

# PEORIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS staff news weekly

Volume II — No. 26 — March 10th, 2010

## Events Planned at Four Locations on Institute Day

The annual county-wide institute day, which again will include Peoria Public Schools, is scheduled for Friday, March 19th. Students will not be in session during this day. Seminars will be held at four locations throughout the five hour institute day. Dr. Willard Daggett returns for his second con-

secutive year and will speak to pre-k through 12th grade staff at three separate locations throughout the morning. Dr. Patrick Dolan will address administration, Board of Education, PFT Union leaders, building leadership and the business community. Details for each schedule are listed below.

### County-wide Institute Day Schedule for March 19, 2010

Richwoods H.S. Pre-K through 4th staff	Woodruff H.S. 5th through 8th staff	Limestone H.S. 9th through 12th staff	Civic Center Union Leaders, Building Representatives, Board of Education, Central Office Administrators & Business Community
7 - 8 a.m. Doors open, refreshments & entertainment in lobby	7 - 8 a.m. Doors open, refreshments & entertainment in lobby	7 - 8 a.m. Doors open, refreshments & entertainment in lobby	
8 a.m. Event begins in theater (Phares Award)	8 a.m. Event begins in commons (Phares Award)	8 a.m. Event begins in theater (Phares Award)	7:00 - 8:15 a.m. Breakfast with Dr. Dolan for community and business leaders
8:30 a.m. Presentation 1	8:30 a.m. Presentation 1	8:30 a.m. Presentation 1	8:00 a.m. Event begins in ballroom (Phares Award)
9:50 a.m. Break	9:45 a.m. Break	10:10 a.m. Break	8:35 a.m. Dr. Dolan Presentation 1
10:20 a.m. Presentation 2	10:10 a.m. Breakout Session	10:40 a.m. Breakout Session	9:35 a.m. Breakout Session
11:45 a.m. Breakout Session	11:30 a.m. Presentation 2	12:00 p.m. Q & A Session	10:45 a.m. Dr. Dolan Presentation 2
12:50 p.m. Wrap Up	12:50 p.m. Wrap Up	12:50 p.m. Wrap Up	11:30 a.m. Action Plans

## PFT and BOE to Recognize "Peoria's Finest Teacher"

In an effort to showcase the positive things happening within Peoria Public Schools, the Peoria Federation of Teachers' Local 780 is organizing an award presentation to be held at the second Board of Education meeting each month. The first "Peoria's Finest Teacher" award will be given on March 22 during the awards and recognition segment of the meeting.

"The PFT wants to promote quality teaching and learning which can look many different ways," says Manual Vice President for the PFT, Elizabeth Crider-Olcott. "Best practices, unique approaches and going above and beyond will be some of the criteria that will be considered."

Nomination forms are now available and will be emailed to each teacher. The nomination form is short and includes only two questions, other than names and building/grade level: 1) Why are you submitting this teacher for a "Peoria's Finest Teacher" award? 2) Please give examples of why you think this teacher is a candidate for this award.

All nominations will be considered by the PFT Executive Board, however the award is restricted to PFT members. The PFT and the nominating teacher will present the award at the scheduled board meetings. Nominations to be considered for an upcoming month are due by the first of that month to the PFT.

## Redefining Teaching & Learning

### "Mind Over Muscle"

It was like an awkward social experiment. Andrew Ganuchau remembers the difficulty his students had asking their teachers for help after he began requiring his students to sign improvement contracts during his program's first year.

"It was like watching a guy try to tell his girlfriend he loved her," Ganuchau says. "It was a little uncomfortable."

Ganuchau began Trewyn Middle School's Mind Over Muscle three years ago through a PACES Grant. The improvement contracts involve every program participant. They are assigned one or two classes in which they are performing poorly and instructed to approach the teacher and state they care about their grade. Students then follow up to see if they have any missing homework or if extra credit is available that might help them raise their grade. Like many other challenges since the start, Ganuchau has worked to overcome awkward confrontations between his students and their teachers as he teaches his students responsibility and how to ask for help. The now employee of the Center for Prevention of Abuse was then just an intern, but he realized he had to start coaching and create mock interactions to make the students feel more comfortable in asking for help. That quickly became one of the first lessons of his weekly meetings as he started his second year.

Ganuchau began teaching middle school students, referred by teachers, the concepts of responsibility, accountability and self-esteem. In a summary of his program, he says "Mind Over Muscle is a program for young men, designed to explore the healthy notions of masculinity. The program covers the characteristics of healthy conflict resolution skills versus the unhealthy violent lifestyle."

A certified counselor, planning to soon pursue his Ph.D., Ganuchau says another initial obstacle he overcame was helping to coach staff to recognize the right fit for his group-based program.

