees may monitor any camera whenever they feel it necessary. The Superintendent and a few others have remote access to the cameras.

It wasn't very long ago that fire drills were the only drills practiced in schools. Today districts all over the nation, including CR, also practice Shelter in Place drills, hurricane/tornado drills and interior/exterior lockdown drills. Staff is continually trained in all of these drills that are practiced at various times during the day and year. Active shooter drills are conducted by our local police departments and the Mid County S.W.A.T. team at our two high schools. Every school building entrance is numbered both inside and out in

(Continued on next page)

In the Numbers

CR Student Bus Ride Times in minutes

Secondary Schools	Average	Longest	% of riders Over 30 minutes
South HS	12.6	47	1.20%
North HS	15.6	50	8.40%
Holland MS	11.1	43	0.50%
Newtown MS	19.4	57	17.00%
Richboro MS	11.8	31	3.10%
Elementary Schools	Average	Longest	% of riders Over 20 minutes
Churchville	15.3	41	22.60%
Sol Feinstone	18.8	54	34.40%
Goodnoe	12.9	48*	8.30%
Holland	16.8	49*	17.90%
Newtown	13.1	39	6.50%
Rolling Hills	12.3	30	8.10%
Wrightstown	19.2	35	34.80%
Hillcrest	13.1	38	13.80%
Richboro **	14.5	47*	14.50%
Maureen Welch	13.0	51*	19.10%
* Represents a Special Education student			
** Among the Special Ed "Applied Behavior Analysis" students, 92% ride over 20 min; the average is 33.3 min. & the longest is 47 min.			

(Transportation Cost - continued from page 9)

activities that traditionally run until 5 pm.

Since a recent school board vote allows the high school libraries to be open longer on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and students have a place to go following clinic hours, Citizens recognizes that it would be helpful to parents to eliminate the 4:15 buses on Tuesday and Thursday, and provide the service instead with 5 pm buses. When specifically asked about that change, Mr. Pinheiro thought that would be a good idea because it will increase the amount of time bus drivers have to drop off elementary students and return to the high school in time for 5:00. Since this time shift would incur no cost unless there is a significant increase in ridership, **Citizens For Education is advocating that the Administration and school board explore the idea of having 5 pm, instead of 4:15 pm buses at the high schools only on Tuesday and Thursday, to accommodate students in activities and the needs of working parents.**

Despite decreasing state subsidies, the CR Transportation Department continues to safely transport students at the lowest possible cost, through the diligent management of all transportation processes. Citizens For Education would like to thank Jack Pinheiro for his valuable insights into this important district function.

(School Safety Implementation—continued from page 10)

order to identify a location in an emergency, and local law enforcement has building plans of the CR schools. Additionally, panic buttons that link directly to the police have been installed in various locations at each building.

Even the buses that transport our students have become more secure. All buses are equipped with a GPS so that CR knows where every bus is at all times. Security cameras can be installed in any bus whenever necessary. Bus drivers receive training as well.

Much thought has gone into implementing these changes. Mark Klein brought in all four local police chiefs to help determine what CR's security needs were so that the proper decisions could be made. The district has spent \$1.2 million on security enhancements in the schools. According to Mr. Klein, keeping all students and staff members safe is the primary goal of the district. That seems like money well spent. Nobody wants to see a tragedy strike our district. These measures will help bring some piece of mind, but it is up to all of us to be aware and if you "see something, say something."

Focus on the Middle Schools: Points of Pride

Citizens For Education recently toured each of the district's three middle schools to chat with the principals and discover what makes each school a unique and special place of learning for our community's 7th and 8th graders. While staff members in every school work diligently toward the academic preparation of their students, certain aspects of the middle school experience stand out. This is due to the top-level vision of the administration and/or the excellence of the teachers, staff, and parent community. A brief comparison of school statistics is shown in the table and a summary of five Points of Pride for each school follows.

