



# SPIRIT OF EDUCATION

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## Park Elementary School Embraces "Spirit of the Season"

Over the holiday season, Park Elementary School faculty and staff celebrated the holiday by adopting two District families. Through their generosity, each family received Christmas dinner and grocery gift cards. Their children received clothing, toys, books and craft materials.

In addition, students and staff decorated their school holiday tree with hats, gloves, scarves and mittens that were later donated to MUSA for local distribution. Our hope is that the message of sharing is reinforced through this activity.



## New Science Classrooms Enhance Curriculum

## District Report Card Now Available

Log on to [www.svsd.k12.pa.us](http://www.svsd.k12.pa.us) to view the complete **Pennsylvania Department of Education Academic Achievement 2004-2005 Report Card** for the District. A wealth of detailed information is available there.

According to **Dr. William Kinavey**, assistant superintendent, under the *'No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001*, school districts are required to provide parents and community members with a detailed report about student achievement in their schools.

"This report contains data from the 2004 and 2005 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests for students in grades 5, 8 and 11 in mathematics and reading," said Kinavey. "Because the intent of NCLB is to ensure that every child regardless of their background is achieving, student achievement data is provided by subgroups such as race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, migrant status, disability status and low-income status."

The report also contains information about student attendance in grades K-8 along with the high school student graduation rates.

Report cards are an important source of information about school performance and accountability. They allow schools to compare data in a consistent way and highlight opportunities for improvement.

This report card will show not only the achievement of students overall, but also the progress that disaggregated groups are making in closing achievement gaps. Report card data helps Pennsylvania school districts and the Pennsylvania Department of Education focus on specific groups of students who are currently not meeting academic standards.

The report card is designed to ensure that the public is fully informed about school performance, and to promote broader participation and better decision-making by providing a shared source of performance data. This federal initiative is based on the idea that a well-informed public plays an important part in school improvement.

Besides the District Web site, the report card is also available in each District building office; it can also be accessed from the Pennsylvania Department of Education Web site – [www.paayp.com](http://www.paayp.com).

## Flexible Scheduling Implemented in District Library Media Centers

According to Barrett Library Media Specialist **LuAnne Szczypinski**, the District is in its first year of implementing "flexible scheduling" in the Library Media Centers and it seems to be working very well.

"At Barrett, it has allowed students and teachers to have more access to materials, computers...and, most importantly, access to a certified Library Media Specialist," said Szczypinski.

According to the **American Association of School Librarians (AASL)** position statement on flexible scheduling, it's vital that the library media program is fully

integrated into the educational program to strengthen the teaching/learning process. This will enable students to develop vital skills necessary to locate, analyze, evaluate, interpret, and communicate information and ideas.

With this integration, school, students, teachers, and library media specialists become partners in learning with the library program serving as an extension of the classroom.

Cooperative planning by the teacher and library media specialist integrates information skills and materials into the classroom curriculum and results in the development of assignments that encourage open inquiry.

## Steel Valley Middle School Movie Review – “The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe”

By: *Emily Olson, Lauren Harter & Jacque Joll*

From Nov. 14 – Dec. 8, sixth grade reading classes read the second book of “*The Chronicles of Narnia – The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe.*”

The book is about four brave children (Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy) who go to live with a professor during World War II because of the air raids. While playing a game of hide-n-seek, Lucy ventures into a wardrobe in a spare room. That’s where the adventure begins.

We don’t want to ruin the story, so we will stop.

After reading the book, we went to Loews Theater on Dec. 13 to see the movie. “The movie had great graphics and costumes. Everything seemed so real,” said **Jacque Joll** of Ms. Adam’s class. **Kelly Schuetz** also of Ms. Adam’s class said, “The book was excellent. My favorite was when Peter went to battle. I liked the movie; it was really good but skipped some parts of the book. Peter was so handsome!”

Many people thought the movie was great, but skipped parts of the book. Most people liked the book better because it was more detailed. The book and the movie were both violent and emotional, like when Aslan

is being taunted by the evil creatures. We would not recommend this movie for children younger than third grade.

Now we’ll get to the teacher’s point of view. Here’s what they think. Ms. Adams, a sixth grade teacher said, “I liked both. I liked the movie because it seemed real, the war and also how the witch was jeering at Aslan. I like the book because it had more detail.” **Mrs. Fry**, another sixth grade teacher said, “I liked how they incorporated the action into the movie. When I was reading it, I acted like the White Witch the most!”

