



Citizens For Education



Fall Issue

November 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.

How Pluses and Minuses are Used in CR

Plus and minus grades for individual courses are recorded on transcripts in Council Rock, yet the calculation of the final GPA does not reflect them. When a student receives his/her final grade in a course, the teacher makes the decision whether to include plus or minus, indicating the strength or weakness of the grade. Some teachers use them while others do not. The final grade is then recorded on the transcript, including any plus or minus. However, in the calculation of GPA, only the letter grade counts, not the plus or minus. This introduces inconsistency between the transcript grades and the GPA.

The district has been studying this issue and recently the Academic Standards Committee of the Board requested an explanation of the process.

For interim and marking period grades, the Home Access Center (HAC) calculates the letter grade and automatically includes plus or minus based on the numerical grade out of 100% (98-100=A+, 92-97=A, 90-91=A-, 88-89=B+, 82-87=B, 80-81=B-, 78-79=C+, 72-77=C, 70-71=C-, 68-69=D+, 62-67=D, 60-61=D-, 59 and below=F). However, when it comes to the final

(Continued on page 3)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How Pluses and Minuses are Used.....	1
BYOD Underway.....	1
A Five Year Capital Plan.....	3
Maintaining a Quality Music Program.....	4
Sam Smith, New Rolling Hills Principal.....	6
Local Scholarship Opportunities.....	6
In the Numbers—Inventory of Technology.....	7
Humanities (Gifted) Program Overview.....	8
Tech Corner—Barbara Tiger, HMS Librarian...	9
Running Classes as Enrollment is Declining..	11
Computer Coding Instruction at CR.....	12

Contact us at: citizens4Ed@yahoo.com



BYOD Underway

Last fall, Citizens For Education (CFE) reported on CRSD's plans for a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) pilot program that was to begin in spring 2014 (see "Information Technology In Council Rock" at www.citizensforeducation.com => Special Topics=> Tech Corner). The "D" in BYOD refers to any portable electronic device (i.e. smart phone, laptop, tablet, iPad, etc.) used to augment the educational process. The goal of BYOD is to improve access to information technology by incorporating into the classroom the technological devices that students already use at home.

BYOD Concerns Addressed

As part of the preparation for BYOD, CR surveyed parents last spring. Parent's concerns were addressed by the district and responses to parental concerns are as follows:

1. For students who cannot afford a portable device and students who are not able to bring their portable device to school, the district will provide a device for them to use in school. Currently each high school has 12 carts, each containing 15 laptops, for use by teachers on a sign-out basis.
2. Concern about damage/loss/theft of devices is ongoing; however, the district has stated that it cannot be responsible for devices brought to school and the form that parents sign acknowledges that position.
3. Restriction of inappropriate websites is accomplished via a regularly updated content filter that prevents access to sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and others that are deemed distracting or harmful.
4. The district is investigating access to charging stations with a possible option of having a location with lockable cubbies where a student can leave a device, in a secure environment, while it is charging.
5. All types of devices and formats can be used,

(Continued on page 2)



(BYOD—continued from page 1)

including Apple products such as iPhones and iPads; Google products such as Chromebooks and Android phones; Kindles and other e-readers; and Microsoft-based devices such as Surface Pro tablets and Windows-based laptops.

Before they can implement the BYOD pilot program, a teacher must have on file, for each student who is electing to bring in a device, a “Personal Electronic Education Device Agreement” that is signed by the student, parent and an administrator.

BYOD Infrastructure

Currently, a wireless cloud in each school provides access for all computers already purchased, but it is insufficient to accommodate the expanded technology usage of a fully implemented BYOD program. Although fewer computers will need to be purchased if students are bringing their devices to school, expenditures for expanding the wireless infrastructure are rising. One access point, costing approximately \$1000, can support 20-30 devices.

Since any use of BYOD would be teacher-directed, the principals gave permission for teachers at both high schools to participate in the BYOD pilot which began in May 2014. Although some elementary and middle school teachers are experimenting with BYOD on an informal basis, with their principal’s permission, improvements need to be made to the infrastructure (i.e. wireless access points) before BYOD can be fully implemented. The upgrades to the middle schools and the elementary schools will be phased in over the next few years.

Only three schools, the recently renovated Churchville, Holland, and Goodnoe elementary schools, are fully outfitted to provide wireless access in every classroom. When PTO’s donate additional technology devices (i.e. iPads) for their school, they are also being asked to donate \$1,000 for each device purchased to cover the costs incurred to attain wireless access points in every other classroom. Without additional access points, the portable devices will have no use in school because the students will not be able to access the Wi-Fi they need to use those devices.

Since CR is about to embark on a major renovation and consolidation of the middle schools, increasing access points for more devices will be included in the building and/or renovation specs for Holland and Newtown middle schools.

