

# R Schools

digital edition

## Hoops For Hunger a Big Success

The RRMS and RRHS student councils sponsored Hoops for Hunger to collect food and funds for the Cleveland Food Bank's "Harvest for Hunger" campaign. From February 2-18, 2009 students at RRMS and RRHS collected cash, checks, and food items.

The Bay Village City Schools were challenged to compete to see who could collect the most donations of funds and food during February 2-18. Rocky River was announced as the winner at the Bay vs River high school boys' JV and Varsity basketball games on February 20 at RRHS.

Rocky River offered 2 raffle tickets for every \$5.00 donation and 1 raffle ticket for every 5 cans of food. Raffle tickets were drawn for a Half Time Shootout at the basketball game on February 20. Prizes were donated by Giant Eagle and SportsTime Ohio.

As an added incentive, the game was televised by SportsTime Ohio, who donated \$750 to the district collecting the most cash and/or food and \$250 to the second place district.



RRMS Student Council members present a check to Julie Simmonds from the Cleveland FoodBank. From left to right: Rob Hendricks, Alexandra Fedynsky, Julie Simmonds, Madeline Fitzsimmons, Madelyn Cook, Josh Krampitz.

## RRHS Students Honored with Work Ethic Award

Elizabeth Hearn, Alex Moore, and Brandon Best may still be in high school, but they have already mastered one of the skills that employers value the most – a strong work ethic. These Rocky River High School students were honored by the Lakewood Chamber of Commerce and Lakewood / Rocky River Sunrise Club with the 2008-2009 Work Ethic Award. This award was presented to students in the West Shore Career and Technical District at the Lakewood Chamber of Commerce's luncheon on February 20, 2009 at Winterhurst.



Front (left to right): Students Brandon Best, Elizabeth Hearn, and Alex Moore. Back (left to right): LRC Coordinator Cathy Calamia and RRHS Principal Debra Bernard

## RRHS Earns Second US News & World Report Silver Medal

For the second year in a row, Rocky River High School was awarded a silver medal by US News & World Report in its annual rating of America's Best High Schools. This silver medal is one of only 4 earned by a high school in Cuyahoga County and one of 37 in Ohio that received this distinction.



# RRHS's Professional Learning Community

Visit Rocky River High School on selected Monday mornings during the school year and you'll see groups of people throughout the building working and learning together. "Why is that unusual?" you might ask. What is different about these groups is that they are comprised of teachers, not students. The faculty of Rocky River High School has embarked on the development of a Professional Learning Community whose ultimate goal is to help all students learn. The 2008-2009 school year is dedicated to finding out what a PLC is and deciding how best to implement one at RRHS. To that end, groups of faculty members have visited schools in Charon and Chicago to see PLCs in action.

The term Professional Learning Community was first used by researchers in the 1960s when working to reduce the isolation common to the teaching profession. Further work in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in the formation of PLCs in schools across the country. According to *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement* by Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker (Solution Tree, 1998) when schools function as a PLC their members:

- Collectively pursue shared mission, vision, values and goals
- Work interdependently in collaborative teams focused on learning
- Engage in ongoing collective inquiry into best practice and the "current reality" of student achievement and the prevailing practices of the school
- Demonstrate an action orientation and experimentation
- Participate in systematic processes to promote continuous improvement
- Maintain an unrelenting focus on results

DuFour and Eaker identify "Three Big Ideas" that guide the work of members of a PLC:

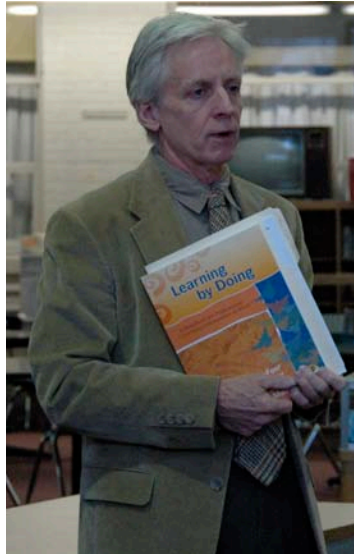
- The fundamental purpose of the school is to ensure high levels of learning for all students, and the extent to which the school is successful in achieving that

purpose will have a profound effect on the short-term and long-term success of students. The relevant question in a PLC is not "Was it taught?" but rather, "Was it learned?" The shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning underpins the work of a PLC.