**Taylor Stevens** and **Kelli Findlay** of Mrs. Fry’s class said, “Both the movie and book were excellent.” **Kellie Muha** of Ms. Adam’s class said, “I liked the movie better than the book because you can see how the book comes to life.” **Taylor Szczepankowski** of Mrs. Fry’s class said, “I liked the movie better because it made things come to life and helped me to understand the book better.” **Shannon McShane** also of Mrs. Fry’s class said, “I liked the movie because in the book you couldn’t visualize things as well.”

If you liked what you’ve heard so far, go and read the book and see the movie.

## Park Elementary School Honored for Academic Achievements by Pennsylvania Department of Education

The Pennsylvania Department of Education recently honored Park Elementary School with an award for meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards for two consecutive years.

“I am so pleased to accept this award,” said Park Elementary Principal **Beth Tully**. “We strive to reach academic success at Park School. The teachers and students truly deserve all the credit for earning this award. It’s wonderful to be recognized for our joint efforts.”

The keystone-shaped award is being presented to schools across the state where students have exceeded the math and reading standards required by the state’s accountability system and federal “No Child Left Behind Act.” To meet AYP in the 2003-2004 school year, at least 35 percent of students needed to reach proficiency in math and 45 percent proficiency in reading. For the 2004-2005 and the current school year, proficiency standards were raised to 45 percent proficiency in math and 54 percent in reading.

Park Elementary School is receiving its second Keystone Achievement Award for its high achieving students. The teachers, school staff, parents, community and students have worked hard to achieve at this level. The Pennsylvania Department of Education added the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System to its ever-growing slate of tools to help our schools achieve at this sustained level of success.

This is the second year that the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Association of Federal Program Coordinators have partnered to create the Keystone Achievement Award.

The Award was celebrated at the Dec. 5 School Board meeting and now hangs in the office entry at Park School.



*Former Steel Valley School District graduate and now Pittsburgh Steeler Quarterback Charlie Batch's shirt proudly displayed in High School Lobby.*

# Annual Public Notice on Screening and Evaluation

**T**he Steel Valley School District uses the following procedures for locating, identifying, and evaluating specified needs of school-aged students requiring special programs or services. These procedures, as required by law, are as follows:

The district, as prescribed by Section 1402 of the School Code, routinely conducts screenings of a child's hearing acuity in the following grades: kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 7, and 11. Visual acuity is screened in every grade. Speech and language skills are screened in kindergarten and on a referral basis. New students are initially screened the year of admission. Classroom teachers on an on-going basis assess gross motor and fine motor skills, academic skills, and social-emotional skills. Other screening activities include the review of cumulative group based achievement, health and attendance records, grades and information shared by parents or guardians. Specified needs from all of these screening sources are noted within the child's official file.

School records are always open and available to parents, and only to school officials who have a legitimate "need to know" information about the child. School records may be released to other schools, without written permission, in which the student would enroll. Information from student records is released to other persons or agencies only with appropriate authorization that involves written signed permission by parents.

Parents with concerns regarding their student may contact building principals at any time to request a screening or evaluation of their child. Communication with parents and eligible students shall be in English or the native language of the parents.

Screening information will be used by the Child Study Team within the student's school to meet his or her specific needs or to document the need for further evaluation. If it is determined that a child needs additional services, the Child Study Team will make adjustments relative to such things as the child's learning style, behavior, physical inabilities, and speech problems to be more in keeping with traditional classroom expectancies. If a student does not make progress, parents will be asked to give written permission for further individual professional evaluations by a Multidisciplinary Team.

The Multidisciplinary Team consists of parents, teachers, a certified public school psychologist, other related service personnel and persons familiar with the student's educational experience and cultural background. The evaluations conducted by the Team, must be sufficient in scope and

depth to provide information about the student's academic functioning, adaptive and social behavior, learning problems, strengths and information obtained by the Child Study Team and information from the parents.

After all the evaluations are completed, an Evaluation Report (ER) will be compiled and include specific recommendations for the types of interventions that are appropriate to meet the child's specified needs. This evaluation will be completed and a report sent to the parents within 60 school days. Parents are then invited to participate in a meeting where the report will be discussed.

