

Connect Unite Succeed



Inspiring Each Student for Success Today and Greatness Tomorrow

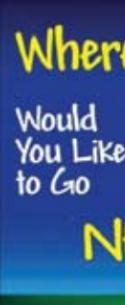
(Below) Students embrace on the first day of school. A newly remodeled building offers a fresh start to a new school year.



(Left) Middle school students and volunteers install gardens for Chester County Food Bank. The gardens will be used for hands-on science exploration and nutrition lessons. At least 60% of the food grown will be donated to the Chester County Food Bank, increasing access to fresh foods by those in our District who are in need.



Photos by Janice Houck



Where
Would
You Like
to Go
NEXT?

Uncover the Possibilities!

Chester County Night School

Glasses run March through May

www.chestercountynightschool.org
 (610) 692-1964

For the past fifty-five years, CCNS has partnered with districts in Chester County to provide quality courses that are responsive to community needs and are operated without cost to the host school district. Get a preview for what is in store at chestercountynightschool.org, where it is promised, “Whether you’re searching for personal enrichment, sharpening your professional skills, exploring a new hobby, improving your fitness or developing a talent – ‘there’s a class for that’ at Chester County Night School!”

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Owen J. Roberts School District is in the process of gathering information through a feasibility study. The study is required for state reimbursement and must provide an appraisal of each facility's ability to meet both current and planned educational program needs. The School Board hired Jeffrey D. Chambers, Chambers & Associates, Inc., to lead the study. A steering committee made up of school board members, school personnel, township supervisors, residents and parents will gather and sort stakeholder input to make sure that the ideas and concerns of all constituents are heard. The team is starting with a blank slate to create a new direction that makes sense for 21st Century education and community needs, yet is fiscally responsible.

Residents may access current literature and study findings at <http://ojrforum.ojrsd.com>. A Town Hall meeting has been set for January 26, 2011, 7 p.m., in the high school. All community members are invited and encouraged to come, learn and offer ideas. Recommendations for a long-term plan will be made through the steering committee to the Board of Directors on behalf of the community by late May.

The All New www.ojrsd.com

Take advantage of the new district website format! Easier navigation, customizable calendars, enhanced search function, and RSS feeds to alert users when content has been added make this website more useful to parents and community members. Kudos to the technology department.

Teaching Lifetime Activity

Gone are the days when gym class meant just another basketball or kickball game. Not every child is an athlete and physical education (PE) classes are evolving to engage all children. In addition, with a general decline in fitness levels for Americans, care must be taken to teach activities in which a person can participate over the course of a lifetime. Development of a physically educated person includes learning the skills necessary to perform a wide variety of physical activities. Owen J. Roberts health and PE teachers work to motivate all types of learners with various interests. Curriculum has been developed that motivates students to value physical activity and its contribution to a healthful lifestyle.

Many fitness skills are now taught to students in all grades. Learning to set and achieve personal goals shift the focus from competition-oriented physical education. Fitness rooms are now used in our secondary schools and a variety of fitness techniques are taught at the elementary level. Yoga is one example of a lifelong fitness activity, and some of the breathing, stretching and core strengthening skills of yoga are being integrated into the elementary fitness curriculum. Age-appropriate yoga poses help strengthen bones, joints and muscles and may give kids a better chance at retaining natural balance and flexibility. In addition, learning to be mindful of one's breathing can calm busy minds and benefit children who tend to get anxious.

At North Coventry Elementary School, after-school yoga classes are offered to both teachers and students as part of a grant from the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation. Response to the student program was so great that enrollment was capped at 55, and there is still a list of 22 others who are waiting for the next session of after-school practice. In the age of technology, students need plenty of opportunities to be physically active and providing students with options is a district goal.



High School physical education teacher Meghan Maurer demonstrates a core-line strengthening pose to the elementary health & PE teachers.

Cooking for a Cause

The King Arthur Flour Company recently visited the Owen J. Roberts community with the King Arthur Flour Life Skills Bread Baking Program and students learned that with a little science, a little baking instruction, and some good flour, they can bake delicious bread! East Vincent Elementary, North Coventry Elementary, and the Middle School all participated.



