



SOMERVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT *Review*

Reaching for Excellence

51 WEST CLIFF STREET • SOMERVILLE, NJ 08876 • (908) 218-4101 • FAX (908) 526-9668 • www.somervillenjk12.org

SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT WELCOMES A NEW EDUCATIONAL LEADER



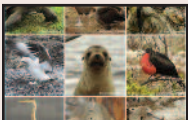
Dr. Timothy J. Purnell officially joined the Somerville Public School district as superintendent of schools on February 1, 2011.

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WELCOME TO THE WEB

www.somervillenjk12.org

The Somerville Public School district is eager to share information with the community.

Visit us on the web for student and parent programs, school activity calendars, district events, board meeting schedules, curriculum documents, and breaking news. ■



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS DR. TIMOTHY J. PURNELL

I am honored to serve as your new superintendent and privileged to be an advocate for your school district. I would like to thank everyone who has helped me make the transition to Somerville very meaningful.

Previous to this post, I served as the superintendent of Harding Township School and continue to serve as an adjunct professor at Montclair State University. My educational experience includes a Bachelor's degree from the University of Delaware, a Master's degree from Montclair State University, and a Doctorate degree from Seton Hall University.

Throughout my years in education and coursework, I have learned that successful schools are the product of an inclusive learning environment, in which students, parents, staff members, administrators, and community members grow and learn together. One of the strongest research findings in the field of education is that a child's academic success is related to the connection between the home and the school, whether

parents volunteer at the school or regularly help their child at home.

Somerville has an outstanding reputation as an excellent school district. It is my responsibility to continue this tradition and build upon it for further improvements, but I need your help in this process! I will be hosting my first brown bagged lunch on **Thursday, February 24, 2011 from noon to 1 p.m.** The purpose of this program is to provide school community members with an opportunity to

share their thoughts, opinions and feelings about the programs and services offered in Somerville. I will also disseminate a needs assessment survey in the upcoming weeks. I urge each of you to take the time to complete the survey.

Communication is essential to the success of any organization and extremely important to me. I plan to maintain a blog for community feedback and input into district happenings.



“Communication is essential to the success of any organization and extremely important to me.”

You can access my blog at <http://www.drurnell.blogspot.com> or from the district website. I will also utilize a twitter account (@SchoolSup) to broadcast instant information and alerts.

I look forward to working with you, your children, and the outstanding professional staff in the upcoming years in an effort to answer your questions and ultimately continue to improve the quality of education for EVERY child. Thank you for your time and continuing support of Somerville Public Schools. ■



21ST CENTURY LEARNING IN OUR SCHOOLS

Today's students are advancing at an astonishing rate when it comes to using technology. The Somerville Public School district strives to integrate 21st century skills across the PreK-12 curriculum to enable students to make informed decisions that prepare them for life in a dynamic global society. Innovative digital tools and activities, such as SMART Boards, ThinkQuest, Web Quests, and podcasting, build on students' love of technology and promote innovation and creativity in a digital world. ■

SMART Boards in a High Touch World

Interactive white boards are revolutionizing instruction in classrooms throughout the district. In a high touch world, the district's SMART Boards recognize the user's touch for input instead of standard PC input devices, such as a keyboard or a mouse. Classroom interactive white boards accept touch from a finger, pen, or other solid object. VDV teachers, Susan McCabe and Charlene Tackvic, SMS



teacher, Jennifer DePace, and SHS teacher, Gilman Eaton, wowed the audience at the December 7, 2010 Board of Education meeting. They zoomed into the pyramids at Giza to study ancient civilizations, manipulated electronic mathematics tools with ease, tallied and displayed survey responses instantly, and demonstrated the SMART Board's recording feature for auto playback. ■

ThinkQuest Connects Somerville to the World

Would you like to learn more about sports in Haiti?...food in France?...rock bands in the Czech Republic? Thanks to the Oracle Education Foundation ThinkQuest program, piloted by SMS French teacher, Maria O'Shea, and SHS French teacher, Bernice Husk, Somerville students have the opportunity to communicate in French with students across the globe. Our middle and high school students

partner using digital tools to explore common issues with each other and with students in other countries whose native language is French. Ms. Husk said, "This safe, interactive communication site is accessible to students from school or home and encourages collaboration on projects, engaging them in real-world authentic communication with their peers in French-speaking countries." ■