If the student meets criteria for special education services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed for specialized services for the student within 30 calendar days. The Steel Valley School District IEP Team will consist of at least two of the following district staff: the building principal, the special education teacher, the regular education teacher, the psychologist, director of pupil services, other teachers or specialists as needed and other administrative staff when appropriate. One person may fulfill two or more roles.

Parents are an integral part of the IEP team and need to be physically present at the IEP meeting. The district will make every effort to insure parent participation. The district will notify the parents in writing, make documented phone calls, and make home visits, if necessary, to make parents aware of the IEP conference and the need for parental participation. Prior to initiation of services, parents will be presented a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) that explains the services and program recommendations. Parental consent must be obtained before providing initial special education and related services. The Procedural Safeguards Notice describes the parents' rights and options if they disagree with the individualized program presented.

When screening results suggest a student may be eligible for gifted education, the school district seeks a parental consent to conduct a multidisciplinary team evaluation. The initial evaluation is summarized in the Gifted Written Report (GWR) and used by the Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP) team to develop to develop the GIEP. After the initial evaluation, students identified as mentally gifted are reevaluated before a change in educational placement recommended or under recommendation of the GIEP team. The Notice of Recommendation Assignment (NORA), signed by the parent, gives the school district permission to provide services.

## Services for Eligible School-Age Students

The Steel Valley School District provides a full range of placement options and services to eligible students. Options in the district range from supportive intervention in the regular classroom to full time special education classes, depending on the student's individual needs. Inclusive intervention practices are the first step in the continuum of placement options. If a placement option is not available within the District to meet the student's needs, then services are secured from the Intermediate Unit, another school district, a licensed private academic day school, an approved private school or a community agency. Placement options provide for a free and appropriate public education for all eligible students. The District also provides such related services as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, transportation, nursing services, psychological services, social worker services and special education aide support.

The following programs are provided within the District: Learning Support, Life Skills Support, Emotional Support, Elementary Autistic Support, Blind or Visually Impaired Support, Deaf and Hearing Impaired Support, Speech and Language Support and Gifted Support. Programs outside the District include but are not limited to: Pressley Ridge School, Wesley Highland School, Wesley Academy, PACE School, Craig Academy, Holy Family Learning, Auberle Katherine Dean Tillotson School, Mon Valley School, Children's Institute, Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children and Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf.

## Services for Students in Nonpublic Schools

Public special education is accessible to resident students attending nonpublic schools by affording the opportunity for the nonpublic school student to enroll on a part-time dual enrollment basis in a special education program operated within a District school. These services are accessible following a Multidisciplinary Team evaluation, determination of eligibility and development of an Individualized Education Program. Parents of non-public school students can obtain further information by contacting their child's school principal or the Office of Pupil Services at 412-464-3670.

## Services for Preschool Age Children

Act 212, the Early Intervention System Act, entitles all preschool age children with

disabilities to appropriate early intervention services. Young children experiencing developmental delays or physical or mental disabilities are eligible for early intervention services. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare is responsible for providing services to infants and toddlers, defined as children from birth through two years of age. Contact the Alliance for Infants and Toddlers at 2100 Wharton Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203, (412) 394-5736. The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing services to preschool age children from three to five years of age. Contact Project DART at 4475 E. Waterfront Drive, Homestead, PA 15120, (412) 394-5737.

### Protected Handicapped Students - Chapter 15

The Steel Valley School District, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Chapter 15 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code, will provide without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aides, services or accommodations which are needed to provide the student equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities. These services and protections for protected handicapped students are distinct from those applicable to all eligible students in special education programs.

For further information on the evaluation procedures and provisions of services to protected handicapped students, please contact your child's guidance counselor or Mrs. Borges, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services at (412) 464-3670.

### Education Rights and Privacy

The Steel Valley School District and its employees are required by Federal Law and State and Federal Rules and Regulations to protect the rights of students. The foundation of these rights comes from Federal legislation entitled, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (also known as the Buckley Amendments). There are State Rules and

Regulations dealing with regular and special education students' rights and privacy. All students are covered by the State Regulations contained in Chapter 12 known as Students' Rights and Responsibilities, which include regulations on the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of pupil records.

The basic premise of the above-mentioned laws, rules, and regulations is that information about students cannot be disclosed without written parental consent except in limited instances which include disclosure from one educational agency to another when the student transfers. There are different categories of information: Educational Records consist of information related to a student that is maintained by an educational agency. Personally Identifiable Information includes the student's name, the name of the parent or other family members, a personal identifier or a list of personal characteristics that would make the student's identity easily traceable.

