

# The Curriculum Corner

North Brunswick Township Schools Monthly Curricular Update



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## Celebrating all Special Programs in NBTSchools

Here in North Brunswick, we pay close attention to the quality of all of our special programs including music, art, business, technology and world languages. While many districts throughout the state consider eliminating or cutting back on these programs during budget cuts, we make every effort to make these programs thrive as we know the positive impact they have on our students.

Research validates the impact of these kind of rich programs. Did you know that art education affects students' growth and development beyond the art classroom both physically and educationally? Development of motor skills is supported by motion required in art classes, including holding pencils and crayons or using a paintbrush. Decision-making and visual learning skills are also supported in art classes, as they are required to use creativity and critical-thinking skills in designing their own art projects. Music education also benefits the mental and social development of our students. It is also found to enhance language development as music supports the development of the left side of the brain, which also processes language.

In the areas of business and technology, there is no shortage of discussion around the importance of preparing children for college and career readiness. Our programs focus on current technologies that will ready our students to be productive contributors in the work world. We are trying to create problem finders, problem solvers, and entrepreneurs, and ultimately prepare them for jobs that do not yet exist. These programs start in the life skills classes in the middle school and spiral all the way through high school.

Finally, world language exploration and acquisition is a priority for North Brunswick schools. According to the NJDOE, the study of another language and culture enables individuals, whether functioning as citizens or workers, to communicate face-to-face and by virtual means in appropriate ways with people from diverse



cultures. We take this responsibility seriously and assure that students obtain a quality K-12 experience in world language.

This month's curriculum corner highlights specific programs in music, art, business, technology, and world language at all levels. We are proud of the work our teachers do and the learning that takes place within each school and know that our students are receiving a well-rounded education to better prepare them for career and college readiness.

## Music



Our music department has continued its commitment to both school & community events. Judd elementary school just presented the Wizard of Oz in the high school theatre under the direction of Ms. Elizabeth Perryman. The township adult drama group under the direction of Michael Hritz has graciously worked with the elementary school for performance & rehearsal space. Our elementary, middle, and high school groups serve as ambassadors to our community as they perform at a myriad of events throughout the year. Livingston Park Elementary put on beautiful Veterans Day and Dr. Martin Luther King assemblies under the direction of Ms. Elizabeth Fackelman. The

high school Wind Ensemble under the direction of Jeffrey Smith and the Choir under Ms.

Vanessa Moreno's direction honored a group of Veterans attending the program run by social studies teacher Donald Smutko. It is common for the NBTHS Music department to integrate other core subjects. To improve performance as a musician, there must be reflection on previous performance. When our K-12 musicians write reflections, our music teachers use the same rubric to grade their writing as our classroom teachers.

Music teachers have been meeting across grade levels to develop common assessments that will help follow students' progress from kindergarten through high school. We hope to minimize any stresses that might occur as students ascend from one school to the next thereby reducing "music dropouts" as students grapple with their new surroundings. Teachers will know exactly where a student left off and where to begin instruction in their new school.

Our supervisor of music, Jamie Egan, has also been in contact with the NJ State Department of Education to note recent changes to National curriculum for the visual and performing arts and how they impact NJ standards. This has helped guide us and ensure it doesn't become an obsolete document soon after completion. Linwood Middle School is in constant collaboration with both the elementary schools and the high school. These groups plan and perform for our elementary schools throughout "Music in our Schools Month" in March. Our high school also performs their annual winter concert for the district's entire 4th and 5th grade. These collaborative events help our younger students see the many possibilities for their school music careers. These events also celebrate our elementary teachers as the first introduction to our performing groups. Our older students use this opportunity to thank the teachers who helped them begin their journey in performance. We are proud to say that often this journey continues throughout college and beyond.

## Art



The art room in each **elementary school** is an exciting place; providing a warm, creative studio for every student to gain understanding of the world of art and their place within it. Elementary level art education empowers children to learn about themselves and express their ideas via visual communication. The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards are the structural base for the content of art education as it's taught through four components: Performance, History of Art and Culture, Creative Process, and Aesthetic Responses and Critique. Beginning in kindergarten and occurring sequentially through fifth grade, art students learn to apply the elements of art and principles of design to express personal responses to creative problems. Students experience art discovery and processes in a hands-on learning environment. Children learn to safely and appropriately use and care for art materials and tools. Creative activities include, but are not limited to, drawing, painting, coloring, design, collage, and 3-D/sculpture work while exploring countless media. Students engage in creative problem solving tasks as individuals and in group efforts while guided and supported by their art teacher. Monitoring for assistance and success takes place through observation, 1:1 conferencing, group critiques, checklists, reflective responses and rubrics. Art students in North Brunswick elementary schools learn about art, themselves and how that learning interrelates with other academic areas, cultures and beyond.

