



Students Present at Educational Conference

A group of Tamarac High School students presented at an educational conference in October to explain the benefits they see in the school's Honors Seminar Class to a group of nearly 100 educators from across the state.

The district was asked to present at the Capital Region Conference on the Inquiry Approach to Research because of interest in the independent research component of Tamarac's Honors Seminar Class, explained organizer Mary Ratzler.

"I met with students last spring as they were creating action plans for their inquiry research and was extremely impressed with their thinking, their convictions regarding their topics, their motivation, and their authentic engagement with their work," Ms. Ratzler explained. "Their appearance was a first for us and their real world experience and voices added untold value to our day."

Principal Rich Pogue explained the Honors Seminar Class, which is modeled after a college class, started last year as a way to build research and independent study skills. "We

wanted to focus on the skills students would need to be best prepared for the future," said Mr. Pogue.

During their presentation and panel discussion, students explained how the elective class meets every other day in the library around the Board of Education table. Students often lead discussions with guidance from teachers Aimee Bishop and Tim Jacques and library media specialist Michelle Furlong.

Maria Clemente discussed how she and her classmates have learned to work collaboratively and have developed critical reading and research skills. Students are given a lot of independence but also high expectations, she said.

"You need to be very organized so you know when something is due. There's no procrastination," Maria said. "You have to be independent and not be reliant on a teacher to keep you on track."

Taylor Sweet gave an example of how the class wrote a literary review of "Lord of the Flies" including the societal implications of the novel. Students then wrote a research

paper and created artwork around an issue in society of their choice. Taylor, for example, chose domestic violence.

"By being able to choose our own topic, it led to a lot of discussion," she said. "It hit home a lot more than a regular project would."

Daniel Motzer discussed how the class has helped him improve his public speaking. He said he believes students will be better prepared for college by also having opportunities to receive constructive criticism from a group and writing a five page research paper.

"You have to be driven. This is a class that may be given in college. It will really prepare us," Daniel said.



Students Ashlea Raemer, Taylor Sweet, Maria Clemente, Dan Motzer and Matt Murray speak at a conference at HVCC.

Understanding New York's Property Tax Cap Law

Did you know that New York's Property Tax Cap Law does not cap a homeowner's tax bill to a 2% increase?

Instead, the law that New York State passed applies to the tax levy — or the total money the district collects in property taxes — not a homeowner's tax bill.

To help clarify exactly how the law that New York State passed works, the district has created a Property Tax Cap webpage with an informational publication, question and answer section, and more.

"We are very mindful of our community's desire for tax relief. That's why we kept our tax levy increase to 2% this past year even though the Property Tax Cap law was not yet in effect," said Superintendent Lou McIntosh. "As we deal with the challenges the law presents for the 2012-13 budget, we want to make sure our community understands how the cap works."

VISIT THE DISTRICT WEBSITE, WWW.BRITTONKILL.K12.NY.US, TO LEARN MORE.

RPI Graduate Student Assists Class

Students in Andrew Welkley's High School science classes get to learn from a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute graduate student thanks to a national program that links graduate researchers in science with local high schools.

Twice a week, Allycia Gariepy leaves her research at RPI on interstellar shock waves to assist Mr. Welkley in his classes.

"She truly is a classroom resource," said Mr. Welkley. "She has an intimate knowledge of physics and helps suggest ideas for classroom projects, often more advanced projects than I could do."

This is the fourth year that Tamarac High School has benefited from the program, at no cost to the district thanks to federal funding for the program.

"The program puts graduate students into local schools," Ms. Gariepy explained. "I like it a lot, especially the opportunity to work with students."

That opportunity for students to work with a graduate researcher helps encourage students to consider fields such as science and math, Mr. Welkley explained. In past years, the program has led to student internships at RPI. Other students have sought advice on how to get into college programs.

"I'm also hoping that Allycia's presence inspires some of my female students to pursue science careers," added Mr. Welkley. "She's very passionate. Students don't often see science as something that can be passionate. But there is a passion and a drive to learn more and get the right answer."



District Welcomes New Business Official

For the first time in nearly 12 years, Brunswick (Brittonkill) Central School District has a new school business official.

Lyn Derway, previously an Assistant Superintendent for Business at the Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk Central School District, joined the district in October.