Each high school currently has 72 access points, but more are needed to achieve wireless in every classroom. At the October 2014 Facilities Meeting, Matt Frederickson (Director of Information Technology) and Doug Taylor (Supervisor of Operational Services) presented a preliminary list of summer projects. This list included an expansion of the wireless infrastructure at an estimated cost of \$197,000 for each of the high schools. This expenditure still has to be approved by the School Board.

BYOD Staff Development

Teacher training for BYOD implementation is done both in house and by bringing in technology specialists from sources such as the Intermediate Unit, and is expected to be ongoing. The district holds a “Deep Smarts Day” in-service every January where Council Rock teachers mentor other teachers in their area of expertise on best practices, including the integration of technology into the classroom.

CR previously had one Elementary and one Secondary Education Specialist with teaching and technology expertise who advised teachers on integrating technology into their classrooms, but they were cut from the budget several years ago during the economic downturn. As part of a CFE interview to find out about BYOD, Mr. Frederickson expressed, as part of his “wish list,” the need to reinstate one or more Technology Education Specialists.

Citizens For Education is in full support of providing Technology Education Specialists and urges the school directors to support the expansion of technology access for all students in Council Rock.

Over the winter of 2014-15 a BYOD committee of about 40 CR staff members will be meeting to get feedback from those teachers, who have elected with the permission of their principals, to pilot BYOD in their classroom. Citizens For Education will continue to report on the progress and evaluation of BYOD implementation in Council Rock.

A Five Year Capital Plan

The Council Rock Board of School Directors laid out a 5 year capital plan on November 6, 2014. This plan was the result of recommendations provided by a committee of community members tasked with capital planning, combined with administrative recommendations.

The 5 year plan includes:

- Removing all trailers that house students/ instructional programs by the start of the 2015-16 school year, while leaving a maximum of 2 trailers per school, temporarily, for storage. The administration will present this plan in January 2015.
- Removing the remaining storage trailers by August 31, 2016.
- Building a new Newtown Middle School (NMS) on the current NMS property and demolish the existing NMS when construction is complete.
- Renovating Holland Middle School (HMS).
- Redistricting students to close or repurpose Richboro Middle School when HMS renovation is complete. This plan is to be provided by the administration 1 year prior to the completion of the HMS renovation.
- Developing a long term elementary school plan with options for redistricting and closing/ repurposing schools. This plan is to be presented in October 2015 for the 2016-17 school year and each year thereafter, adapting to keep the plan current as needed.
- Developing a long-term plan for capacity and efficiency for the programs currently housed at the leased Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) building. The administration will begin reducing the use of the LSAC building by eliminating all space that is not used as instructional space for students, with commensurate reduction in lease payments starting by Aug. 31, 2015. The LSAC lease will end following the reassignment of student programs.
- Developing a long-term plan for capacity and efficiency of all non-school buildings and properties owned by CRSD. This includes an evaluation of relocating the activities at the Twining Ford Road facility and the use and potential for repurposing or sale of the Twining Ford property. This plan shall be delivered at the board meeting in July 2015 and successive years thereafter, keeping the plan current and adapting as needed.

- Continuing with routine maintenance at schools.

Citizens For Education has advocated for removal of trailers for many years and is pleased to see this will happen in the 2015-16 school year. CFE also applauds the district for looking for efficiencies.

(Pluses and Minuses continued from page 1)

grade at the end of the course, the teacher converts the letter grade (without plus or minus) for each marking period to a point value (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0). A letter grade is assigned to the student based on the total point value over the four marking periods. It is up to the teacher to decide:

1. Whether to include plus and minus in the final grade (and therefore on the transcript).
2. The student's grade when the total point value is between two grades, such as a student having two A's and two B's for the four marking periods. This can be either an A or a B as a final grade, at the teacher's discretion.
3. If the final grade does not accurately reflect the student's work. In this case, an adjustment up or down can be made and a written explanation is included.

This final grade is then placed on the student's transcript, which will eventually be sent to colleges.

The high school administrators have stated that dialog is continuing on this topic. Citizens For Education feels that inconsistent grading practices introduce subjectivity unnecessarily and cause confusion for college admissions offices. Since the HAC software generates a numeric final grade based on a 100% scale, it seems that teachers should use that overall percentage to generate the final grade. If a teacher feels that the final percentage does not accurately reflect the student's work, they already have the ability to raise or lower the grade as they see fit, with a written explanation. It also seems logical that if the GPA does not reflect pluses and minuses, they should not be on the final transcript or, if plus and minus are reported on the transcript, the GPA should also reflect those grades.

CFE would like to see the grading system become more consistent so that all students are on equal footing and subjectivity is reduced.