	Newtown MS	Richboro MS	Holland MS
Year Built	1955	1964	1974
Current # of students	863	510	517
# of teams for 7th/8th	3/3 + 1 Arts team	2/2	2/2
# of Professional Staff/ Support Staff	68/31	47/32	50/19
Sending Elementary Schools	Newtown Goodnoe Sol Feinstone Wrightstown	Richboro Rolling Hills Maureen M. Welch Churchville (approx. 10 students)	Holland Hillcrest Churchville
Destination High School	CR North (12 students go to South)	CR South	CR South

Newtown Middle School Principal Tim Long and Assistant Principal Terry Stoertz identified the following points of pride:

- Student and faculty sponsored community service projects, including an overnight lock-in volleyball tournament to support Autism Cares, making sandwiches for local food banks and soup kitchens, volunteering at Newtown's Chandler Hall assisted living center, and gathering backpacks for The Synergy Project (<http://www.vyhphila.org/locations/bucks-county/street-outreach-program/>).
- Full utilization of the school's proximity to Tyler State Park, which includes a spring reenactment of the Battle of Bunker Hill, riding bikes in the park during gym, and an innovative team-building program called Crossroads. Crossroads teaches each grade level how to work together to overcome physical obstacles and challenges while enhancing the middle school experience. The curriculum requires teams to communicate and work together in small groups to solve specific challenges, such as how to cross an imaginary body of water using a limited number of wood planks. In this exercise, the team starts on one side of the water and must navigate all of its members to the other side, requiring that some students have to wait to cross over in addition to ensuring the planks span the water.
- Excellence in the theatre and music program, where typical annual musicals draw 100+ cast members and feature a full orchestra. NMS was the first middle school to implement a guitar program in which every 8th grade student participates.
- Strong parent involvement via the PTA, which sponsors programs such as a Holocaust speaker series, Go for the Green assembly, and a Getting To Know You picnic for incoming 6th graders and their families. In addition, they have funded a theater production of Anne Frank, the purchase of a new piano, and a new book cart and reading chair for the library, among other projects. The PTA has been actively participating as a nonprofit organization since 1997.
- Facility distinctions: NMS includes a huge theater seating 600+ and tennis courts behind the school.

Richboro Middle School Principal Rich Hollahan spoke highly about these points of pride:

- Administration, student, faculty, and PTO involvement in beautifying the school, including indoor and outdoor landscaping, painting murals and signs, new gym scoreboard, new floor tiles, and a sports display

(Continued on next page)

(Middle School Points of Pride - continued from page 12)

case with rotating electronic photos and athletes of the week. A new mural will add thumbprints of every 8th grader who graduates from the school, providing a lasting reminder of each student's imprint on the hearts and minds of the school staff.

- Staff enthusiasm for piloting new district technology, such as the use of surveillance cameras and security key fobs to allow teacher access. The Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS) Student Growth Reporting, "analyzes available data from previous years to help districts and schools evaluate how much groups of students have gained academically in a school year."
- An annual floor hockey tournament which involves 80 students and is held during the Resource Activity (RA) period over the course of six weeks in winter.
- Substantial school pride, evidenced in the Blue & White nights, team scavenger hunts, team BBQ lunch, and the extreme leaf rake-over service project, in which student teams volunteer to rake lawns for the elderly.
- Facility distinctions: Outdoor courtyard funded by the PTO which includes tables, benches and landscaping. Students enjoy their lunch outside during warmer weather. The indoor cafeteria includes a TV, also funded by the PTO. The theater seats 360.

Holland Middle School Principal Dan Greenland proudly discussed the following points of pride:

- Staff willingness to promote new initiatives to push the leading edge of instruction. One teacher is currently testing a "flipped classroom" in which, instead of traditional homework, students watch a 4-minute Khan Academy instructional video about a specific math concept at home and complete several related math

problems via Quia, an online questionnaire. The teacher can review the students' understanding through the Quia results, and also lead the class in practice problems, while verifying that all students have understood the lesson before moving on.

