

WINDHAM RAYMOND SCHOOL
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THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE COMMUNITY
OF REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT 14

WINDHAM RAYMOND SCHOOL

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At Windham High, a digital revolution under way

It's hard to believe the technology transformation at Windham High School in just one year. One year ago, the ratio of computers to students was 1 to 4 with 80 percent of those computers more than five years old. When compared to surrounding school districts, RSU 14 was definitely behind the curve. Most had already made the commitment of moving to a 1 to 1 computer ratio in grades 7 to 12.

Thanks to the district's purchase and deployment of 1,050 Netbook computers this September, that ratio is now 1 to 1 for grades 6 through 12.

This infusion of technology is keeping in step with the new district Strategic Plan, which contains three major goals, one being the utilization of technology in the district.

In prior years, students had limited access to the technology, which made it difficult for teachers and students to share information electronically. Now, with a 1 to 1 ratio of computers to students, learning has become a 24/7 experience.

To assist the staff and students in making the best use of this new technology, the district is also moving ahead with its deployment of Google Apps. This is a free service provided to educational institutions by Google that delivers a long list of online applications that duplicate those found in Microsoft Office. Besides offering word processing, spreadsheet and presentation capabilities, its communication modules like e-mail and shared calendars make it easy for teachers and students to share and collaborate on projects and assignments.

It's an understatement to say that methods of communication have shifted away from the paper society of old to one of electronic contact with the world. Technological advancements have created new tools that make it faster and simpler to communicate and share ideas. The Netbooks are one of those tools that students need to compete globally.

Using their Netbooks, students are now able to gauge their success by accessing their grades



Like all students at Windham High School, Aaron Murray can access a new world of information on the Netbook.

through the Infinite Campus Student Portal at any time and place. Curriculum is starting to be delivered electronically, where students can take classes with Moodle software, communicate with Google Apps and share ideas with Wikipedia. New high school student e-mail capabilities and moderated chats enable students to contact their teachers for help or collaborate with their peers as needed.

Collaboration and communication capabilities identified as 21st-century skills for future workers are now educational tools available in RSU 14. Multiple students can now work on a project together without having to be in the same room, building or even in the same time zone. Sharing calendars that show due dates for projects, tests and major course deadlines is now a common occurrence. Connecting to important resources such as authors, famous people or ancient documents is only a computer click away. Teachers can now bring into the classroom the entire resources of the Library of Congress, and software on the Netbooks allows the device to be turned into an electronic reader like a Kindle. Also available are text-to-speech programs so the computer can read to the student and accommodate different learning styles. Music teachers are now listening to and evaluating student performances that have been recorded and uploaded to the web.

High school students are currently taking classes online in subject areas that can't be offered locally because of budget or staffing con-

Digital revolution *continued page 3*

From the Superintendent... Sandy Prince **A foundation for optimism**

I remain encouraged and optimistic that we are cultivating new ground in our organization. We anticipate wonderful things to come in 2011.

If you were to pause and think seriously about the things that matter most in your life – particularly in a new year – what would your top choice be? As a regional school unit, we ask the same question: What matters most?

It is no surprise that ensuring that all students meet success is our top priority. It is what matters most. Our mission ("Success for All") and our newly adopted Strategic Plan are critical for the education of our students and a pivotal point for RSU 14. The Strategic Plan reminds me of a compass – channeling and focusing our work to ensure that we stay true to our mission.

How best can we make the invigorating work of our district transparent to our wider school community?

Like Velcro, the connection between our schools and our communities, when brought together, stick strongly, one to the other. I am excited about having us broaden our efforts so our readers can see the different evidence provided by our Strategic Plan.

Go to http://www.windham.k12.me.us/strategic_plan/index.cfm to view the entire plan and to check out the progress we are making and have made on each goal and objective.

The remarkable successes of our district through much of the 21st century should be a foundation for optimism. I heartily thank you for your continued support and belief in our mission.

Schools seeing healthy makeovers

Some healthy makeovers are on tap for Windham Middle School and Windham High School, thanks to nearly \$3,000 in grants awarded by the Let's Go! 5-2-1-0 Program.

