

# Spotlight

NEWS FROM THE BURLINGTON SCHOOLS

Volume 4 No. 9

January 4, 2012



**Greetings all...**and a happy 2012 to each of you! I hope the break refreshed you and prepared you for the next stretch of student learning! It is always a welcome opportunity to take a step back and reflect on our professional practices each December, knowing the year is

approaching the halfway mark, and to make changes in order to benefit the student group we have this year.

We are in the midst of budget development at this time. Please take the time to make yourselves familiar with what is being proposed. We need your help! We have a very complicated scenario this year, with cost shifts from the City and from federal funding to the schools, all of which add up to a significant increase. On top of that, we know we have had large (22) kindergarten classes for two years, with a nearly 3% increase in student population each year. Thus, we are seeking some respite for kindergarten numbers next year. Also, to provide equity for our student population with the rest of the county and even the country, we wish to move to a 1:1 laptop initiative for our grade 6-12 students, with a four year phase in process. This cost will be offset by 50% if we are able to apply the Nellie Mae funding to it; making now the time to make this happen!

What can you do? The Board is still deciding what budget proposal amount will be acceptable to the community. We have made significant cuts over the past few years, and as of this writing, the major area being looked at for cuts is to shift funding from the high school, where enrollment is slightly down, to primary grades. Other cuts may be identified in the next week or so, as the Board decides whether the budget that is needed in an already lean system will be acceptable to the community. Please become involved; get to know the budget talking points, share them with your neighbors and parents when asked. As the budget becomes final, I will give you more information to share as people ask you what the Burlington Schools are asking for in funding this year. As you return to the classroom, I hope you have a wonderful week and an awesome year! *Jeanné*

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**Due to new printing software, the Business Office is currently working with the software company to format W-2s for this year. We anticipate all W-2s will be issued by Jan. 31 and will be sent to individual homes for your convenience.**

**To ensure no further delays, please be sure your address is up to date with the Business Office. Any changes can be emailed to Sara Graves at [sgraves@bsdvt.org](mailto:sgraves@bsdvt.org) or Betty Gill at [bgill@bsdvt.org](mailto:bgill@bsdvt.org).**

## Teacher Feature

### Mollie Heath (BHS)

Upon entering room E206, I immediately noticed a positive vibe. My first impression of Ms. Heath and Burlington High School was “wow” this is a great atmosphere...

[http://www.bsdvt.org/News/TeacherStories/bhs\\_heath\\_seeber.pdf](http://www.bsdvt.org/News/TeacherStories/bhs_heath_seeber.pdf)



### Richard Boyers (EMS)

Mr. Boyers' class is an exceptional place to learn and grow as an individual. It was great to observe Mr. Boyers challenging his students to push themselves and nurturing their intelligence and development...

[http://www.bsdvt.org/News/TeacherStories/ems\\_boyers\\_cercena.pdf](http://www.bsdvt.org/News/TeacherStories/ems_boyers_cercena.pdf)



## Spotlight on Safety

Immediate response to emergencies is practiced monthly at each school, as required by law. Being prepared is more than going outside when you hear the fire alarm and requires planning so that everybody knows what part to play if a real emergency occurs.

The District Safety Committee meets monthly during the school year. Every school has a representative, usually the principal or assistant principal, who attends these meetings. Other representatives include nurses, food and property service staff, the afterschool program, special services, and the police and fire department. Each month we discuss safety issues, which might include reviewing recent events to consider how we might better respond to them, learning about crowd managers or defibrillators, reviewing practices for crisis follow-up and communication, and in general working to make sure that each building has at least two leaders who are prepared.

Each school also has its own school-based safety team. This team typically includes representatives from the health office, guidance, the head custodian, and afterschool coordinator, as well as others at the building level who are interested or who have experience that could assist the school in an emergency. If you are interested in participating please check with your principal. Know what immediate response steps you must take to keep yourself and your students safe. If you are not sure, ask your school administrative assistant for a copy of the immediate crisis response procedures, and follow up with your principal if you have any questions. Thanks for helping to keep our kids safe!

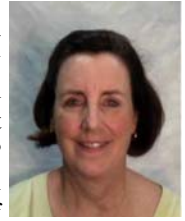
## Do You Know How to Request a Medical Leave?