- Use of the Mango online language program in 7th grade to allow students to hear an introduction to all offered languages (French/German/Spanish) before deciding which to take in 8th grade. Eighth graders use Mango during class and have access to home use to enhance understanding of their selected language.
- A huge, open library with 80 computers which allows large groups to take the Keystone Exams online, thereby eliminating the need to secure paper copies. The computers are also used by teachers and students to enhance classroom learning, and the numbers allow multiple groups to be accommodated at one time.
- Active community service clubs such as Kids In Community Service (KICS) and Student Council. HMS has been the top March of Dimes donor in the state for the last 5 years.
- Facility distinctions: HMS is the only middle school with no trailers, which provides enhanced safety for students. Large, open rooms facilitate student movement and involvement in Tech Ed, Art, and Family/Consumer Science classes. Color coded "houses" enable students to quickly identify what part of the building they are in, and teachers of the same subject area are located within a given house to encourage collaborative practices.

While the students are in the middle school for a brief two years, these and many other points of pride create lasting memories for students, teachers, and staff members. Citizens For Education would like to thank all of the administrators for their time and enthusiasm in showcasing their respective schools.

Did You Know there are nine classes shuttled from the high schools this year?

Students shuttle from South to North for:

AP Computer Science, AP Art History, AP French, French 1, Accelerated Accounting, and Honors Architectural Design.

Students shuttle from North to South for:

AP Environmental Science, AP Statistics, and German 1.

Council Rock's Planning Committee Update

Council Rock's (CR's) greatest challenge is to deliver quality education while addressing the needs of its aging buildings, along with meeting the growing financial obligations for the state's Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS). To facilitate transparency and community involvement in facing this challenge, the CR School Board convened a community volunteer Planning Committee in late 2013 and charged the 30+ members to "address using our facilities in the most efficient and effective ways consistent with our current educational policies and procedures."

The challenges facing the Planning Committee include:

- Funding the delivery of a quality education while meeting PSERS obligations
- Geographically unbalanced and declining enrollment
- Aging facilities and needs for renovation

The Board has charged the committee "to deliver at least three alternatives for community and school board consideration." Each alternative is to include an actionable plan with advantages, trade-offs, and timelines with measurable short and long term outcomes. Topics being explored include the effect of enrollment declines, sizing schools for financial efficiencies, removing trailers, redistricting students, closing schools, setting renovation priorities, and more.

As CR looks to tighten its belt to meet its financial commitments while preserving important educational programs, Citizens For Education would like to thank all those who volunteered to dive into the details behind what will ultimately be the School Board's decision.

Middle School Class Sizes

The following data shows the class sizes of the middle schools for the core courses (Math, Social Studies, English, Science, and Reading/Foreign Language).

	RMS Grade 7	RMS Grade 8	NMS Grade 7	NMS Grade 8	HMS Grade 7	HMS Grade 8
# of classes						
<20 students	10	10	13	10	12	14
% of classes	20%	19%	17%	13%	23%	27%
20-25 students	26	12	19	18	18	16
% of classes	52%	23%	24%	23%	34%	31%
26-29 students	12	22	22	24	19	16
% of classes	24%	43%	28%	30%	37%	31%
30+ students	2	8	24	27	3	6
% of classes	4%	15%	31%	34%	6%	11%
Total Classes	50	52	78	79	52	52

While no single year of statistics can be extrapolated to make assumptions concerning class size, Citizens For Education reviews the class size data every year, looking for long term trends as well as consistency among the middle schools (see our website for prior years class size and class rigor tables). It is interesting to note that, once again, NMS has a very high percentage of classes over 30 students. While HMS and RMS now have similar class sizes and student population, HMS has 18 more permanent classrooms than RMS. As the population continues to decline across the school district, the administration will be challenged to place students so that the number of students and the class sizes are appropriate to the middle school facility.

High School Enrichment and Athletic Activities The Antidote to “I Have Nothing to Do”

Citizens For Education recently surveyed high school principals to determine the range of enrichment activities, trips, and clubs offered at each school. This is the last article in our three part series highlighting the enrichment activities found in all CR schools. The articles and table listing of all activities from the elementary, middle and high schools can be found on our website at www.citizensforeducation.com.