At the middle school, the purchase of a new food service cart will make it easier for students to purchase fresh vegetables at lunch, and an additional water dispenser will increase the availability of fresh, cold water. Meanwhile, Let's Go! Team members at the middle school continue to incorporate the 5-2-1-0 messages of healthy eating and physical activity into the curriculum.

At the high school, the school store's merchandise is the target. The student wellness team will work with students in the Business Simulation class to promote healthier food and snack options at the store.

With Let's Go!, a community-based initiative, students are encouraged to eat five or more fruits and vegetables a day, decrease their sedentary screen time by two hours per day, be physically active for one hour or more day, and eliminate sugary drinks from their diets.

Steve McFarland honored

Steve McFarland, the Workforce Education Coordinator for Windham Raymond Adult Education, was recently given the Sebago Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce's Community Service Leadership Award, which recognizes individual or group efforts that have made a significant contribution to the quality of life in the Sebago Lakes Region.

McFarland's efforts in providing training for businesses, coordinating the Adult Education Work Ready Program and serving on the Chamber Board's Business Education Training and Development Committee clearly show his commitment to enhancing the quality of life in the area. He has also been instrumental in working on an intern program with students at St. Joseph's College in Standish, and he has helped secure funding for adult learners seeking post-secondary options.

Among the organizations McFarland volunteers with are the Maine Development Foundation's Employer Initiative Advisory Board, Maine LiLA (Lifelong Learning Accounts) Advisory Board, RSU 14 Future Search and Monitoring Team, Good Shepherd Food Bank, Rotary, high school Interact Club and the North Windham Union Church.



Legislature to consider new academic standards

Academic standards, which have a direct impact on the curriculum, instruction and assessment programs in Windham and Raymond schools, are expected to be taken up by the Maine Legislature this year. This action comes as a result of the Common Core Standards movement, which was jointly initiated by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Previously, individual states were responsible for developing standards that defined the knowledge and skills that students should be able to demonstrate as they progress through a K-12 program. As a result, the standards looked a little different in each state, providing few opportunities for states to collaborate on curriculum development, educational policy and other initiatives.

To remedy that, common standards have been proposed reflecting international and national models of best practices in English Language Arts, Math and eventually Science. The proposed standards define the academic skills that all students should demonstrate within their K-12 careers in order that they may be successful in any post-secondary opportunity that they might pursue.

Maine is not required to adopt the Common Core Standards. Individual states can choose to adopt or not adopt the standards as they are written. By late December 2010, 39 states had moved forward with adopting the standards. It is already anticipated that not all states will implement the standards. In Maine, that decision will be up to the state Legislature.

Maine has been involved with the implementation of academic standards for more than 20 years. In the early 1990s, the first standards document, called Maine's Common Core, was adopted. In 1997, Maine's Common Core was expanded to become the Maine Learning Results. In the early part of this decade, the Maine Learning Results were modified as part of No Child Left Behind. In 2007, the Maine Learning Results were overhauled.

The final change to Maine academic standards took place recently when the Maine Educational Assessment was retired and the New England Common Assessment Program was adopted. The move to the NECAP prompted the retirement of the 2007 Maine Learning Results standards for Math and English Language Arts and the adoption of NECAP standards. Until a change is made by the Legislature, educational programming will continue to be guided by the NECAP standards for English Language Arts and Math and the 2007 Maine Learning Results for all other subjects.

For more information about the Common Core Standards visit www.corestandards.org.

Feb. 17 designated as arts day

Raymond Elementary School will be celebrating "World Community Arts Day" by devoting the entire day of Feb. 17 to creating art. Students and staff will participate in a variety of art activities. The goal is to bring community and school together through the arts.

In order to make this day successful, the school needs the help of community artists and craftspeople to come to the school and lead half-day and all-day workshops in any of these areas (or others): Pottery, stone carving, photography, poetry, dance, jewelry making, drama, sculpting and snow sculpting, storytelling, painting, visual arts, printmaking, movement, collaging, music.