Ms. Derway succeeds Gail Lathrop, who first started working for the district in 1988 as District Treasurer before becoming Director of Business Operations in 2000. Ms. Lathrop retired on October 28.

Ms. Derway's extensive experience as a school business official made her the clear choice for the position, noted Superintendent Lou McIntosh. Ms. Derway has served as a school administrator for the past 25 years, including working for the Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk, Lake George, Plattsburgh, Greenwich and North Warren school districts.

"We've been incredibly fortunate to have such a gifted business official like Gail for the past 12 years," said Mr. McIntosh. "Fortunately, Lyn comes to our district with a similar expertise in school finances and the same passion for providing our students the best education we can while being mindful of our taxpayers."

The district's strong fiscal condition was in fact a key reason that Ms. Derway was attracted to the district.

"I believe Brunswick is a district where I'll be able to build on past successes," Ms. Derway said. "They are in a good fiscal condition and have a supportive community that cares deeply about their schools."

Community Thanks Teachers & Staff with BEF Teacher Tribute

The Brittonkill Educational Foundation released its Teacher Tribute list for 2010-11, a program that allows community members to honor the hard work and dedication of teachers and staff.

Teacher Tribute contributions are made in the name of a teacher or staff member and support the Foundation's mini-grant program, which supports educational opportunities at Tamarac schools not otherwise available through the school district's budget. Thanks to everyone who honored our faculty and staff at the same time supporting the Foundation's efforts.

Miles and Alex Ednie – Linda Riley and Stephanie Bonesteel; Kayley and Ashley Duncan – Amy Quackenbush; Mary and James Toomajian – Kay Akin; Leah Wertz and John Domurad – Sandra Bailey, Suzanne Myers and Kate Tully; Emily Fink – Barbara Baker; The Malsch Family – Eric Olson; Charles, Nancy, Mitchell, and Hope Rheeman – Kay Akin, Sharon Bevis, Barbara Place, Linda Riley, Cindy Pollock and Chris Siegenthaler; The Spear Family – Alicia Devine; Paul, Michele and Mackenzie Campbell – Wendy Tarricone, Chris Siegenthaler, Barbara Place and Sue Turner; The Bull Family – Barbara Baker and Judy Anderson; Darren and Barbara Galipeau – Lori Hamm; Kathy and Mark Lagenbach – All Special Education Teachers; The Heinrichs Family – Ken Parks, Cathleen Croson and Stephanie Bonesteel; The Gicobbi Family – Patricia Kearney; Kevin and Aileen Zotto – Eileen Alston, Middle School Staff and High School Staff; Chris Schewe – Heather Valenti; Clayton LeBlanc – Barbara Baker; Chris, Tracy, Spencer, Shane and Abigail Yetto – Wendy Tarricone, Stephanie Bonesteel and Alicia Leavitt; Norman and Barbara Goodell – Ira Share; The Kazunas Family – Angelica Roddy, Ira Share and Suzanne Myers; Olivia and Amanda Hepp – Ira Share; Lance Miller – Angie Harris; David, Garmina and Zachary Rice and Family – Aaron Thiell; Juliann Labounty – Angelica Roddy; Tabitha Bulson and Timothy Matala – Kay Akin, Daniel Pryde, Sharon Beavis and Roberta Jones; Louise and Hannah Symansky – Karen Cordes; Abigail Becker – Ira Share; Stein Davis Family – Sanada Bailey and Kate Tully; and The Malsch Family – Steve Pomposello.

Teaching Assistant Saves Student's Life

Muriel Denué is literally a life saver. A few weeks into the school year, the 20-year district employee saved the life of a Tamarac Elementary School student who started choking during lunch in the school cafeteria.

"It was just a quick reaction. Thank God I was there at the right moment," Ms. Denué said. "I'm so glad it worked. I think anyone in the same situation would have done the same thing."

Ms. Denué works as a teaching assistant at Tamarac Elementary, where she works one-on-one with a third-grade student with special needs.

Because of the student's disability, she wears a body brace. As a result, when Ms. Denué noticed the student was choking, she first tried to hit her back to dislodge the food. When that didn't work, Ms. Denué had to calmly take the brace off before administering the Heimlich maneuver.

"She even thanked me when it was over," Ms. Denué recalled. "That made me cry."