Education Records and Personally Identifiable Information cannot be disclosed or related without written parent consent or if a student is over eighteen without student consent, except as permitted under Federal Regulations and State Guidelines with regard to the student's transfer to another educational agency.

There is certain information that can be released without consent, which is called Directory Information. Directory Information means information contained in an education record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. The School District designates what information is labeled as Directory Information. It shall include the following: Student's name, address, phone number, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student.

Disclosure of information means to permit access to or the release, transfer, or other

communication of education records, or the personally identifiable information contained in these records, to any party, by any means, including oral, written, or electronic means. This means that information about a student cannot even be shared in conversation without permission. This also applies to other Steel Valley personnel who do not have an educationally relevant reason to possess knowledge of a student.

Written parental consent is necessary for disclosure of personally identifiable information and education records. The consent must: (1) specify the records that may be disclosed; (2) state the purpose of the disclosure; and (3) identify the party or class of parties to whom the disclosure may be made. Furthermore, Steel Valley must maintain a written record of disclosure for the parents to inspect in case information has been released.

### Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of the Steel Valley School District not to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, disability, or age in its educational and vocational programs, activities, or employment as required by Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VI, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and state and federal laws. For information about your rights or grievance procedures, contact Section 504, Title VI and Title IX Coordinator, Dr. William Kinavey, Assistant Superintendent, (412) 464-3619, or Chapters 14 and 15 Coordinator, Diana L. Borges, (412) 464-3670 at the Steel Valley School District, Administration Building, Munhall, Pennsylvania.

Employees and participants who have an inquiry or complaint of harassment or discrimination, or who need information about accommodations for persons with disabilities, should contact: Dr. Alex M. Warren, Superintendent at (412)464-3650 at the Steel Valley School District Administration Building in Munhall, Pennsylvania or the Director of the Office of Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20202-1100.

## Easy Things to do at Home to Raise Writers

- Be sure your child has different types of writing implements such as pencils, crayons, markers and lots of paper.
- Encourage your child to tell you stories. Write them down and have your child illustrate them.
- Create labels so your child can match them to objects throughout your home.
- Before you go to the grocery store, write a shopping list together. Have your child cross items off the list after you select them.
- Create scrapbooks about your family, special occasions and trips.
- Keep a journal with your child and have him/her summarize what happens each day while you write it down.



## Steel Valley School District Honors School Director Keith O'Toole

Steel Valley School District (SVSD) Board Member **Keith O'Toole** was added to the "Honor Roll of School Board Service" by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) at its statewide conference in Hershey, PA for having over 14 years of service at Steel Valley. O'Toole was also recognized at the Dec. 5 Steel Valley School District School Board meeting. "Mr. O'Toole has shown a great deal of commitment to the District for more than a decade," said **Dr. Alex Warren**, SVSD superintendent. "And, we're proud of his recent recognition by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association."

PSBA President **Barbara A. Frankhouser**, Mifflin Co. school director said, "School directors continually are spending more of their personal time on school-related activities. Sixty-five percent of them devote 16 hours or more a month to school board business. That shows a real commitment on their part."

According to Frankhouser, these individuals average about two and a half working days per month of non-paid, volunteer service as school directors.

"They exemplify leadership and dedication, giving unselfishly to their communities, students and the public schools," said Frankhouser. "Their efforts, along with those of their fellow board members, reflect their dedication to giving our children the opportunity to gain knowledge through the best educational system possible."

O'Toole also received a certificate of appreciation from the PSBA executive board for his role on the school board and the long-term contributions he made to guide youth and public education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

PSBA has been recognizing Pennsylvania school board members since 1983; recognition is offered at eight, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28, 32, 36, 40 and 44 years of service to a local school board.

## Three Children from Park Elementary Selected for Prestigious "People to People" Program

**Ariel Busche, Josh Lohr** and **Zack Paterlini**, fifth grade students at Park Elementary, have been selected to serve as Student Ambassadors in the "People to People" program. They will be traveling to the Canadian Rockies, Vancouver, Calgary and Banff National Park for two weeks this summer.

According to **Patricia K. Metinko**, academic literacy coach for grades 6-12, "The children will live with the Blackfoot Indians for a couple of days and must build their own Tepees; they'll live on a Wolf Sanctuary and care and feed the wolves for another few days; and then they'll walk a glacier, dig for fossils, and go whale watching."