Volunteers should contact Susan Crockett at scrockett@windhamraymondschools.org.

Odyssey offers new learning journey

A new online learning tool, Odyssey, is providing students at Windham Middle School and Windham High School with direct instruction and individual assessment in Math, English Language Arts, Science and Social Studies.

Odyssey, a highly engaging, web-based program that is replacing an online math program used in both schools last year, has several unique features that make it a natural fit for the students. For example, at the middle level, the program directly links to NWEA results. (NWEA is a computer-based assessment taken by students in grades 2 to 10). Each night, Odyssey checks the NWEA server to see if any new student scores are available. If a new score shows up, Odyssey uses that information to create an individualized program to address that particular student's needs. The net result is the creation of an instructional supplement that can challenge students at all levels.

In addition to the NWEA connection, Odyssey provides students with opportunities for independent study. As a student progresses through each of the lessons, the program has a built-in assessment component. If a student does not show he or she has comprehended the material, the software can determine where the student is struggling so it can provide other examples or other experiences in those areas.

Odyssey differs from other software programs used in the past couple of years in that it is available to all students in the schools that have license to it. Many of the previous programs were limited to only a few students. In addition, Odyssey contains content that can challenge learners at all levels, as opposed to those that only targeted students who needed remedial help in a particular subject. Finally, Odyssey is web-based and is available for use by students at home and at school. Results of this pilot year will be evaluated and then expanded to other schools.



Peace prize

This is one of several Peace Flags created by Raymond Elementary School students and staff to display positive wishes for family, friends, community or the world. The project was spearheaded by art teacher Kirsten Hackett. Both she and Kathy Gillis, new standards-based teacher, were recognized earlier in the fall with the Mugs and Kisses Award. They were presented with a certificate and a mug filled with candy kisses from Horace Mann insurance company representative Lisa Bussiere in recognition of their achievements.

Briefs

Teacher connections

The Raymond Elementary School staff visited teachers at Windham Primary School in November to share information on Responsive Classroom, a teaching model that helps children acquire social skills – cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control – in order to help them succeed academically. Raymond teachers began implementing these techniques in the 1990s, and the whole staff has been using them since 2007. The purpose of the visit was for Raymond teachers to share the philosophy, morning meeting ideas, songs and games and guided practice of Responsive Classroom. This was also an opportunity for teachers to connect with other teachers in the district.

Robotics winners

The Imperials, the Jordan Small School

robotics team, took home a second-place trophy from the recently held First LEGO League Tournament in Augusta. Some 47 teams from across the state competed in two major categories: robot missions and a research project presentation. The team did well on the missions, and scored second place in the presentation. The students' parents were involved from the beginning, in coaching and in providing transportation and snacks during meetings. They organized a leaf-raking business and Clynk bottle program so the students could raise money for this. The students did the work and raised \$300 raking leaves.

Athletic schedules on line

Looking for the schools' athletic schedule? Here's a website that has them all:

www.viewmyschedule.com

Blackboard 'smartens' up in RSU 14 schools

In this digital age, who would have thought that the blackboard would continue to be an important teaching tool? Educators in RSU 14 still use the traditional blackboard, but more and more are using a different kind of blackboard that is a little "smarter."

A Smart Board is an interactive whiteboard that responds to touch. It has all the capabilities of a personal computer, since it is connected to one, but rather than clicking a mouse like a computer, a user's finger or a special pen interacts with it. Think of a Smart Board as a large, touch-screen computer monitor that an entire class can use for doing online

research, creating documents and presenting video and audio information.

Currently, Windham Primary School has eight Smart Boards. Teachers sign out the boards and use them in their classrooms for two weeks at a time. The boards are being used in art and music classes, as well. Some of the advantages to using these boards include: increased student engagement and motivation, a larger variety of instructional methods, improved efficiency of instruction, and greater access to instructional and educational content. Students enjoy using the Smart Boards and teachers recognize the positive impact these tools have in the class-

room, whether it be for learning multiplication facts or discovering the effects of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The majority of the funding for Smart Boards has come from the fundraising efforts of the Windham Primary School staff and grants. A committee of staff members called "Go Green for Technology – Dollars for Tech Scholars" has been instrumental in the funding of the boards, which cost approximately \$2,500 each with the required projector and a stand. Anyone interested in seeing a Smart Board in action within the classrooms can contact any of the RSU 14 schools.