Maintaining a Quality Music Program for All Students

Music education is valuable for young people. Citizens For Education wrote about the benefits of music education a few years ago and that article can be found on our website www.citizensforeducation.com => Special Topics => Curriculum => Co-Curricular Programs. Since then, further research has shown a connection between music and increased IQ scores, better standardized test scores, better language skills, better learning of other disciplines, and can act as a therapeutic outlet for many students.

A school music program thrives based on its feeder program. Students start with music at the elementary level, move to the middle level and then on to high school. The stronger the elementary interest, the more students will continue. Other factors can influence the feeder program, such as outside interests and class enrollments.

Music Participation Trends

According to CR Music Curriculum Coordinator, Lee Hauslein, there is a 30% reduction in music participation from 6th grade to 7th grade (elementary to middle school). This is largely due to the addition of after-school sports programs, clubs and the opportunity to take a language in middle school. Another factor contributing to the drop in student participation between levels is that the commitment level is different. At the elementary and middle level, lessons are pull-out based, 30 and 50 minutes respectively, and at the middle school, rehearsals occur during the student's Resource Activity (RA) period. In high school, the program shifts to a broader level of instruction where co-curricular opportunities outside of the school day supplement regular education music classes. The good news is that an average of 60% of music students will continue from middle school to high school. It is the policy of the Music Department to talk to every student that doesn't continue in music to find out why. It is unfortunate that the majority of responses indicate students are simply "too busy."

The District has realized the value in capturing a student's interest at the earliest possible opportunity. Newtown and Holland Elementary

schools have begun offering instruction in Guitar. Jazz Bands presently exist at Newtown, Hillcrest, Rolling Hills and Maureen M. Welch Elementary schools. Whether a jazz band exists at an elementary school is dependent upon the staff members or volunteers available to facilitate it.

The District is seeing a change in the emphasis of music education at the high schools. Student interest used to be on keyboarding, percussion instruments and melody, whereas now the attraction is on learning guitar. The district is responding by tailoring course offerings accordingly.

High School Music Options

At the high school level, students with an interest in music have a variety of course selections to supplement their education. Unfortunately, some classes are not being run due to lack of enrollment. The minimum number of students needed to run a class is 18, although there has been some leeway from time to time to run classes with enrollment below that number. The district has also taken a "think outside the box" approach by combining classes of similar content and by shuttling classes from one high school to the other. (See Running Classes as Enrollment is Declining on page 11).

Interest and availability in the elective music classes at the high school level differ dramatically between North and South. While both schools have students in Band, Choir and Orchestra, the additional elective music classes vary. Current enrollment figures provided by the District show that South has classes running in Music Technology, Intro and Intermediate Guitar, Music Theory, Honors Music Arranging, Improvisation and AP Music Theory. North on the other hand, is only running Music Theater, Music Technology and Intro and Intermediate Guitar. Two students at North are shuttled to South for AP Music Theory.

As a result of courses not being run at North, students at South have many more choices of music classes this year. The district does not track the number of students who have chosen these classes prior to their cancellation, though it is safe to assume that some students at North were interested but there were not enough to run the class. The disparity between North and South has occurred because of scheduling and enrollment numbers, which in turn has precipitated a change in staffing levels at each high school. At the peak of high school enrollment, staffing levels at both high schools consisted of 3 full-time teachers in each Music Department. Over the last 5 years, the staffing

(Continued on page 5)

(Music continued from page 4)

level has gradually decreased to the current level of 2 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers at North and 2.4 FTE teachers at South. The phrase “full time equivalent” is used because not every teacher assigned to teach at each high school is doing so on a full-time basis. For the 2014 – 2015 school year, South has 2 teachers assigned to the high school full time where North only has one. At South, John Burns leaves the school for a portion of his day and at North Scott Slutter and Joshua Cook leave the high school for a portion of their day. In addition to their high school teaching responsibilities, the teachers who are part time at the high school are also teaching classes at the middle and elementary school levels. For example, with less music elective classes running at North, Scott Slutter, who teaches more than 120 students in Marching and Concert Band, actually leaves the building for approximately half of his day to teach instrumental lessons at the elementary level. Then, after the school day has ended, Mr. Slutter returns to North to instruct students on an extra-curricular level.

Many music classes run on an Alternate Day schedule and sometimes students simply cannot fit the classes into their schedules. Some students opt to take electives in core subjects instead of music electives. All performance classes (Marching Band, Choir and Orchestra) have an accelerated offering either within the academic class or through a higher level performance group such as Symphonic Band. However, the majority of classroom-based music electives are academic level, not accelerated or honors, and therefore carry no additional weight when calculating a student’s GPA. The only honors level offering is Honors Music Arranging. This may be a factor in students opting for electives in core subject areas where more accelerated and honors options exist.

