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DATES TO REMEMBER

March

- 24-28 Schools Closed—Easter Recess
29 Schools Reopen

April

- 6 Board of Education Public Work Session
19 Board of Education Regular Meeting & Preliminary Budget Hearing
25-29 Schools Closed—Passover Recess

May

- 2 Schools Reopen
4 Board of Education Public Work Session
17 Annual Election & Budget Vote
25 Board of Education Regular Meeting
30 Schools Closed—Memorial Day

Technology in Our Schools

The 2015-2016 school year has brought many new technological endeavors to the Rockville Centre School District. New resources have been made available to students, parents and teachers that expand and improve learning and communication practices.

In late August, on the heels of the success of the 2014-2015 iPad rollout to all Middle School students, the District distributed iPads to the entire student body at South Side High School. Currently, every student from grade 6-12 has a District-owned iPad for use at school and at home. Fifth grade students have individualized iPads during the school day. This initiative gives our students access to vast resources on the internet as well as applications such as LightSail and eBackpack.

Internet resources allow teachers to share information and expand student knowledge with additional support outside of the classroom such as Flipped Learning sessions, which give students the ability to continue learning even after leaving school. Using this resource, teachers prepare lessons that students can access for further explanation of material or for clarification of topics. LightSail is a reading program that assists students in reading comprehension and expands their genre horizons. After a successful pilot last year at both the elementary and middle school levels, the District expanded its use for students in grades 5-8. eBackpack is used to share assignments and resources through the iPad.

In an effort to improve communication with parents, the District has elected to distribute reports electronically. Report cards, progress reports, NWEA results and New York State assessment results are all being accessed as PDF documents by parents through the PowerSchool Parent Portal with secure individual access codes issued by the District.

Since its introduction last year, the Rockville Centre School District's App has been downloaded over 2,200 times and can be used to access push notifications, PowerSchool, eBackpack, Edline, building news, district-wide news, calendars, school lunch menus and much more. The App is currently available in the iTunes store and in the Droid Market. Download the App to keep up with important District news and announcements.

Technology usage continues to be a main focus in education across the nation. In Rockville Centre schools, our students have adapted well to the many new programs made available to them through these new resources. We will continue to introduce appropriate applications for our students to expand their skills and knowledge base.



Congratulations to the South Side Middle School Robotics Team who came in first place at the Regional Championship!

iPad Use in Our Classrooms

Today, the use of iPads has become part of the daily routine of our students. In grades K-4 classes are provided iPads for students to share; in grade 5, each student has an individual iPad to use at school; and in grades 6-12 students have been issued iPads for use at school as well as at home. This initiative allows our students instant access to vast resources available on the internet and through District installed applications.

The use of iPads has been weaved into the curricula at all grade levels. In STELLAR, students are taught the essentials of research in exciting ways. Second graders went on an “iPad Adventure” and traveled to Ellis Island. Third grade students used online resources to create a travel brochure to Mexico. Students in grades 5-8 use the application Lightsail to read books of different genres. This application allows teachers to monitor students’ reading progress and gives students a variety of choices. Fifth grade teacher Mrs. Glass said, “Students are now reading classics which they might not have picked up on their own.” The application eBackpack is used in grades 5-12 where teachers and students can post, share, revise, critique and return work seamlessly on their iPads. Teachers can also create assignments and assessments for students to complete right on their devices. Digital textbooks were introduced in Social Studies for students in grades 6-8 and we expect to expand their use in the coming years.

South Side High School Principal John Murphy is extremely satisfied with the progress of his students. He said, “The ways in which they expand the learning opportunities for students have increased exponentially. Initially, iPads were used to distribute handouts and homework assignments, share class notes, and collect student work. Over time, teachers and students began to use them more as a collaborative tool, to peer-edit, create multimedia assignments and redefine the research process.”

Assistant Superintendent Chris Pellettieri states, “iPads are helping to change the dynamics of teaching and learning in Rockville Centre Schools. No longer are teachers the only ones with the information in class. iPads have empowered students with a knowledge base which we have never seen before. This is causing a shift in our classrooms. Instead of teachers being the sole providers of information, we now have a situation where students have the information at their fingertips 24/7. Teachers now help students take the information, analyze it, make sense of it, evaluate it, collaborate and communicate it back to others. It’s an ongoing process, but one we are working to embrace. Our students certainly will be moving on to college and careers armed with strong 21st century skills.”



Students Apply Their Math and Science Skills to Robotics!