Walking trails enhanced

A new kiosk, exercise stations and "story walk" literacy activities soon will enhance the network of walking trails on school campuses. Those additions, as well as other improvements, will be funded by two grants totaling more than \$9,000 awarded to the district to expand and enhance the existing trail network.

Volunteers will be an integral part of the project, which will include:

- Construction of a central kiosk with trail maps and other information on the Windham campus.
- Linking the pond trail at Raymond Elementary School and the cross-country trails at Jordan Small School with a new trail running parallel to Raymond Elementary's driveway. With the help of Maine Post & Beam, fitness kiosks will be installed to promote physical activity along

the rails and story-walk kiosks, in which pages of books are posted along the trail encouraging trail-users to participate in activities along with story characters.

The addition of exercise stations along a newly highlighted trail at the Manchester School.

The new opportunities for outdoor activities on school grounds will be open to all students, staff and community members. Schools will be looking to the community for help in making these improvements happen.

Funding came from Maine Post & Beam's Building Community Program, \$5,000; and PROP's Healthy Lakes' Communities Putting Prevention to Work, \$4,475.

The efforts are part of the district's commitment to health, and its partnership with Healthy Lakes to improve access to healthy food and physical activity for all community members.

Digital revolution continued

straints. So students are taking Basic Mandarin Chinese, Constitutional Law, Advanced Placement Statistics, Environmental Science, Folklore & Literature of Myths, European History, Creative Writing, Animal Behavior, Portuguese, Astronomy, Oceanography, Kindergarten Apprentice, Philosophy, Sociology, Advanced Placement Government & Politics and Criminology. There were 25 applications for Distance Education courses in RSU 14.

New assessment tools are being utilized to help identify and remediate gaps in student skills. Online testing with immediate feedback is being used effectively by staff through Moodle.

The Netbooks allow students to create and perform activities that were impossible before by utilizing more than 40 software packages to help students deliver a professional product by using any of three movie-making packages, desktop publishing software, web design tools, music production software and other resources.

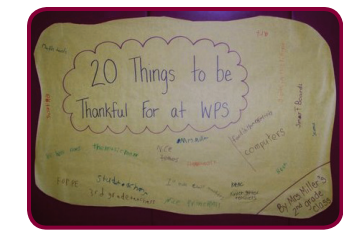
Utilizing electronic probes and online web-sites, they are able to conduct virtual science experiments commensurate with real world accuracy without the dangers and costs.

For More

View the Strategic Plan online at http://www.windhamraymondschools.org/strategic_plan/Strategic_Plan_FINAL_May_2010.pdf

To learn more about Google Apps, see <http://www.google.com/a/help/intl/en/edu>

All software used can be found at http://www.windhamraymondschools.org/wsd_hs/Netbook_Resources/Software_overview.pdf



20-year celebration – 1990-2010

Windham Primary School celebrated 20 years this fall with a reception and student assemblies. Retirees and current teachers planned the events, which included artifacts, historical data, photos and video tours of the building when it was under construction. Retirees donated funds for each student to have a commemorative pencil. Students created posters about what 20 means to them, some of which are shown at left. Parents donated food items for the reception. The architect of the building, Lyndon Keck, sent a letter that was shared during the festivities. The Primary School chorus sang at the evening event and for all students during our Friday assemblies. Local dignitaries and school leaders shared memories and stories with attendees. More than 500 people attended the reception.

"I urge all states to set high expectations for themselves and take advantage of the opportunity to create strong plans to move reform forward... to do the hard work necessary to write the comprehensive plans necessary to succeed in school reform."

– Secretary of Education Arne Duncan