Additionally, because of redistricting, the student population at North has been declining, so there are less students overall to take the various music classes. This has a negative impact on any North student considering music

as a career, and wanting to take multiple music classes in high school. According to enrollment projections, this trend will continue unless the district realigns high school sending areas.

Because only 70% of elementary students, and approximately 60% of middle school students, continue with music at the next level, the district is looking for ways to increase the music student retention rate. Two ideas are being considered. First, the district is initiating “Cluster Concerts” this year, where students from all levels and feeder schools will perform together. The South orchestra and the North band are both doing an elementary/middle/high school cluster concert. North’s orchestra and choir are each doing a middle/high school cluster concert. The thought is that this will increase interest for students, after interacting with students at the higher grades and seeing the difference

Did You Know that CR North has 1767 students in 103 classrooms and CR South has 2079 students in 87 classrooms?

in the level of performance between the groups. Finally, staff members from the middle and high schools are speaking with music students at the elementary schools to spur interest in the secondary music programs.

Middle School Music Schedules

A schedule change that is being looked at for the middle schools may have the opposite effect – losing students in the music program. There has been some discussion about moving the Resource Activity (RA) period to the end of the school day. This could impact the number of classes that string teachers, who teach at both the elementary and middle levels, can teach. Since the middle school starts before the elementary school, string teachers can do rehearsals at the middle school and then go to the elementary school and teach a full day. If RA were at the end of the day, string teachers would lose 2 hours of lessons (because of travel time back and forth) at the elementary school. This would occur on every day that they had middle school rehearsals, so they could lose 6-10 hours per week of instructional time. Because of this issue, and also because of the athletes who would be missing rehearsals, Mr. Hauslein and the instrumental music teachers are concerned about this possibility and the disadvantages of changes to the RA period are being discussed.

Citizens For Education applauds the efforts of Mr. Hauslein and his team to raise awareness of the wonderful Council Rock Music Program and to increase the number of students who participate in music throughout their Council Rock career.

Sam Smith, New Principal at Rolling Hills

In July 2014, Sam Smith was named Principal of Rolling Hills Elementary School. Mr. Smith had sixteen years of teaching experience in CR before taking his current position.

A 1998 graduate of Penn State University, Mr. Smith also earned his Masters in Instructional Technology from St. Joseph's University along with a Certification of Administration. After subbing for a year outside of CR, he began his career at CR as a full time substitute until he was hired in 1999 as a full time fourth grade teacher at Holland Elementary. Mr. Smith has taught 3rd, 4th & 6th grades over the years and in 2010 he became the Math Specialist at Holland Elementary and Maureen Welch Elementary. More recently, Mr. Smith filled in for Wrightstown Elementary principal, Beth Fox, who was out on maternity leave. After several rounds of interviews with different teams during the principal search, Mr. Smith was hired and now reports to Joy McClendon, Director of Elementary Education.

Mr. Smith is married to a former Richboro Elementary teacher and together they have 4 children – 3 boys ages 11, 9 & 7 and a 2 year old daughter. As a parent and principal who has a passion for teaching he often asks himself, "How do I want my own children talked to?" and "What do I want from my children's teachers?" Respecting the students and enjoying their love for learning

Did You Know that Richboro Middle School, with 487 students in 25 classrooms, has only 9 less students than Holland Middle School, with 496 students in 43 classrooms?

enabled him to become a successful teacher.

Now an Administrator, Mr. Smith is focused on developing relationships with the students, parents and staff at Rolling Hills. He looks forward to greeting the students in the morning as they enter school and wants to be as visible and accessible as possible. He is also working closely with the Home and School Association because he knows the value of having a great partnership with the parents. Rolling Hills is a community-oriented school with many involved parents. Getting to know the staff at Rolling Hills is also important to him. He is looking forward to working with the District on staff development and also on integrating technology into all subjects. One of his priorities is spending time in the classrooms and working with

teachers on new initiatives, such as updating standards on the new elementary report cards. Rolling Hills has a Positive Behavior Support Plan where students who are "caught" being good are rewarded. Mr. Smith will mail a card to the students at home or contact the parents to let them know their child was caught being good. He also sends out a weekly email to parents keeping them informed of what's going on. These are just some of the ways that he is reaching out to the students and parents and keeping the lines of communication open.

Mr. Smith is excited to be Principal at Rolling Hills, is looking forward to becoming more involved in this school community, and working together with staff and parents to make Rolling Hills a great place to learn and work. His enthusiasm can be summed up in the saying he shares with students and staff, "Make today better than yesterday."