- Educators cannot fulfill the fundamental purpose of learning for all if they work in isolation. Therefore, they must work together collaboratively to address those issues that have the greatest impact on student learning and must take collective responsibility to ensure the learning takes place.
- Educators will not know the extent to which students are learning unless they have a results orientation, constantly seeking evidence and indicators of student learning. They will use that evidence to identify students who need additional time and support for learning and to inform and improve their own practice in the classroom.

These three main concepts are informing the PLC work of the faculty at Rocky River High School. Principal Debra Bernard is grateful that the Board of Education and Superintendent Michael Shoaf are so supportive of their work. "Our PLC affords teachers the time to collaborate to meet the needs of our students. In this, our first year, we are identifying where RRHS is and where we want to go."

A group of faculty members have started a study group where they explore the PLC research in depth and report back to their colleagues. "Professional Learning Communities model what we hope for each of our students - that we are all life-long learners. Our group allows each teacher to feel part of a larger community," said PLC Study Group member and RRHS mathematics teacher Kristen Stephens.



Associate Principal Alan Wilhelms addresses members of the RRHS Professional Learning Community.



(Left to right) Teachers Russell Shuster, Darryl Knauss, and Ann Brokaw in a PLC discussion group.

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## Sources:

[www.allthingsplc.info](http://www.allthingsplc.info)

*Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement* by Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker (Solution Tree, 1998)



## Crystal Apple Awarded to Cindy Zebris

Cindy Zebris, Rocky River High School science teacher, has been recognized with a Crystal Apple Award from The Plain Dealer newspaper. Mrs. Zebris was nominated for this award by a former student, Joseph Constantino, who is currently a freshman at the University of Akron.

In citing his reasons for the nomination, Joseph mentioned Mrs. Zebris' dedication to her students, her willingness to spend time out of school hours to help with study sessions, and the high standards to which she adheres. He also noted that, as a freshman in college, he realizes how well Mrs. Zebris prepares her students for their future studies.

## Don't Just Teach American History, Live It!

Ben Purdy, 8th grade social studies teacher at Rocky River Middle School, presented at the annual Ohio Middle School Association Conference on February 20th, 2009. Purdy shared strategies with fellow middle school educators to increase student motivation and use creative instructional techniques in the areas of lecture, group work, and projects.

TUFPOH, The Un-Famous People of History, is a favorite activity of Purdy's 8th graders. "TUFPOH is a way to honor those thousand of Americans who, while making this a better world, never received their due credit. Our students make

sure that they have their shining moment," said Purdy. Students dress up as a non-famous person of history and report on them to the class. Other TUFPOH highlights include a gift exchange, fashion show, awards, dance, Olympics and feast.

Purdy also brings history to life for his students by dressing as an historical figure and delivering his lesson in a first-person narrative. Purdy is an expert on John Smith, James Madison, Davy Crockett, Civil War soldiers, the Lincoln assassination, and the \$1 bill.

The Pursonium is a small museum wall in the classroom where a rotating selection of military memorabilia is displayed. Collected by Purdy over the years, the exhibits range from muskets and power horns to a pilot seat from a Vietnam-era jet. "It all helps to bring history to life for my students," said Purdy.



## Kensington P.E. Program Awarded AHPERD Ohio Gold Medal

Kensington Intermediate School physical education teacher Linda Neitzel was presented with the Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance's Ohio Gold Award in Columbus on December 3, 2008. This is an award program designed to recognize outstanding school physical education programs across Ohio.