The community-oriented program promotes family time as students are sent home with flour, a recipe booklet, yeast, a bread bag, a dough scraper, and the know-how to make two loaves of bread from scratch. Students are encouraged to bake two loaves of bread at home and bring one loaf back to school to be donated. More than a hundred loaves were donated to the North Coventry Food Pantry for holiday distribution. Search "Student's Homework: Bake a Loaf of Bread for Food Pantry" at www.pottsmmerc.com to learn more.

PTA: Every Child. One Voice

PTA provides a resource for families and communities and a way to join with fellow parents to encourage all children to dream big. The Owen J. Roberts School District community is made up of seven smaller communities from five elementary centers, the middle school and the high school. PTAs in each school are vital organizations that work to benefit students by building family and community. Check your school's web page and the PTA Council web page at www.ojrsd.com to learn more and keep informed about events such as family nights and parent enrichment activities. When families and schools work together, student achievement improves, communication increases, and family, school, and community connections multiply.



Cubs Roar at East Coventry

The Coventry Lions Club, chartered in 1958, has a rich history of service in the Owen J. Roberts community. Each Owen J. Roberts school has service organizations affiliated with the Lions Club that carry out multiple projects directly benefitting residents and those in the surrounding area. One such group, the East Coventry Lions Cubs, has been working hard on projects such as collecting eyeglasses for the visually impaired and decorating the school for family events. Currently, they are creating children's books for the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The Cubs plan to collect canned food and non-perishables for local families over the holiday season; gently-used athletic equipment for Philadelphia schools; and blankets, food, and toys for the local SPCA. East Coventry's future plans involve the construction of an outdoor classroom in which the Lions Cubs will assist. The East Coventry Lions Cubs currently consists of 24 outstanding 5th and 6th grade students who demonstrate much excitement in serving their community.

Flag Etiquette

6th graders at East Vincent Elementary School learned protocol for raising and lowering the flag each day from the High School ROTC. Reverence and honor to our country and flag were demonstrated.



OJR Education Foundation Grant to Support 'A Choral Celebration with Rollo Dilworth'

As a part of the celebration of Black History Month, choral students in all district schools will have the experience of working with renowned African American composer Dr. Rollo Dilworth. Mrs. Sheila McIntyre, high school choral director, and Mrs. Cheryl Markofski, middle school choral director, planned the two-day project that will conclude with a gala community concert on January 28, 2011.

Dr. Dilworth is an Associate Professor of Choral Music Education at Temple University's Boyer School of Music and serves as conductor for the University Chorale. He has written and/or arranged over 150 choral works that are currently in print. His choral compositions are a part of the Henry Leck Creating Artistry Choral Series and he has recently published pieces with the Santa Barbara Music Publishing Company. He is a contributing author for elementary and secondary choral music textbooks and frequently serves as a guest conductor and/or clinician for honors, festival and all-state choirs throughout the United States and abroad.

Additional information for this community event will be posted on www.ojref.org and www.ojrsd.com

Veteran’s Day

by Kellie Choy, Grade 12

This year, Owen J. Roberts School District continued the tradition of honoring our nation’s veterans with the 5th annual Veterans Day Luncheon. As always, choral director Ms. Shelia McIntyre welcomed the honored veterans and their families with the choir’s rendition of “America the Beautiful”. The assembly was then followed by NJROTC’s color guard members who carried flags that symbolized each branch of the military. Bugle musicians Brian Iezzi and Kyle Patrick from NJROTC played songs from each branch with the flag lowered in their honor. During this time, veterans stood up patriotically to honor the flag of their service in the military.

After the color guard demonstration, Superintendent Dr. Joel DiBartolomeo provided opening remarks on the role soldiers play in preserving the American privilege of freedom . Captain Stanley further emphasized the importance of veterans. Student Body President, Julia Sbat, conveyed appreciation for how veterans have given many immigrants, such as her grandmother, an opportunity to live the American dream. “This freedom,” Senator John Rafferty stated, “is precious and comes at a cost.” State Representative Tim Hennessey echoed the honor of every person who has served.



Cadets surround Congressman Jim Gerlach, Senator John Rafferty, Representative Tim Hennessey and Board Member, John Stone.