Local Scholarship Opportunities for CRHS Seniors

Each spring, thousands of dollars in local scholarships are awarded to deserving students during Senior Recognition Nights at Council Rock North and South. These awards are the culmination of an application process which begins in mid-February, when the Counseling Center at each high school releases their Criteria Sheet for Local Scholarships. At that time, applications for each local scholarship must be picked up in the Counseling Center or downloaded from the Counseling website, completed and returned by the stated deadline (usually the third or fourth week of March) to be eligible for consideration. Both need-based and merit based scholarships are included. Many of these scholarships require an essay, an activities resume or summary, SAT or ACT test scores, notice of college acceptance, LINC'S hours, and/or FAFSA financial information (need-based only).

In June 2014, 110 South seniors received 142 awards ranging from \$100 to \$10,000 for a total outlay of \$104,200. At North, 120 seniors received 148 awards ranging from \$100 to \$10,000 for a total outlay of \$158,850. Questions about local scholarships can be directed to Mr. DeMaio (jdemaioc@crsd.org) in the North Counseling Center and Mr. Colacicco (jcolacicco@crsd.org) in the South Counseling Center.

In the Numbers Inventory of Technology

Below is a chart of the locations of the 5,961 technology devices in the Council Rock School District. This equipment serves approximately 14,000 users for regular and special education, staff and teacher training. This chart is not meant to be a direct comparison between the schools as special education and/or curricular needs create dissimilar technology demands that affect the number of devices at each school. For example, iPad/tablet totals are highest at Goodnoe, where they have been shown to be beneficial for the many special education students being taught there.

The IT (Information Technology) Department services and supports usage and connectivity regardless of whether the devices were purchased by CRSD or donated. It is estimated that about 80% of the district's iPads/tablets are donated.

In general, Council Rock follows long-standing guidelines in terms of the number of devices in a school. Each building has one PC per classroom/educational space. In addition, there are two labs at each elementary school, two to four labs at each middle school and eight to twelve labs at each high school. There are also two laptop carts per elementary school and middle school and twelve per high school. Citizens For Education recommends that the district periodically evaluate the allocation of technological devices based on changing populations within each school, to ensure that students' regular education technology needs are met with parity across the district.

COUNCIL ROCK INVENTORY OF TECHNOLOGY						
<u>TYPE of Technology</u>		<u>Desk Tops</u>	<u>Lap Tops</u>	<u>Netbooks</u>	<u>iPads/Tablets</u>	<u>PER SCHOOL</u>
<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>Nov. Enroll.</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
North HS	1767	586	616	25	155	1382
South HS	2079	491	432	25	225	1173
Holland M	496	239	56	3	43	341
Newtown M	822	281	65	11	18	375
Richboro M	487	197	52	3	41	293
Churchville	657	128	35		10	173
Goodnoe	770	134	35		133	302
Hillcrest	517	120	35		35	190
Holland E	340	126	36		40	202
M. M. Welch	628	148	9	35	54	246
Newtown E	665	102	72		4	178
Richboro	432	137	35		49	221
Rolling Hills	415	117	35		4	156
Sol Feinstone	678	131	35		3	169
Wrightstown	327	93	35	15	7	150
Sloan	17	22	20		4	46
Achieve	14	1	14		10	25
Chancellor	Staff &	91	152	10	71	324
Twining Ford	Training	4	10		1	15
Totals		3148	1779	127	907	5961

Humanities (Gifted) Program Review

The Council Rock Humanities (gifted) program was reviewed in the spring of 2013. The district felt that an outside review would be beneficial and a committee, assembled by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU), was formed. The review revealed many areas of program success as well as suggestions for improvement. The review can be found on the District's website: www.crsd.org=>Administration=>Special Services=>Gifted Program Review.

There is currently no set "model" for gifted programs. It largely depends on the culture of the district, how schedules are organized and the structure of the classes. The overarching feature is to allow gifted students the opportunity to spend time with peers of similar abilities. In Council Rock, the program is delivered through the Social Studies classes. At the elementary level it is more exploratory, while the secondary level is more research based.

Following the BCIU review, the Director of Special Services, Dr. Charles Lambert, determined next steps to looking deeper into and improving the program. The first step was to meet with representative stakeholders (district staff, parents, etc.) to develop an implementation plan and to prioritize the steps. Sub-committees were assembled to look into three key areas that the District was looking to implement quickly:

- Developing a mission and vision statement
- Infusing math into the elementary gifted program
- Increasing the rigor of the gifted program at the middle level

To that end:

- Mission and vision statements have been developed and are on the website.
- Math is being infused in the 2nd and 3rd grade humanities program with a focus on problem solving; tying the Common Core standards with math practices. 2nd and 3rd grade were chosen as they are precursors to the Math Enrichment at the 4th grade level. This is an ongoing process with the Math Specialists and Humanities teachers working together. Math enrichment in 3rd grade is being looked at, but at this time the additional staffing requirements are not maintainable in the budget.
- The middle schools now have a dedicated Humanities teacher for each grade level, instead of a social studies teacher doing double duty in Humanities classes. The social studies curriculum is being compacted, allowing gifted learners to move through the curriculum faster. As a result, opportunities for in-depth, small group and independent learning of an interdisciplinary fashion can occur. Looking toward the future, the district would like to bring experts from the community into the classrooms - in a seminar approach - a few times per year to lead discussions of an advanced nature.