Kensington principal Todd Murphy was delighted that Neitzel achieved this recognition. "Linda Neitzel is truly an outstanding teacher. She collaborates with colleagues and incorporates leading edge instructional strategies for fitness education. Linda's award is reflective of her dedication to the students of Kensington. We are all extremely proud of Linda's achievement which will continue to enhance fitness instruction for our students."



# Transportation



The Rocky River City Schools is proud of the level of service provided by the Transportation Department. "We have an excellent group of drivers in Rocky River," said transportation manager Mary Lavendusky. "Their concern for the safety of their passengers is outstanding."

All drivers are trained according to the Operation and Safety Rules written by the state of Ohio. Training includes pre trip inspection of the bus, loading, unloading, railroad, right/left turns, backing, emergency procedures, and student management. This intense training course takes at least 40 hours. Drivers are also required to have a minimum of 4 hours of in-service training each school year; our drivers have 8 hours. All drivers have an annual physical and semi-annual records check. Drivers are re-certified every 6 years.

The Transportation Department added a Zonar Ground Traffic Control System to all buses in its fleet this year. This provides Lavendusky with real-time information on the location of all buses, their speed, time moving, and time idling. "Zonar helps us to run a cost effective and fuel efficient system," said Lavendusky.

## By the Numbers

District square mileage:	5
Number of buses:	23
Number of routes per day:	17
Number of students bused per day:	1,154
Number of non public students bused per day:	298
Miles traveled daily:	472
Non public miles traveled daily:	210
Miles per year:	130,140
Extra curricular/activities miles per year:	37,387
Average mileage per bus:	57,694
Average annual fuel expense per bus:	\$3,329
Annual fuel expense:	\$76,566
Gallons of diesel fuel per year:	26,605
Cost of a new school bus:	\$78,000

# Goldwood's Penguin Days

Second graders at Goldwood School celebrated Penguin Day on February 6, 2009. They dressed as penguins, learned about penguins, read books about penguins and participated in penguin races.



# Kensington Students Know Their Presidents

Students from Kensington School were big winners in this year's Northeast Ohio Academic Games - Presidents' Competition held at Brooklyn High School. The Northeast Ohio Academic Games League provides academic competition for students in elementary, middle, and high schools. Participants are motivated to improve their skills in mathematics, language arts, and social studies and receive recognition for their achievements. The Kensington students participated in the Presidents' Competition. Players learn about and develop an understanding of the personalities, historical contexts, political decisions, and other events of the Presidents of the United States of America.

In the fourth/fifth grade division, the following Kensington students earned the highest scores. They also earned a medal. They are: Peter Wilson (Grade 4), Andrew Gluntz (Grade 4), Sophia Manoloff (Grade 4), Dana Way (Grade 4).

In addition, the fourth and fifth grade students' scores combined to give them the highest average score for the whole tournament (for grades 4-8). These students earned the first place trophy. The students are: Grade 4: Andrew Gluntz, Sophia Manoloff, Hannah Mazzei, Maddie Thompson, Dana Way, Peter Wilson, Jessica Zelinski, and Victoria Zelinski. Grade 5: Cathy Eichler, Kyle Moore, Hailey Mylett, Aidan O'Donnell, Claudia Stohr, Stuart Taylor, Anna Weixel.



## Kelley's Island Field Trip Funded by Target Grant



*Rocky River High School science teacher Daryl Knauss holds a fossil found on Kelley's Island.*

Rocky River High School science teacher Daryl Knauss is the recipient of a \$600 grant from Target. These grants are awarded to provide teachers with the opportunity to bring learning to life outside of the classroom. Knauss will use the grant to help fund a field trip to Kelly's Island on Saturday May 9, 2009, which is open to students in grades 9-12 at the high school. A total of 48 students can go on the trip and there is always a waiting list for this popular event.