21ST CENTURY LEARNING IN OUR SCHOOLS

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Web Quests Engage Learners of All Ages

Students throughout the district are engaged in the “hunt” for information through the use of Web Quest digital learning activities. Faced with questions that range from the causes of World War I to the conservation of the environment, active learners use critical-thinking skills to access, assess, and apply information found on the Internet to



solve real-life problems. SMS social studies teacher, Jennifer DePace, uses Web Quest technology to “allow students to hone the thinking skills the 21st century demands and to use the Internet in a responsible way that develops the skills necessary to evaluate the reliability and value of digital information.” ■

Podcasting Innovations Enhance Learning

At the November 9, 2010 Board of Education meeting, podcasting expert, SHS teacher, Aileen Diggins, showcased the use of podcasting as an innovative practice that enhances discovery learning through the application of technology. The end product of a podcast is an audio recording, a video recording, or a combination of audio and visuals, known as an enhanced podcast.



Mrs. Diggins stated, “The possibilities for classroom applications are unlimited. Teachers can incorporate podcasts to enhance delivery of instruction or as a performance assessment tool that requires students to demonstrate and prove their understanding. Our students are ‘digital natives’ and podcasting taps into their skills, knowledge, and interests in a safe learning environment.” ■

Technology & Learning



SHS TEACHER FOLLOWS DARWIN'S FOOTSTEPS

Racie DeFelice, SHS Science Teacher, will follow Charles Darwin's original travels as she sails through the Galápagos Islands this summer. Ms. DeFelice will be conducting independent original research on the impact of the non-native species that humans have introduced into the Galápagos Islands intentionally, such as animals, vegetables, and fruits, for food. Other species, such as rodents, insects,



and weedy plants, were brought accidentally on cargo ships.

Ms. DeFelice's research findings will be submitted to the Darwin Research Center and will contribute to the body of knowledge needed to restore areas and systems in the Galápagos Islands, where ecosystems have been disturbed, thus helping to prevent further degradation. Ms. DeFelice hopes to



share her first-hand knowledge of Darwin's travels and research with her students. "My ideal of what I would bring back to my students is inspiration: to be inspired by

seeing their teacher experiencing Darwin's scientific research first hand." ■

VAN DERVEER STUDENT COUNCIL SENATORS INDUCTED

Proud parents and members of the Van Derveer Elementary School staff looked on as VDV Student Council Senators were inducted in a ceremony on January 14, 2011. Earlier in the month, students campaigned for senator by giving speeches explaining why they would be positive role models and school leaders. During the school year, senators represent the Van Derveer student body, assist in organizing school-wide programs,

greet school visitors, conduct building tours, and assist with special events, such as Read Across America celebrations in March.



Each fifth grade class elected two Student Council Senators. It is with pride that Van Derveer congratulates the 2010-2011 Student Council Senators: pictured front row L-R Spencer Cleveland, Antonio Alino, and Ashlyn Jess. Back row L-R Timothy Vogel, Gina Marie Capoccia, Allison Wheelan,

Samantha Beach, Myra Knowles, Luis Bucaro, and Jocelyn Hayes. ■

RESPECT AND ACCEPTANCE: CORE VALUES AT SOMERVILLE



The Somerville Public School district incorporates and values the core principles of respect, acceptance, fairness, and justice throughout the PreK-12 educational continuum. Acceptance acknowledges and celebrates individual uniqueness. The scope of tolerance has no barriers based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, political opinion, or other distinguishing characteristics. The district encourages and promotes the exploration of individual differences in a safe and nurturing environment. Respect, acceptance, fairness, and justice are about “understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual” (University of Oregon).