Perhaps the biggest change that is being considered is moving the Humanities program under the English Language Arts (ELA) umbrella, instead of Social Studies. Many gifted students are talented readers. It is thought that by offering gifted support through ELA, teachers will be able to do curriculum compacting to open up time for additional study across content areas. This idea is being piloted in Newtown Elementary in 5th grade this year with students remaining with their classmates for Social Studies and having their ELA classes delivered by the Humanities teacher. This pilot will be monitored and evaluated. If successful, other grades and other schools will be added in future years with an eye to this being implemented in grades 4-6 across the District within a few years.

As changes are implemented, other key areas of focus include:

- Communication – ensuring the Humanities student understands why they are in the program and allowing parents a better understanding of the results of the initial placement testing and the components of each specific test
- Staff Development – training all teaching staff to understand the needs of gifted learners

(Continued on page 9)

Tech Corner **Barbara Tiger—Holland Middle School’s Librarian**

To describe Barbara Tiger as the “Librarian” at Holland Middle School (HMS) does neither her nor the library justice. Because of her efforts, the HMS library has evolved into so much more than a quiet place where students go to check out books and use reference materials.

She is the cheerleader for students and HMS library activities. She is excited about technology and is able to persuade staff, parents, and community members to become involved. This extends from getting “likes” on Holland’s Library Facebook page to raising funds by convincing vendors to donate to the school.

For those who have never been there, the library at HMS is located in the center of the second floor classrooms and serves as the school’s media center – it is both the schematic and technological hub for the teachers and students. The smiling, vivacious librarian, Ms. Tiger greets students passing through the library throughout the day. Ms. Tiger misses no opportunity to help students grow scholastically through rich educational and technological guidance.

The HMS library is much larger than other Council Rock middle school libraries and has an abundance of natural light from the skylights. More valuable than any of the standard physical features is the enlightenment students receive from thoughtful, interesting, and sometimes humorous rotating displays that adorn the walls and tops of bookcases. During Citizens’ interview visit, there were pictures of Holland’s teachers, when they themselves were in Middle School, accompanied by narratives of their favorite middle school book.

As a library teacher, Ms. Tiger uses a long a list of library curriculum goals for both seventh and eighth grade students. She collaborates with the classroom teachers to integrate their subject’s curricular goals with technology. She and other teachers help students to access technology to organize and gather information for presentations. Students use a program called “Noodletools” as a vehicle for note taking, outlining, citation, document annotation, and collaborative research and writing.

In seventh grade, among other duties, the middle school librarian teaches students:

- Literature appreciation
- Online search strategies

(Continued on page 10)

(Humanities Review continued from page 8)

(including those with two or more exceptionalities – such as gifted with ADHD; gifted with learning disabilities) and how to meet those needs (through enrichment and/or acceleration) in regular education classrooms and across subject areas

- GIEP Improvement – adding more content to the Gifted IEP including goals based on interest and learning types
- Differentiation – increasing the use of standardized assessment data to improve differentiation for Gifted students in regular education classes

Council Rock currently has approximately 900 students in the gifted program. This represents about 8% of the student body. Pennsylvania mandates gifted education but does not fund these programs. This differs from Special Education that is mandated at the federal level and a portion of funding comes from the federal and state governments. Gifted programs require a higher staffing level than regular education programs, though not as much staff as Special Education.

Citizens For Education thanks Dr. Charles Lambert for filling us in on improvements to date and goals for the future in the District Humanities program. CFE is happy to see this program acquiring more depth and a cross-curricular component.

Visit our website at www.citizensforeducation.com

(Barbara Tiger continued from page 9)

- How to use databases
- The rules of copyrights and plagiarism
- The 20 checks to make sure a website has legitimate information (see the Web Page Evaluation Form used by Ms. Tiger at www.citizensforeducation.com)
- How to use the district's catalogue platform - "Destiny"

Seventh graders work on a "Point of View" project where they research and report on two opposing points of view, such as the pros and cons of Stem Cell Research. The seventh grade Humanities project uses technology to research and find challenging solutions to real world problems, like homelessness. Seventh grade library curricular goals include evaluating and organizing information, online graphic organizers, and learning the works cited format.