Mrs. Sheila McIntyre shared touching family memories of her father and his commitment to his children, even while stationed in Vietnam. The ceremony concluded with the choir dedication of “Homeward Bound”.

John Rafferty said, “Owen J. Roberts puts on the nicest Veterans Day celebration out of all the schools in the area!” Senator Jim Gerlach stated that “We need to recognize our men and women throughout history. We need to say thank you.”

Veterans and their families headed to the luncheon where I had the pleasure of sitting down and speaking with eighty-seven year old Edward Golden who served in the army during World War II from 1944-1947. Mr. Golden was in the 346 regiment who fought in the Battle of the Bulge, the largest and bloodiest battle of the war.

This Veterans Day has ingrained in me a sense of patriotism. I have learned that the sacrifice of these brave men and women has affected each of us and I am very proud to have shared in honoring those who have had the courage to serve America.

Tasty Tuesdays Tingle Taste Buds

There is a national movement supporting farm-to-school programs and Pennsylvania would like to be at the forefront. Recently the Pennsylvania Department of Education sent a film crew to East Vincent Elementary School to tape Tasty Tuesday celebrations. Tasty Tuesday is an opportunity for kids to taste a variety of different foods. After celebrating Tasty Tuesdays at the kindergarten level for several years, data demonstrated that this program has a positive effect on fruit and vegetable consumption. This fall, the Tasty Tuesday program was kicked-off school-wide in all the elementary centers and the middle school with the help of PTA volunteers. Owen J. Roberts food service director, Mrs. Kate Haile, visited local farms and orchards over the summer to make arrangements for local food to be provided for the District’s 5,045 students.

Surprisingly, buying local presents certain challenges. Ample supply and delivery are two barriers school districts face. The nation’s current food system is set up in such a way that it is often significantly less expensive to

buy from huge producers located out of the area (and often out of the country). Owen J. Roberts is considered a model in the state for farm-to-school practices such as local purchasing, which takes a good deal of coordination, work and collaboration.

In OJR’s cafeterias, students may have noticed that the apples were not the big tasteless types often found in supermarkets. In fact, they look different all the time because local growers offer many varieties. Tasty Tuesday allowed students to sample apples that were tart, sweet, and aromatic. Students took note and investigated textures, flavors and appearances.

Studies show that people value real food when they can connect with the source of that food, so East Vincent Elementary invited apple supplier Frecon Farms in Boyertown to visit students during lunch. Farmer Josh was treated like a celebrity. The children loved him and asked thoughtful questions about his income potential and working conditions. “Do you ever sleep?” one child asked.

Tasty Tuesdays



PTA volunteers help prep and distribute foods children taste. The County Fair Queen and Farmer Josh (not pictured) visited East Vincent for a special Tasty Tuesday celebration of local agriculture.

Tasty Tuesday is a “Promising Practice” featured with Project PA, a collaboration between Penn State

University (Department of Nutritional Sciences) and the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Growing Greener Concepts



School gardens reinforce science and nutrition. Dr. Joel DiBartolomeo, superintendent, digs in with kindergarten students at West Vincent Elementary.

Load That Bus!

On Make a Difference Day, a big yellow school bus, provided by Gross Bus Company, made its rounds to all the schools and buildings in the Owen J. district, loading items until it was absolutely packed with provisions. Principals, service group advisors and staff led and encouraged the students and families in each of our buildings to participate in the collection which benefitted the North Coventry Food Pantry. The food pantry serves over 70 families living in our district each month. Make a Difference Day is a huge opportunity for the community to gather and become strong.



Save the date for next year! OJR’s 6th Annual Make a Difference Day will be on Saturday, October 22, 2011!