"The trip is all so very well organized... down to the clothes, shoes, boots and other items that the children must have prepared to attend," added Metinko.

People to People Student Ambassador Programs are invitation-only and provide international educational opportunities for grade school, junior high, and high school students. Through the program, students participate in hands-on cultural experiences; gain behind-the-scenes access to fascinating people and places; and experience amazing outdoor adventures to create life-changing educational experiences.

The children had to go through many steps to qualify for the program. "They were judged for maturity, had to have three letters of recommendation (two from teachers), attend meetings and interviews," said Metinko. She added that they were also selected based on their PSSA scores.

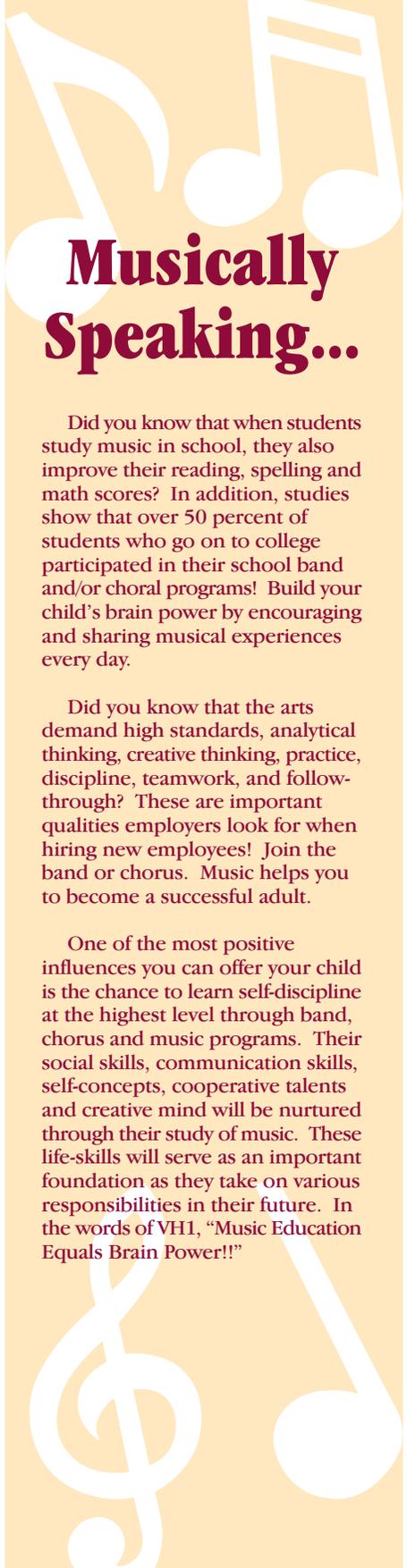
Out of the over 60 interested children, only 33 were selected for the trip. Metinko said some were eliminated after the second meeting of personal interviews and recommendation letters.

"Everything is a learning tool, like applying for a scholarship, preparing for the interviews and how they must dress for the interview," said Metinko.

People to People Student Ambassador Programs embody the mission set forth by its founder, President **Dwight D. Eisenhower**, to "promote peace through understanding" between individual citizens of the world.

Over the past 50 years, Student Ambassadors have traveled to all seven continents to fulfill President Eisenhower's vision of a better world, gaining maturity, confidence, self-esteem and friendship through People to People Student Ambassador Programs.

For more information on the program, visit [www.studentambassadors.org](http://www.studentambassadors.org).



## Musically Speaking...

Did you know that when students study music in school, they also improve their reading, spelling and math scores? In addition, studies show that over 50 percent of students who go on to college participated in their school band and/or choral programs! Build your child's brain power by encouraging and sharing musical experiences every day.

Did you know that the arts demand high standards, analytical thinking, creative thinking, practice, discipline, teamwork, and follow-through? These are important qualities employers look for when hiring new employees! Join the band or chorus. Music helps you to become a successful adult.

One of the most positive influences you can offer your child is the chance to learn self-discipline at the highest level through band, chorus and music programs. Their social skills, communication skills, self-concepts, cooperative talents and creative mind will be nurtured through their study of music. These life-skills will serve as an important foundation as they take on various responsibilities in their future. In the words of VH1, "Music Education Equals Brain Power!!"