Eighth graders research a decade in 20th Century America. After choosing a decade, they investigate any one of the following categories: Art, Music, Fashion, War, Movies/TV, Political Events, Inventions, Technology, Sports, Disasters, Science, Medicine and Health. Eighth grade library curricular goals include defining and accessing a variety of information from multiple sources, and evaluating and organizing information. In addition, students work on skills to improve collaborative research and group projects.

At Holland's library there is a multitude of software tools available to students including:

- Destiny - software platform for managing library resources where students can access articles for research or eBooks.
- Lexile.com – uses a Lexile measure to match students with books that are appropriate for their reading level.
- GALE – provides primary source materials for students to do online reliable research.

Ms. Tiger works to fill gaps in the budget. She and the staff at HMS hold fundraisers at Applebee's to purchase "wish list" items and to provide the extras that enhance learning. The library also receives a little revenue from Barnes and Noble book fairs. That money is used to ensure the latest book series that is capturing the student's interest is on the HMS shelves.

She asked for and received book donations at the ALA (American Library Association) Convention from the National Library Convention in Philadelphia last year.

Some of those donated books are available for student use and the balance is kept in her office for "teacher lending". This year she arranged for Barnes and Noble to sponsor an author's visit. Jasper Fforde spent two days with HMS staff and students.

Ms. Tiger collaborates with HMS teachers on a daily basis (either in person or via email) about new methods for using technology. She also schedules twice a month meetings with other teachers to share how technology can be used to enhance learning in the classroom and in the library. She engages teachers by asking them to participate in a survey or join her for a cup of coffee. The hour Citizens intended to spend interviewing her turned into an enjoyable and informative three hours and a record for the longest interview ever. She is both welcoming and

a wealth of information on innovative uses of technology in education.

Barbara Tiger's resume and depth of experience is impressive - and only

Did You Know that Holland Middle School has 496 students in 43 classrooms and Newtown Middle School has 822 students in 39 classrooms and 4 trailers?

the book jacket of what she has to offer as a mentor to other teachers. She taught math in the Upper Darby School District for 13 years and then took time off to raise her children before returning to education as a part-time teacher of the Council Rock (CR) internet safety program. At CR, she has taught a range of subjects from Algebra 1 to business courses. Ms. Tiger holds a BS in Secondary Education with a math option. She passed the Praxis (American teacher certification exams) to obtain her Business degree to teach computers, and earned her Librarian certification in 2009-2010. Ms. Tiger is a well renowned and dedicated cheerleading coach who has the persona to encourage students to be interested in literature and to coax the most reluctant students into trying new approaches.

Citizens For Education thanks Ms. Tiger for agreeing to be the focus of "Tech Corner" and for all that she does for Council Rock and its students. She would rather give the credit to others, including her capable and praise worthy Library Assistant, Mrs. Kathleen Cusick, and the capable staff of Holland Middle. She publically thanks her Principal Dan Greenland, winner of the 2013 PA School Librarians Association (PSLA) Administrator Award, along with Holland's PTO for supporting student access to technology by purchasing what is now a total of 40 iPads.

Running Classes as Enrollment is Declining

Over the last three years, the high school population has shifted due to the redistricting of Richboro Middle School to CR South. The population at CR North has declined by 264 students to date while the population at South has remained steady at close to facility capacity. This can result in difficulties meeting class size minimums to offer classes and/or finding space to run classes. There are three options the school district exercises to mitigate these issues: cancel the class, shuttle students between the two high schools or combine two classes of similar content.

Every year, certain classes are cancelled due to low student enrollment. Often, but not always, the classes are electives. If the class doesn't run for three consecutive years, a recommendation may be made to the School Board to have the class permanently dropped. This year, at both North and South, 20 courses are not running due to lack of enrollment or space constraints:

North		South	
<u>Subject Area</u>	<u># of Classes Dropped</u>	<u>Subject Area</u>	<u># of Classes Dropped</u>
English	2	English	2
Science	3	Science	3
Social Studies	1	Social Studies	1
Art	4	Art	4
Family/Consumer Science	3	Family/Consumer Science	3
Music	3	Music	3
Technology Education	4	Technology Education	4

As an alternative to cancelling a class, some key classes are shuffled from one high school to the other. There are a total of 7 shuttle classes this year. In total, 15 students from North, and 17 students from South utilize the shuttle system:

North to South		South to North	
<u>Subject</u>	<u># of Students</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u># of Students</u>
German 1	7	French 1	6
AP German	6	AP French	4
AP Music Theory	2	AP Computer Science	6
		Hon. Modern World History (Humanities)	1

Recently the district has been combining more classes of similar content to meet the minimum enrollment requirement and allow the classes to run. The teacher differentiates his/her class work to accommodate students at the appropriate level. There are a large number of combined classes, most notably in the areas of Art, Music, and Technology Education. At North, where the population decline has resulted in difficulty maintaining enrollment minimums, there are 30 combined classes running this year. At South, there are 22 combined courses, which may be a matter of enrollment minimums and/or space constraints. The breakdown of subject area classes being combined are in the chart below.