District Calendar Highlights

DECEMBER

December 24-31, 2010 Winter Recess - School Closed

JANUARY

January 3, 2011 School Resumes

January 17, 2011 Martin Luther King Holiday- School Closed

FEBRUARY

February 18, 2011 No School for Students - Staff In-Service

February 21, 2011 School Closed (First Snow Make-Up Day)

MARCH

March 2-3, 2011 School for Students
Parent Conferences

APRIL

April 21-25, 2011 School Closed - Spring Recess

MAY

May 30, 2011 Memorial Day - School Closed

JUNE

June 10, 2011 Graduation for Class of 2011

June 13, 2011 Student Half Day

June 14, 2011 Last Student Day, Half Day

June 15, 2011 Last Teacher Day

Don't Miss:

- Feasibility Study Town Hall, January, 26, 7-9 pm, HS
- Math Rocks! District-wide Math Night, February 10
- HS Fashion Show, February 25, 7 pm, HS
- Workshop: School Director Candidate Process, February 2, 5-9 pm, CCIU
- Friends of the Arts Craft Show, March 5 & 6
- Beauty and the Beast HS Musical, March 25-27

Check www.ojrsd.com for more details

Community Connections are “Fitting”

West Vincent Elementary uses recreation to build community connections. It was estimated that over 200 people participated in the food, fun and fitness demonstrations at the school when they hosted the 2nd annual Fit Fest on September 24th. Many types of recreation were spotlighted including ice skating, tennis, yoga, martial arts, horseback riding, dance, gymnastics, biking and nature activities. A local farm and two chefs promoted healthy eating. Even the food vendor sold veggie sliders, bison burgers, fish sliders and fruit salad in surprising quantities. Don't think a Fit Fest can't include dessert - there were long lines for frozen yogurt.



Another event dedicated to creating a healthy school and community partnership is the annual Turkey Trot at West Vincent Township Park held the Friday after Thanksgiving. Children of all ages gather to chase a costumed turkey on the township walkway. They brought families and extended families to the beautiful park for fresh air and fun for the third chilly year.

Garden Reflections From French Creek Elementary School Garden

In the poem *A Prayer in Spring*, Robert Frost writes: “Oh give us pleasure in the flowers today: and give us not to think so far away ... as the uncertain harvest: keeps us here ... all simply in the springing of the year.” It is difficult to believe that our garden season at French Creek has passed so quickly since we celebrated Earth Day where, in new garden beds amongst edible landscaping in the courtyard, we planted our version of the “Three-Sisters”: companion planting of Strawberry Popcorn, pole beans and butternut squash. That same day, we built six vermiculture compost bins, planted potatoes, zinnias, zucchini, spaghetti squash and containers with onions, herbs and marigolds.

Over the summer months, the courtyard became more like “the secret garden” in the absence of all the children. It was alive, however, with butterflies, our red compost worms and the fish in the pond ... a summer still-life. We were fortunate that several of the staff tended to the watering when there was insufficient rain ... thank you!

In early August the original garden area was doubled and planted with a double row of broccoli, more onions, beets, kale, cherry tomato plants, eggplants and peppers. The compost bins were emptied onto the squash plants and those plants continued to produce zucchini for an incredible four months! Students in the garden club have been enjoying the popcorn they grew.

As seasons change, so do the garden patches ... frost arrives whether we want it or not. Alas, the onions, beets and kale are still to be harvested at our next day in the garden. This winter will find us planning for the warmth of spring and our next year of homegrown harvest ... plants dreaming deep.

Wildcat Athletic Highlights

High school field hockey and girls' soccer teams were PAC 10 Champions and competed in District 1 playoffs.

The football team is a PAC 10 Co-Champion.

Football competed for the first time in the AAAA District 1 playoffs.

Jimmy Wolfe is the PAC 10 Individual Golf Champion and played in the PIAA Regional Golf Tournament.

New at the high school -- a girls' crew club has been started and there is interest in starting a boys' team as well.



2011-12 Budget Planning and Development Calendar

Public is encouraged to attend

January 10, 2011	Committee of the Whole Meeting: Finance Committee Presentation - Review Budget Calendar & Preliminary Act 1 Budget
January 24, 2011	School Board Resolution to Limit Tax Increase to Act 1 Index <u>OR</u> Proposed Preliminary Budget Available for Public Inspection
February 15, 2011	Special Board Meeting: Adoption of Preliminary Act 1 Budget
March 14, 2011	Finance Committee Meeting: Budget Workshop
April 11, 2011	Finance Committee Meeting: Budget Workshop
April 18, 2011	School Board Meeting: Acknowledge Receipt of Proposed Annual Budgets
May 23, 2011	School Board Meeting: Approval of Final Annual Budgets