



SOMERVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Review

Reaching for Excellence

51 WEST CLIFF STREET • SOMERVILLE, NJ 08876 • (908) 218-4101 • FAX (908) 526-9668 • www.somervillenk12.org

TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES AT THE VILLE

In the 21st century, technology in education is no longer an option. The Somerville Board of Education and superintendent of schools have recognized this fact of our times and have made investments in the district's technology. Those investments in technology have begun to bear fruit.

The district has a new website! The new website has several distinct advantages over its predecessor. It has a much easier method of navigation, allowing parents/guardians and students quicker access to information. The new website has the ability to be completely translated into Spanish at the click of a button. Twitter and blog integration have been added to quickly get information into the community's hands. Finally, and most importantly, the new website will allow for every teacher to have their own space to build out a web presence. With the ability to post homework, podcast classes, blog, and much more! Check it out at <http://www.somervillenk12.org>.



Furthermore, the district will begin deploying over one hundred new MacBook laptops for classroom use in the various school buildings. These

ultra-modern learning tools will allow for teachers and students to podcast, blog, create movies, and much more. Additionally, the teacher iPad initiative began across the district. During October, over fifty iPads were distributed to faculty members who completed technology professional development this summer. These amazing new devices will allow for interactive lessons in the classroom, advanced lesson planning by the teacher, and enhanced and meaningful collaboration and communication between students and teachers. Keep your eyes on <http://www.somervillenk12.org/technology> to see future examples of the usage of these great tools.

These initiatives, combined with greatly increased professional development in the classroom, add up to a huge commitment by the district to providing the tools to move learning into the 21st century at the Ville. Somerville teachers and students already are recognized for their excellence; imagine what they can do with these exciting new resources! ■



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Meet the Technicians: Pictured L-R Cory Weeast, David Seltzer, and Joe Schiavone.

HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS RECOGNIZED



Congratulations to nine Somerville High School students for being recognized for exceptional achievement in being identified by the National Merit Scholarship Program and the National Hispanic Recognition Program for their performance on the 2010 PSAT! Seven seniors (Brendan Eckardt, Lauren Fox, Harsha Honasoge, Gianna Morelli, Anthony Pizzelanti, Neha Sikka, and Michael Willensky) received the recognition of Commended Student for the 2012 National Merit Scholarship Program.

This designation is reserved for the top 3% of over 1.5 million juniors nationwide from the 2010-2011 school year who

took the PSAT, which places them in an extremely exclusive group.

An additional two seniors (Edward Burgos and Alexa Echevarria) were recognized as Scholars for the National Hispanic Recognition Program for their performance on the same assessment. This honor is reserved for the top 2% of students who were selected from a pool of over 235,000 juniors who took the 2010 PSAT. This accomplishment is a direct reflection of these SHS students' commitment and dedication towards academic achievement and reflects our goal as a school community in promoting a standard of excellence for all of our students. ■



Pictured L-R Edward Burgos, Alexa Echevarria, and Corey Jones, SHS Principal.



Pictured L-R Anthony Pizzelanti, Michael Willensky, Harsha Honasoge, Brendan Eckardt, Lauren Fox, Neha Sikka, Gianna Morelli, and Corey Jones, SHS Principal.

VDV TEACHER SELECTED TO ATTEND PRESTIGIOUS ACADEMY

This past summer, the top teachers in the nation applied for the opportunity to participate in the Phil Mickelson ExxonMobile Teacher's Academy (MEMTA). Thousands applied but only three teachers from the state of New Jersey were selected. One of the teachers selected for this prestigious academy was Helene Gerson, a fourth grade teacher at Van Derveer Elementary School. The week-long academy focused on science and mathematics and introduced the teachers to the most recent research-based pedagogy. Some of the highlights of the academy included student-directed learning, building student confidence, distance learning, interactive notebooks, and

helping teachers develop their students' critical-thinking skills. According to Mrs. Gerson, the week was extremely rewarding, but what has her excited is the opportunity to continue to share best practices with her colleagues from the academy. Mrs. Gerson states, "MEMTA is featured on social networks, which allows me to share some of the success I am having in math and science this year while getting ideas from the teachers that attended the academy." Van Derveer Elementary School will continue to provide and encourage its staff in professional development opportunities and will utilize Mrs. Gerson's training knowledge to further develop staff members' knowledge base. ■

PRESCHOOLERS PLAY TO LEARN

Nearly one hundred three- and four-year-old residents of Somerville began school on September 7, 2011 with high hopes and great excitement. Greeted by their teachers on the day before classes began, the district's youngest learners were able to familiarize themselves with the classrooms, staff, and

especially the toys, available for their learning experiences. Students are already well established in the routines of the High/Scope curriculum and enjoying the time spent with new friends in exploration and sharing. The entire preschool staff welcomes and looks forward to working with the Class of 2024! ■



SOMERVILLE PRESCHOOL TEACHER REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

*L*ike a challenge, something that pushes me," explained Laura Hennessey when asked about her summer activities.

Mrs. Hennessey, a valued member of the preschool teaching staff, spent the months leading up to the summer training for her latest challenge—climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro. Along with her daughter, Shannon, a freshman at SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry, Mrs. Hennessey joined forces with seven other women from diverse backgrounds in the United States to raise funds and awareness for The Literacy Project, a non-profit organization providing resources for the education of African girls.

After reading about the project, Mrs. Hennessey and her daughter embarked on training and fundraising in order to participate in the climb. Mt. Kilimanjaro, on the eastern side of Tanzania bordering Kenya, is the world's

tallest free-standing mountain at 19,340 feet. Although no technical climbing experience was necessary to participate in the climb, the trip was physically grueling, but exhilarating.