<u>North Combined Classes</u>	<u># of Classes</u>	<u>South Combined Classes</u>	<u># of Classes</u>
English	2	English	1
Math	1	Math	1
World Language	3	World Language	1
Art	8	Art	7
Family/Consumer Science	1	Family/Consumer Science	2
Music	5	Music	5
Technology Education	8	Technology Education	4
Business	2	Special Education	1
TOTAL Combined Classes	30	TOTAL Combined Classes	22

Citizens For Education appreciates the time and effort that teachers put in to create a successful differentiated classroom experience for the students, allowing these classes to continue to be offered to students.

Computer Coding Instruction at CR

Computer programming, or coding, is getting a lot of attention in the news media, thanks to the public's growing interest in computer and smart phone apps. School districts around the country and world are implementing coding into their curricula at younger ages to provide students with information and skills to capitalize on current and future marketplace needs. Citizens For Education recently sat down with Joy McClendon, CR's Director of Elementary Education, to assess where Council Rock stands with respect to computer coding education. Joining us were Matt Frederickson, CR Director of Information Technology; Laura Follmer, CR Library Coordinator; and Kevin Mallalieu, CR Tech Education Coordinator.

CFE was interested in CR's coding culture, i.e., whether the administration deems coding an important skill for CR students to possess and whether there are professional development opportunities for teachers to expand their knowledge about coding. Mrs. McClendon stated that computer coding was a "very important" skill for CR students to attain. She and her team went on to describe how coding is currently being taught in our district:

- At the high school level, Accelerated Computer Science 1 and 2 run as combined classes at both North and South, where students learn the C# (C-sharp) programming language. AP Computer Science, which teaches Java, is currently a shuttled course that runs only at North. Robotics classes also use web-based programming, and students participating in certain extracurricular clubs, such as NASA HUNCH, do extensive coding at an advanced level.
- Middle school students take 6 weeks of computer class where they learn Windows software such as PowerPoint and Excel, as well as introductory website design. Some teachers, such as Joe McNulty at Newtown Middle School, use differentiated instruction to take each student to the next level of their knowledge. For example, a student who is already proficient with the basics of Excel spreadsheet design may get instruction on how to do Visual Basic Application scripting within Excel.
- Coding at the elementary level is sporadic in that there is no formal instruction program, but several teachers with coding interest and expertise are introducing coding to their students. Scratch, an MIT-developed object-oriented program, is available on all school computers, and it is used in some way at all of the elementary schools. At least one school, Goodnoe Elementary, has introduced Scratch to every student, and several extracurricular clubs that teach coding are active at the elementary level. Scratch programming

is also used to make animation movies that can be entered into the Elementary Media Festival scheduled for June 2, 2015. Teacher training of coding concepts is available through Scratch workshops during the district's "Deep Smarts Day" teacher in-service held each January.

Mrs. McClendon would like to see more students exposed to coding at earlier ages. One CFE suggestion the district will explore is if Scratch education can become more formalized as part of the once-a-week Computer Special each elementary class has in its school's computer room. This year, the district has a full-time STEM consultant, Mr. Timothy Duke, whose position was funded from a combination of corporate, state, and Council Rock Education Foundation grant monies. Mr. Duke works to raise the rigor of science and embed more technology at the elementary level. Making this position permanent or reinstating the Technology Education Specialist positions that were eliminated 5 years ago could help to advance education in coding for all students, and CFE strongly supports such a move.

For students and teachers interested in increasing their knowledge, there are free programs and curricula available at www.code.org and www.csedweek.org. Individuals and groups are encouraged to participate in a global Hour of Code during Computer Science Education Week, December 8-14, 2014, that is expected to attract tens of millions of students from 180+ countries.

Mrs. McClendon thanked Citizens for bringing the importance of computer coding to the attention of the District, and Citizens will publish specifics about current projects related to coding and any future plans the district is formulating in future articles.

Did you Know...

Four new courses will be offered beginning in 2015-16 at CRHS North and South?

- ⇒ *AP Accounting will be offered in place of Honors Finance.*
- ⇒ *Honors Marketing will provide an opportunity for business students to take an Honors/AP course in three main areas of business study (Accounting, Marketing, and Business Management).*
- ⇒ *Accelerated Calculus will provide an alternative for students who previously took Accelerated Analysis but may not want to take AP Calculus AB or BC.*
- ⇒ *Honors Latin 4 will be offered, possibly as a shuttle course if the enrollment is too low, at both high schools. This allows Latin to become a 4-year language course of study along with Spanish, French and German.*