Ms. Denué sent third grader Katherine Machnick to get the nurse for her. She marveled at the student's calmness during the situation.

"She was wonderful. She stayed so calm," Ms. Denué said. "I tell her all the time when I see her, 'You were amazing. Thank you so much.'"

Elementary School Principal Karen Lederman marveled at Ms. Denué's own calmness. Removing the brace is not an easy process, Mrs. Lederman noted.

"She had the presence of mind to do all that," Mrs. Lederman said. "She really did save her life."

After the incident, Ms. Denué received a gift basket and card from the student's mother thanking her for saving her child's life.

"She said I was her daughter's angel," Ms. Denué said.



Online System Improves Access to BOE Materials

In an effort to make Board of Education materials more easily available to the public and significantly reduce the amount of paper the Board otherwise requires, the district has moved to an electronic system for Board packets of information.

The system, called BoardDocs, makes Board meetings largely paperless with Board members able to access the information on computers or tablets.

The cost for switching to the BoardDocs system is largely offset by reduced costs of paper, printing and less staff time creating and delivering Board packets. The district also received a donation from Rose & Kiernan Insurance Agency.

Board of Education President Matthew Wade noted the new system, which can be accessed through the Board's website, provides the community with easier access to information

about meetings. For example, a resident looking at the November 3 BOE agenda can not only see that a new AP Environmental Science class was approved but read the supporting recommendation from teachers detailing the course.

"This is a boon for transparency and at the same times saves us money for printing and paper costs while also freeing up our employees to focus on other work," Mr. Wade said.



Speakers Share Anti-Bullying Messages

As part of Tamarac Middle School's anti-bullying efforts, students received advice and words of encouragement from local elected officials, coaches and teachers this past fall.

Each day during morning announcements, guest speakers were invited to talk about the importance of standing up for each other against bullying.

Local officials such as Brunswick Town Supervisor Phil Herrington and Rensselaer County District Attorney Richard McNally visited the school to make the announcements along with other guests such as RPI Hockey Coach Seth Appert. Teachers and faculty also spoke to students.

"The messages students received all related to bullying – what it is, who are the bullies, the victims and the bystanders," explained Middle School Counselor Sue Grimmick. "The anti-bullying messages are a key part of our Character Education program."

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New System Allows Parents to Monitor Student Progress Online

To help make it easier for parents to follow their students' progress at school, Brunswick (Brittonkill) Central School District has introduced a new online ParentPortal feature for its student management system.

The district is rolling out the free ParentPortal service by making it available first to Middle School and High School parents. The system allows parents to view online:

- Attendance records
- Student schedules
- Report cards
- Progress reports
- Disciplinary actions
- Bus route numbers
- State assessments such as Regents Exams



The district also plans to open up a Gradebook function so parents can view grades on tests and projects for classes where teachers choose to use this function.

Due to the high security required for student information, parents must first be approved to use the ParentPortal before they can access student information. To sign up and learn more, go to www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us.

Foundation Funds New Music Opportunities

Thanks to funding from the Brittonkill Educational Foundation, Tamarac students have the opportunity to learn a new musical instrument, steel drums.

The Foundation, which provides funding for innovative and creative programs at Tamarac schools, approved a \$5,500 grant request for steel drums so the district can use them in music

instruction and offer students an opportunity to join a new steel drum band club.

The steel drums will be available for students of all ages in the district, explained music teacher Kevin Barcomb, who applied for the grant funding. The steel drum band would also encourage students who may not otherwise have a musical background to join. The band would perform for students and the community.

"These activities will enhance the musical appreciation and global awareness of all Tamarac students, while providing those involved a unique opportunity to work and perform musically outside traditional school chorus and band settings," Mr. Barcomb explained.

Two years ago, the Foundation sponsored a visit from a youth steel drum band that performed for the school and allowed students to try their hands at steel drums. Students were fascinated by the unique instruments and the Caribbean culture where the instruments originated. The event helped spark the idea for pursuing Tamarac's own steel drum band.

Superintendent Lou McIntosh thanked the Foundation for their dedication and continued support for Tamarac schools.

"We can't thank the Brittonkill Educational Foundation enough for all they do," Mr. McIntosh said. "They provide our students with additional opportunities that certainly enhance the education in our schools."

To learn more about the Brittonkill Educational Foundation, please visit their website at www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us/bef.