Preschool

Preschool children learn about the languages and customs of children around the world. Chinese New Year, Black history, religious holidays, and cultures are celebrated through art projects, read alouds, and lively discussions. April is dedicated to learning about people from other countries. Children are engaged in cultural activities along with their family members who are invited to share their backgrounds, foods, art, and music. ■



Somerville Middle School

The integrated curriculum at the middle school level explores the influence of early civilizations through the Civil War. Amistad studies include the history and contributions of African Americans and the descendants of the African Diaspora. Sixth grade students experience annual Multicultural Day celebrations that feature ethnic singing, dancing, and dramatic performances. Also featured are contributions of ethnic foods from area restaurants and small group sessions about practices, cultures, and beliefs of people from around the world. Character education in grades 6-8 continues the development of the core values of respect, acceptance, fairness, and justice by examining individual belief systems, attitudes, and actions. ■

Van Derveer Elementary School

Character education programs and academic studies at the elementary division promote acceptance and respect for oneself and for others. Local, state, and American studies explore the contributions of Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Somerville’s own Paul Robeson to the Civil Rights Movement. The contributions of the Native American Lenni Lenape tribe, as well as early Dutch and Quaker settlers, are included in integrated social studies and English language arts initiatives. An introduction to the experiences of young people during the Holocaust extends the discussion of fairness and justice for all. ■



Somerville High School

Participation in Kean University’s Cultural Diversity Council has been an integral component of Somerville High School life. Student representatives join other high-schoolers from around the state at Kean University, where they have the opportunity to examine and explore the core values of respect, acceptance, fairness, and justice. Cultures, customs, and religions of people around the globe are explored throughout the 9-12 humanities curriculum in literature, art, and music. Asian cultures and comparative religions are an integral component of a contemporary social studies curriculum. Students examine the impact of world-wide immigration, including, but not limited to, the African Diaspora and immigration of the early 20th century through the present day. Civil Rights studies expand on the middle school’s early American history focus by continuing from the period of Reconstruction through today. ■

SHS STUDENT RECEIVES HONORABLE MENTION AT DREXEL

Congratulations Elisa Chaudet, whose award-winning photograph, *Ballerina*, received honorable mention in the 2010 Drexel University Photography Contest. Elisa's work was chosen from 1,600 images submitted by high school students throughout the nation. *Ballerina* is on exhibit in Philadelphia at the Drexel show at the university's photography facility, January 29, 2011 through February 26, 2011. ■



PRESCHOOLERS FROLIC IN THE SNOW



Preschool students have a new playground thanks to the generosity of the Somerville PreK-8 PTO. Installed in December 2010, the new equipment has proven to be a major attraction for Somerville preschool boys and girls. Even the snow could not keep the children away from playground fun. ■





SMS DRAMA CLUB PRESENTS ALICE IN WONDERLAND

On February 4th and 5th, the Somerville Middle School Drama and Theater Arts Clubs presented



Alice in Wonderland to capacity audiences in the middle school auditorium. The performances, under the direction of SMS music teacher, Michael Callahan, and SMS art teacher, Melissa Cebula, were the culmination of months of hard work by over one hundred students and various parent volunteers. Everyone involved is commended for their superb efforts. ■



District Policies Available On Website

Parents/guardians can access district policies on the district website at www.somervillenk12.org.

Amendments to the district's policies are subject to periodic changes required by the State of New Jersey and will be posted on the district's website.



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- Van Derveer Elementary School.....218-4105
Grades K-5 – Susan Haynes, Principal
- Somerville Middle School.....218-4107
Grades 6-8 – Georgette Boulegeris, Principal
- Somerville High School.....218-4108
Grades 9-12 – Timothy O'Halloran, Principal
- Dr. Timothy J. Purnell, *Superintendent of Schools*.....218-4101

2010-2011 Board of Education Members

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- Mr. Al Kerestes, *Vice President*
- Mr. James Adamec
- Mr. Kenneth Cornell
- Ms. Michelle Edgar
- Mr. Dennis Garot
- Mrs. Janet Lawton
- Ms. Linda Olsen
- Mrs. Dorice Weeks
- *Mrs. Melissa Looby

* Branchburg Board of Education Representative

Questions? Suggestions?

Call the Somerville Schools **HOTLINE** at 908 243-1598.

Guaranteed Response Within 24 Hours.