In the **middle school**, sixth graders have been busy this semester in both Art 6 and World Art. Both courses introduce students to the Elements of Design. All art projects revolve around understanding and using the design elements in some way. Some examples of students' creations are elements charts, African Senufo cloth paintings as well as color theory paintings, theme drawings and Mexican tinware. Seventh graders focus on understanding the Principles of Design. Students explore various media in the

Mixed Media class as well as the Art 7 class. Students experiment with watercolor paint, oil pastels, chalk pastels, watercolor pencil, scratch board and collage. They learn about the different methods of drawing (gesture, contour and whole to part). Students are introduced to Pop Art, the use of pattern and abstract design. Eighth graders, after reviewing the elements and principles of design delve into many different styles of art. They experience street art, portraiture, abstract painting and cartooning.

The **High School** Art Department has been working steadily this school year on implementing the Learner Active Technology Infused model by introducing gamification as well as online teaching and testing in our classrooms. Contrary to popular belief, the Fine Art classroom has become a microcosm of education in general, and our courses regularly offer elements of the History, S.T.E.M. curricula and beyond, in our lessons. In order to build self-stimulated learners who quickly internalize and utilize information creatively, we regularly offer students the opportunity to engage in student and teacher created online learning, assessment tools based on games, not to mention giving students the ability to build their skills and confidence with online testing.

## Business & Technology



Business and technology courses start at the **middle school** level through the students' Life Skills classes. In our 6th grade Research Skills elective, students are learning how to locate information, evaluate sources, develop a search strategy and to use information responsibly. The class includes three projects in which students demonstrate their understanding. The first project is an annotated bibliography of sources. In the second project students are asked to evaluate five online sources and the final project is a presentation on a controversial issue. Currently, students

are gathering online sources and completing bibliographic citations for each source. They will create a search strategy using keywords for searching and locate five credible sources. After locating and citing sources, students will complete a planning document which acts as a rough draft for the final project. This project is a Google Presentation consisting of eight slides and including three arguments and a counter-argument. During the final week of the semester, the students will have the opportunity to present their projects. They will also write a reflection on what skills they will take with them from this course. If there is time, we will discuss issues of copyright law, intellectual property and fair use exceptions. **The Technology Education** team in Linwood provides students with a full range of classes from Keyboarding for 6th Grade, Technology Literacy for 7th Grade and advanced courses for 8th Grade which include Advanced Computer Applications and 21st Century Skills. Projects are designed to meet the needs of the common core as well as being engaging for our students. An example unit is a shopping spree lesson which utilizes Google Spreadsheets. Students are given a budget and they use formulas and functions to calculate sales tax as well as totals. Students learn how to analyze/manipulate the data in the spreadsheet to hit the spending budget goal. In Advanced Computer Applications, students are introduced to the Stock Market, by playing the "Stock Market Game." It is a simulation where students are split into teams, given money and daily financial information on fictitious companies.

The Business Department has a wide range of courses that include: Financial Management, Accounting and Economics. The Business teachers help the students acquire real world skills and understand problems that they will face in life.

The Business Department at the **High School** strives to utilize technology infused instruction to help students form an opinion and then prepare business documents that will help them attain their goals. Students are given the opportunity to work on industry-level software like Adobe Premier, Photoshop and InDesign, and Apple Final Cut Pro, while being taught by industry professionals the complexities of video cameras, mixing boards and computers. Through collaboration with local universities like Montclair and Rutgers and professional sports teams like the New York Giants,

students are exposed to professionals working in the field on trips to radio stations and television studios. We offer Marketing and Sports Marketing which provides instruction about another important segment of business. Marketing students have the opportunity to take Honors level courses while also participating in local, state and national competitions in various marketing categories through Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA). This year NBTHS DECA students have competed and placed in state and regional competitions.

## Assessment Updates

### PARCC - 2015 Score Reports

All Individual Student Reports (ISRs) from the 2015 PARCC administration were mailed home the week of December 21st. Anyone who still has not received his/her child's scores, should contact Amy Rumbo, Supervisor of Assessments & Grants at 732-289-3036.