Are you or a member of your family seriously ill, pregnant or undergoing a medical procedure that will require an absence of more than five days? Even if you have accrued sick leave, you should be requesting a medical or FMLA leave. Various District contracts do make allowances for limited self sick and family sick time. Employees, when possible, must provide 30 days advance notice of the need for leave due to the birth or placement of a child, for their own serious health condition or to care for a covered family member with a serious health condition.

The Process: The employee sends notice to the building principal/director or directly to the HR Department. You can email your request including the approximate dates you will be out of work. An official response is mandated by federal law. Employees may request to apply accrued paid leave for all or part of an FMLA/VPFLA or medical leave. At the discretion of the Superintendent or her designee, decisions will be made on a case by case basis. The VPFLA requires BSD to allow the employee to apply accrued leave time to six weeks (30 work days) of the leave time. Principals/directors should notify HR ASAP when notification is received from an employee. HR then sends notice to the employee designating the time as FMLA/VPFLA, unless the employee and/or the event are not eligible. This notice includes legally required information about the effect of the leave on the employee's benefits, the employee's rights, the obligations of the employee and the obligations of the District. The notice must include any requirement for "fitness for duty" certification prior to returning to work and reinstatement rights.

## Principal's Research Selected for Presentation

The Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP) has selected Dr. Shelley Mathias' paper, *The Relationship Between Cumulative Investment and Student Outcomes*, for presentation at the 2012 AEFP Annual Conference March 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, 2012, in Boston. The membership of AEFP consists of individuals who frequently testify before state legislatures and the federal government on issues of education finance.



### Congratulations, Principal Mathias!

## SOAR Succeeds with Summer Learning

Decades of national research tell us that the "achievement gap" is due in large part to learning loss that occurs over each summer, when at-risk students are not in school. By the time students graduate from high school, this cumulative learning loss has created significant disparities in achievement between students.

This compelling research prompted the Burlington School District to create a comprehensive summer program, called SOAR (Summer Opportunities, Academics and enRichment) beginning in 2010, with funding from Senator Bernie Sanders and other federal and state sources. In 2011, approximately 130 students participated in a five week, five hour day program that included enrichment activities and field trips modeled upon our afterschool program.

Through progress monitoring, we assessed the effectiveness of SOAR. The data below demonstrates that our summer programming is an effective intervention to address the achievement gap. Thanks to all who supported the SOAR program and who participate in progress monitoring!

### Tech Byte

#### Send a Tech Care Package



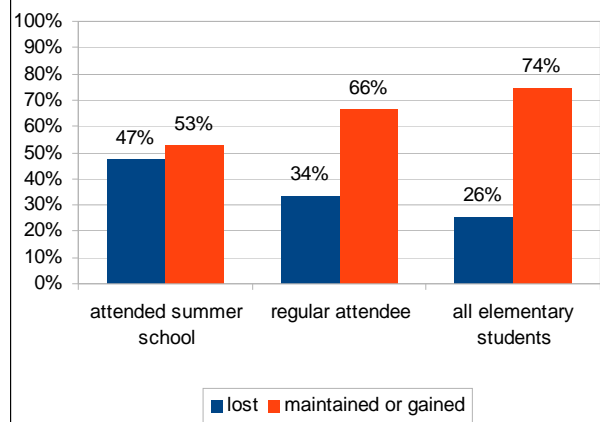
Do you know someone who is need of a "Tech Care Package" this winter? Visit [www.teachparentstech.org](http://www.teachparentstech.org) to send a video based technology care package. "Care packages" cover a variety of tech topics including: finding things on the web, creating an email signature, starting a blog, editing photos, partitioning a fat32 hard drive and more. Although originally designed for students to send to their parents, it can be sent to or from anyone in need of some friendly tech support. "This site was built by a few folks at Google to help keep tech support a family business." Enjoy!



**What's in a name, we might ask?** Well, apparently it's all in your perspective. One of my staff was talking to a kindergarten student who noticed some interesting smells coming from the cafeteria. He asked the staff member what the smell was. The staff member said, "Oh, I think that is the Sesame Chicken that they are cooking for lunch." The five year old looked alarmed and a little sad, saying, "Oh, that's too bad. The Sesame Street Chicken was really nice. His name was Big Bird." Perhaps the meal should be called, "Not the Sesame Street Chicken?"

*Shelley Mathias, EES Principal*

Reading Text Levels  
June to September 2011 gains



Attended = attended fewer than 1/2 of program days  
Regular = attended more than 1/2 of program days  
All = all elem. students with test scores in June and Sept. 2011