Having already run in eight marathons and a forty-two mile quadrathlon, Mrs. Hennessey was no stranger to the rigors of such experiences. With the aid and guidance of a trekking company that provided porters and guides, the determined women hiked for 5½ days up the mountain through a tropical rain-forest, moorlands, heath, and alpine desert.

When asked what the most difficult part of the climb was, Mrs. Hennessey quickly responded, "the summit night." That night began at midnight and ended

when the hikers reached the summit at 7:30 a.m. Mrs. Hennessey explained that the mental challenge of continuing when she felt physically exhausted was what she was most proud of—that and the fact that she was able to experience the climb with her daughter, which made the achievement that much better! ■

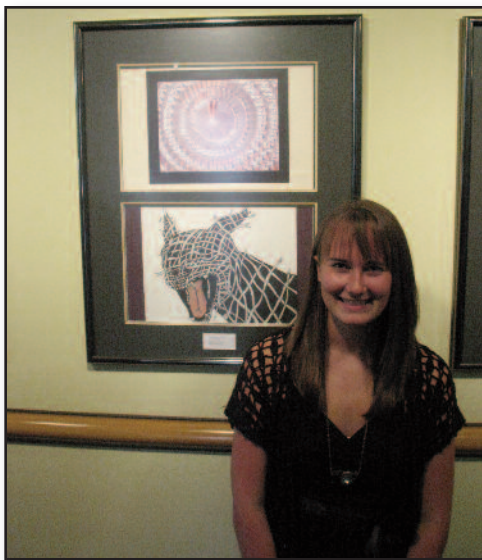


SHS ARTIST'S ARTWORK ON DISPLAY



SHS PROUD OF ART TEACHER AWARDEE

Somerville High School is proud to announce that Erica Thostenen, a junior, has been chosen to display her artwork at NJPAC's Victoria Theater through December 3rd. Through collaboration with NJPAC, the Art Educators of New Jersey (AENJ) selected 30 pieces of art to be displayed and Erica's photography work was chosen to be among this featured group of artists. Mr. Corey Jones,



Principal of Somerville High School, states, "It is encouraging to observe our students experience success with artistic endeavors where they are afforded

the opportunity to feature their creative perspectives and innovative patterns of thought. I congratulate Erica for her accomplishment and for promoting the Somerville 'brand.'" ■

Lisa Conklin, SHS Art Teacher, has been chosen as a recipient of the Art Educators of New Jersey's (AENJ) 2011 President's Award for secondary teachers. Mrs. Conklin received the secondary level

"Divisional Award," which recognizes her for exceptional teaching methodology in the area of visual arts. This recognition was preceded by Mrs. Conklin's



receipt of the distinguished "SHS Teacher of the Year Award" for the 2010-2011 school year. In addition to her teaching duties, Mrs. Conklin serves as advisor to the school's Photography Club, which plays a significant role in providing much of the visual media that is used for school publications. Our Somerville High School community is extremely proud of Mrs. Lisa Conklin's accomplishments and we are fortunate to have her as a part of our teaching staff. ■

POWER OF ONE ACTORS INSPIRE STUDENTS TO TAKE ACTION

On September 30, 2011, Van Derveer students attended a dynamic Anti-bullying Program called the "Power of One". Actors from the Power of One provided students with a series of skits using boxes, colors, and masks to vividly portray what bullying is, what can be done about it, and how every child has the Power of One, the power to report bullying when they see it. Students were equipped with explanations of the roles in bullying (bully, tar-

get, and bystander) and encouraged not to be bystanders. Students were taught the need for individual action to make the community a

safer, better place while being referred to parents/guardians, adults, and teachers for further assistance and instruction. The program was received with much enthusiasm and students signed Van Derveer Elementary School's Anti-bullying pledge during the "Week of Respect," October 3-7, 2011. ■



VDV TAKES PARENT COMMUNICATION TO A NEW LEVEL



Van Derveer Elementary School has been committed to providing its non-English speaking parents with opportunities to effectively communicate with the school. On September 22, 2011, Van Derveer took this commitment to the next level by providing Spanish-speaking families with live English-to-Spanish translation during the administrators' PowerPoint presentation of the 2011-2012 school year. Using audio technology from Talk & Listen Sound Solutions,

Spanish-speaking parents were able to listen to presentations from the superintendent, Dr. Timothy J. Purnell, school principal, Mrs. Susan Haynes, and interim assistant principal, Mr. Nicholas Diaz. The translation was provided by Mr. Michael Guilarte, ESL Teacher at Van Derveer Elementary School. After the meeting, parents and guardians expressed excitement and gratitude for the school's communication efforts. ■

If you have not yet visited the district website, you will be delighted to find that it contains a wealth of information about the Somerville Public School district.

In addition to such features as the school calendar, updates from the Board of Education, and greetings from each school principal, a wide range of offerings distinguish this technological tool. Access to curriculum maps, upcoming events in all schools, special information for parents/guardians, and resource links combine to keep all shareholders in the community informed and up-to-date about the happenings in our schools.

Whatever your question, the website can provide you with the tools to find an answer.

Visit the website at
www.somervillenjk12.org
to be in the know! ■

District Policies Available On Website

Parents/guardians can access district policies on the district website at ***www.somervillenjk12.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 School218-4105
Grades K-5 – Susan Haynes, Principal

Somerville Middle School218-4107
Grades 6-8 – Georgette Boulegeris, Principal

Somerville High School218-4108
Grades 9-12 – Corey J. Jones, Principal

Dr. Timothy J. Purnell, *Superintendent of Schools*218-4101

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Questions? Suggestions?

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

Guaranteed Response Within 24 Hours.

* Branchburg Board of Education Representative