Please visit our district [website](#) for screencasts guiding parents/guardians through the score reports as well as various links to the PARCC & NJDOE websites for additional parent resources.

### PARCC - 2016 Parent Night

North Brunswick Township Public Schools will be hosting its annual PARCC Parent Night on Thursday, February 4th at 7:00pm in the auditorium at North Brunswick Township High School.

The presentation will include a preview of the upcoming PARCC administration scheduled for this Spring, as well as a review of the 2015 testing administration. For more information about PARCC, please utilize the PARCC & Standardized Testing link on our website as well as our [NBTschools](#) [Common Core](#) & [PARCC Parent Resource](#) website.

## World Language



World Language at the elementary level is designed to be exploration rather than acquisition of a new language. All

students in K-5 experience Spanish instruction through the use of a video-based program called "Para Ti". For

a total of 40 minutes per week, classroom teachers immerse students in the Spanish language and culture with engaging video lessons, puppets, and activities to make learning a new language fun and memorable. Over the course of the program, students will gain a foundation of Spanish to ready them for the next level in middle school.

In the middle school, field trips are a fun way to enhance the cultural experiences of our learners. Eighth grade German students recently went on a field trip to the Christkindmarkt in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Seventh grade German students will visit a local restaurant in the spring for a German buffet lunch. Our Spanish and Italian students are preparing for some restaurant trips with shows. Another new feature has been the introduction of the Native Speaker program for Spanish. This program provides our large number of native Spanish speakers an opportunity to improve their language skills at a higher level. These classes are taught completely in the target language and have been well-received, particularly by the 6th graders. Finally, our Literacy goal has our students writing in English about various foreign language and current topics to strengthen their writing as they learn about their chosen World Language. This gives students additional practice in their Language Arts skills while learning about topics under the umbrella of World Language.

World Language programming at the High School is established and full of rich learning experiences. The following are some of the current happenings observed by the content supervisor: **French:** It was a pleasure to visit an AP French class recently and to observe students at work on a project that exemplified a culmination of ongoing discussions of racism in its socio-political and historic context. This project allowed students to share an individual and collective understanding of racism in a way that required a synthesis of the novel *Le Racisme explique a ma fille* (by Nobel Prize winning Moroccan author Tahar Ben Jelloun), contemporary articles on racism in France and an understanding of freedom of expression, stereotyping, anti-Semitism, prejudice, discrimination and xenophobia with respect to immigration. Students engaged in thoughtful discussion as they prepared the assignment. **German:** We are excited to announce that sixteen of our German

students will be participating this summer in the Pforzheim Exchange Program - a partner-school program between North Brunswick Township HS and the Theodor-Heuss-Gymnasium in Pforzheim, a mid-sized city located in southwest Germany. The program is sponsored by the German American Partnership Program (GAPP), a program of the Goethe Institut in New York. Sixteen students will spend three weeks in Germany in July with host families, attend classes at the Theodor-Heuss-Gymnasium, and take in some of the cultural sights of the area. In October, we will welcome sixteen German students to North Brunswick to reciprocate the hospitality afforded our students this summer. A school-to-school partnership is an invaluable opportunity to experience a foreign culture. Rather than staying in hotels and eating in restaurants, students have the rare chance to experience culture as a member of a family and a community. Our students are grateful for the opportunity afforded by the Board of Education that allows them to have this rich cultural experience. **Italian:** The AP Italian and Honors Italian IV classes and Italian Club are making plans to attend a performance of Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti's opera *L'Elisir d'Amore* on March 23 at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Each year, the upper level classes study a unit on classical Italian music and opera, a lesson which is enhanced by experiencing a live performance at one of the best opera houses in the world. **Spanish:** The AP Spanish and Honors Spanish IV classes are preparing to visit the Museum of Modern Art in New York as a culmination of study on a unit on Picasso, a unit of study which is enhanced by a visit to one of the finest art museums in the world that many of our students will be visiting for the first time.

## Technology Tidbit



There are many technology sites/Apps that connect to the special programs in our district. See below to visit some:

**December Hour of Code-** see what NBTschools did to experience it:

<https://www.smore.com/25tdz>

Some of our art teachers use [Artsonia](#):

**Duolingo-** free app/website students can use to learn other languages

**Apps for learning to create music-**