Knauss' background as a state park naturalist and current position as a part-time state park officer affords him access to nonpublic areas of the state park land on Kelly's Island. The field trip begins with a ferry ride over to the island, followed by a day of exploring the birds, animals, plants, and geologic formations. Knauss always includes a stop at the cemetery to show students the graves of the Ester and Kelley families, who were two of the original settlers of Rocky River.

One of the students' favorite spots is an area on the shore that was used as a dump when the limestone quarry was in operation. "Students are amazed that they can pick up 450 million year old Ordovician fossils," said Knauss.

## Internet Safety: Closing the Gap Between What Parents and Kids Know

On Monday, February 23, 2009, the Rocky River City School District hosted a community-wide forum on "Internet Safety: Closing the Gap Between What Kids and Parents Know". George Lichman of the Rocky River Police Department and Ohio Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force updated parents and community members on student safety on the Internet. Topics covered include how children can use the Internet safely, cyber-bullying, information about social networking sites, cell phones/text messaging and pictures. Parents were made aware of legal issues and what local law enforcement and prosecutors are doing to keep our children safe.

The best advice Officer Lichman has for parents? "Talk to your children about safe use of the Internet. Set rules for your children and work together to make sure they are followed." A packet of information dealing with Internet safety is available on the Rocky River City School District website at [www.rrcs.org](http://www.rrcs.org), along with a list of child safety organizations and their websites.



*Officer George Lichman of the Rocky River Police Department and Ohio Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force discusses Internet safety with a group of parents and community members.*



## Rocky River High School Students' Ceramic Art On Display at RRRPL

Rocky River High School ceramics students pose with art teacher Patricia Tobin at Rocky River Public Library, where their work is currently on display.

## RRHS Band Performs at Severance Hall



The Rocky River High School Band performed in the Sixth Annual Northeast Ohio Band Invitational at Severance Hall. (Photo compliments of Clifford Norton Studio)

The Rocky River High School Band performed in the Sixth Annual Northeast Ohio Band Invitational at Severance Hall on Sunday, January 25, 2009. The Ohio Band Invitational is sponsored by Case Western Reserve University Department of Music and the Cleveland Institute of Music. This day of symphonic band music featured marches, fanfares, overtures and suites. The Rocky River High School Band consists of 126 members and is directed by Kirk Taylor.

## Speech & Debate Team Fields Two State Champions

Hard work paid off on March 7, 2009 for the Rocky River High School Speech and Debate Team at the 2009 Ohio High School Speech League State Tournament in Mason, Ohio. Michelle Chaho took first place in Oratorical Interpretation and Paige Nagy took first place in Prose and Poetry. Brian Thorn and Henry Nisiobincki were third in Public Forum Debate, Jake Thorn was a semi-finalist in Impromptu Speaking and Marko Paulic was a quarter-finalist in Oratorical Interpretation. The team took 10th in the state, the highest place for a Rocky River High School Speech and Debate Team since 2000.

## Fencing Team Wins State



Coach Sara Kass and members of the Rocky River High School Fencing Team pose with Channel 3 anchor Ramona Robinson. The Girls' fencing team was recently featured on Ramona's Kids after winning the state fencing meet.

## RRHS Girls' Basketball Team District Champs

The Lady Pirates, coached by Michael Murray, defeated Holy Name to win the District Championship. This is the first time that a RRHS girls' basketball team has won this championship. Congratulations!



## Swimming & Diving

Congratulations to the swimming and diving teams who did a great job at the state meet.

- Girls Division II 9th Place
- 200 Free Relay 4th Place
- 400 Free Relay 7th Place
- 50 Free 6th Place: Stephanie Thomas
- 100 Free 14th Place: Stephanie Thomas

### Individual Qualifiers

- Meredith Hauck 200 & 500 Free
- Paige Ferber 50 Free
- Relays: Stephanie Thomas, Paige Ferber, Meredith Hauck & Annie Camerino
- Boys Division II Diving: Thomas Moran 21st