The following highlights some of the area specific activities offered at both high schools, unless otherwise noted:

Academic Clubs and Honor Societies:

- Students at both high schools who attain the requirements have the opportunity for membership in National Honor Society.
- There are specific curricular Honor Societies for English, Math, Science, and Social Studies.
- In World Language, French, German, Latin and Spanish National Honor Societies are offered to eligible students, coincident with participation in French Club, German Club, Latin Club and Spanish Club. At North, students participate in the Bucks County World Language competition.
- Mathletes, Reading Olympics, and Debate Clubs. Students at South have the Scholars Bowl Team.

After School Sports:

- Fall: cross country, field hockey, football, golf, soccer, and womens tennis and volleyball
- Winter: basketball, bowling, indoor track, swimming, and wrestling.
- Spring: baseball, lacrosse, softball, and track and field, and mens tennis and volleyball.
- Cheerleading is offered all year, as are various intramural activities such as Ultimate Frisbee.

Music and the Arts:

- There are several band and orchestra groups, various choral groups, and the theater groups (Sock ‘n’ Buskin at North, Golden Wings at South).
- Annual trips to the PA State Thespian Festival and the International Thespian Festival taken by the Sock “n” Buskin theater troupe at Council Rock North.
- For several years, students in the music department at Council Rock South have had the prestigious honor of performing at The White House in Washington, DC.

- Music Department trips to foreign countries to perform.
- Music Department students also participate in several competitions and festivals and hold several community concerts throughout the year.
- Other clubs: Art Forum, Dance Club, Artistic Design Club.

Health, Environmental and Civics Clubs: (School specific clubs denoted by N or S)

- Aids Awareness, American Red Cross Club (N), Breast Cancer Awareness (S), Environmental Action Club, Health Activism Club (N) and the Pro-Life Club (S).
- SADD, CR Cares, Gay/Straight Alliance, Coalition for Healthy Youth, Key Club
- Local, National or World event clubs such as the Interact Club, Greater Philadelphia Project (S), Operation Africa (N), Relay for Life (N), and UNICEF Club (S).
- Model UN, Political Science Club, FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America), SAB (Student Advisory Board), SEB (Student Executive Board).

The lists above are just a sampling of the many diverse clubs and enrichment activities that students can participate in, both at school and through school trips. Some of the more unique clubs include the Doctor Who Club, Free Thinkers, Procrastination Club, and Strategy and Role Playing, along with about 50 more too numerous to name. A complete list of all activities can be found on our website, referenced above. Finally, seniors have the opportunity to go on an enrichment trip to the Happiest Place on Earth – Disney World, of course!

Enrichment, extracurricular activities and athletics may positively impact students’ success. Not only are they having fun and being encouraged to interact with their peers, such activities can enhance time management and stress management skills and can increase a candidate’s appeal when applying for college. Many of the activities are supported by CR staff, PTO leadership and volunteers who seek to be positive role models for students. CFE commends the many volunteers and staff for their efforts to provide a well rounded array of fun and enriching activities for students. Updates to the table can be forwarded to Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com.



Citizens For Education

Membership Form

****Check your membership expiration on your label!
Renew today!**

Become a member of Citizens For Education and help to shape the discussions and changes in the Council Rock School District. Join today in helping us to be a voice for the children of Council Rock. Membership entitles you to receive our newsletter published semi-annually and voting privileges at our general membership yearly planning meeting, held in the fall.

Name: _____

Address: _____

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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**

\$25.00 - 4 Years w/electronic delivery (3 years via mail)

\$10.00 - 1 year

Circle one: **New Member** **Renewal****

** Already a member, but need to update information (current e-mail, address, phone #, etc.)? Please contact citizens4ed@yahoo.com

Citizens For Education is a not-for-profit, non-partisan community group whose objectives 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.

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