The District Robotics program began at South Side Middle School with funding through a partnership with the Rockville Centre Education Foundation offering our students hands-on opportunities to work in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM). With the growing popularity at the Middle School, the District expanded STEAM initiatives at the High School and at the elementary schools.

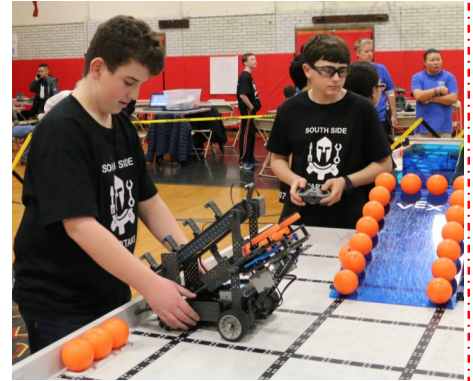
Through this initiative each elementary school now owns several robots to work with, giving the students a chance to drive the technology. The District utilizes in-house professional development, led by Middle School staff, to further STELLAR teachers' knowledge about robotics programming.

Our elementary students are using the robots in grades 2-5. By using their coding background as a springboard, the students have learned how to write and upload programs so that the robots perform certain commands. In some schools the students have conducted mini-competitions to determine which robot would be able to travel from one end of the team's classroom to the other. Students evaluated their code after the competition and made adjustments to improve the speed of the robot.

This year the High School Robotics club participated in a regional competition at Vaughn College of Aeronautics. The team was tasked with designing and building a robot to play against other teams from around the New York region in a game-based engineering challenge. Students developed a design for the robot using a variety of motors and parts. The High School team made it to the semifinals, finishing third.

The Middle School Robotics club held its first robotics competition in the beginning of February and participated in the Regional championship at Glen Cove Middle School on March 5th. During the Championship, our students placed first and qualified for the 2016 VEX Worlds Robotics Competition in Louisville, Kentucky where top-ranking students from over 30 different countries will compete.

Our District Robotics initiatives have grown exponentially; starting in the 2012/2013 school year with only a few dedicated students in the High School and now impacting hundreds of students across the grades. The District is currently looking to offer even more opportunities involving coding and robotics. Mr. Pellettieri said, "The Middle School has done such an amazing job in such a short time period. Imagine what they will be able to accomplish once their students start to arrive with a robotics background. The sky's the limit."





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To All Rockville Centre School District Residents

If you believe that your school-age or preschool child may have a disability, please contact Dr. Noreen Leahy, Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education, (516)255-8928, or Dr. Orly Gadon, Chairperson of the Committee on Special Education/Preschool Education at (516) 255-8942.

Using Video Conferencing to Learn and Explore

In our elementary schools, STELLAR teachers have found that video conferencing can be used as a wonderful learning tool. Using this technology allows teachers the ability to customize their lessons and bring the subject matter to life for their students. STELLAR teacher, Mrs. Pettersen said, "When we are working with video conferencing in the classroom it takes us to a different level and allows students to visit the museum, an exhibit or a specific location."

STELLAR teachers use video conferencing to set up virtual field trips for students. Some sessions are mystery sessions which are coordinated through a community of teachers around the country who want their students to use geography facts in a fun and interesting way to locate the other class. Each set of students poses a series of geographical questions to the other group in order to guess their location. During a recent mystery session at Wilson Elementary School, students had the opportunity to conference with fifth graders from a school in rural Virginia. STELLAR teacher Mrs. Pettersen said, "Our students didn't know where the Virginia students were and vice versa! The children asked 'yes' or 'no' questions on location; for example: 'Are you west of the Mississippi?', or, 'Does your state border on an ocean?' in order to determine their location."

Using the video conferencing technology in conjunction with regular instruction gives students the ability to travel the world without leaving the classroom. Virtual field trips have allowed students to connect face-to-face with experts in fields such as astronomy, wildlife and music. They have received physics lessons via a virtual trip to NASA, learned about the mathematical secrets behind music from Dr. Amir Khosrowpour from the Manhattan School of Music and visited the Aquarium of the Pacific in Monterey, California.

Our students have also used the video conferencing to travel in time. In a virtual field trip called 'Can She Trust You?' our students had the opportunity to help a runaway slave when they visited an 1860 era Ohio Village. During a field trip called 'Investigating the Lincoln Assassination with Detective McDevitt' students traveled to Washington D.C. in 1865, where they met with a detective from the Washington Metropolitan Police Department to visit the sites and examine the clues from the investigation of President Lincoln's assassination. These visits deepen students' understanding of what they are learning and gives them an opportunity to meet people and see places that might not be possible if it were not for this technology.