"This is not for the most troubled kids,

-continued on next page

## Cell Phone Policy for Students

Staff members and students are encouraged to review Board Policies and be aware that while student cell phones are allowed in schools, policy states they should remain off and out of site.



Board Policy 7:190 - "Students are permitted to have in their possession cellular telephones, personal digital assistants and other wireless electronic devices. All such devices shall be kept off and out of sight during the regular school day while in the school building, riding the school bus, or while attending any class or school activity outside of the school building..."

While there are exceptions listed in the policy, it is strongly recommended these exceptions should be at a minimum. Violation of this policy will subject students to normal disciplinary measures outlined in Board Policy 7:190 and/or confiscation of the device.

"While we understand that cell phones have become necessary communication devices for families, our number one priority while at school is education," says Interim Superintendent Dr. Norm Durlinger. "Active cell phones severely disrupt the learning environment."

*-Mind, continued from front page*

who are served better by individual counseling," he says. "This is for kids who are on the fence, that maybe need coaching in making the right choices."

To provide the needed coaching, Ganucheau says he tries to find current role models students may admire. A recent lesson and discussion focused on President Obama's lifestyle through high school and college. Ganucheau is always willing to share his own personal stories when needed, as well.

"Everyone makes mistakes," he says. "It is what you do with those mistakes and if you use them to help you become a better person and make better decisions. That's the message I am trying to instill in these kids."

The lessons culminate each year with a required service project where students spend a half day in a kindergarten or first grade classroom, reading to students and helping where needed.

"It's all about empowering them," says Ganucheau.

The constant conversations and lessons seem to be paying off. Overall, students are seeing improved grades. Last year, Ganucheau says seven students saw significant improvements,

## U.S. Census: A Lesson on the Luck of the Irish



Next Wednesday, Ireland will celebrate a national holiday, also widely celebrated in the U.S. and a host of other countries. Don't forget to wear your green! St. Patrick's Day is an annual feast day that celebrates the most commonly recognized of the patron saints of Ireland. While it is an unofficial holiday in the U.S., you may celebrate or know someone who celebrates the Irish holiday. While your choice to recognize the day is personal, if nothing else, it may be an engaging opportunity to study geography, food or learn about the U.S. Census!

- 36.3 million Americans claimed Irish ancestry in 2008. That's nearly eight times the population of Ireland, itself!

- Did you know there are four locations in the United States named Shamrock, the floral emblem of Ireland? The closest is Shamrock, IN.

- Nine places in the United States share the name of Ireland's capital, Dublin.

- Other places of interest with an Irish twist, include: Emerald Isle, NC, with 3,641 residents; the township of Irish-town, IL, several places or townships

four of which raised their GPA's an entire letter grade. Improvement is continuing for group members that returned this year. Four of the six returning members have raised their GPAs to a 3.0 status. Perhaps most notable is the drop in suspensions by returning students. Collectively, last year's total of 30 suspension days has dropped to nine this year.

"I've learned to think slower," says one student, who not had a suspension yet this year. Last year he was suspended at least once for fighting in the lunchroom. "Thinking slower is important so that you can calm yourself and look at everything before you do it.

The groups are built of five or less students on each grade level from five through seventh grade. Despite the groups' successes, Ganucheau says just like district-wide trends, there is one obstacle that is difficult to overcome - mobility. Many of the students participating this year will likely not even be attending Trewyn next year. For instance, of the four students that completed the program in its first year, only one returned. Last year, 18 students completed the program, eight returned this year and two have already left.

"Unfortunately, this is something that is not uncommon for students and families in low-income school settings," Ganucheau says.

named "Clover" (in South Carolina, Illinois, Minnesota and Pennsylvania) and the township of Cloverleaf, MN.

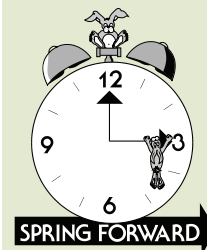
- Does food fit your fancy? The traditional Irish feast in celebration of St. Patrick's day usually includes corn beef and cabbage. Texas is a leader in beef production. In 2008, the USDA estimates Texans produced 6.5 billion pounds worth of beef. For the cabbage, you might very well get yours grown in New York or California. In 2008, New York produced 584 million pounds of cabbage, while New York followed with 528 million pounds.

\* All facts provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. For more information linked to St. Patrick's Day, visit [http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/014521.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/014521.html)



IT'S IN OUR HANDS

## Don't Forget...



This weekend it is time to **SPRING FOWARD!** On Sunday, March 14, at 2 a.m., Daylight Saving Time begins. Don't forget to spring forward and move your clocks ahead!

## Try This! Assistive Technology Ideas

The Montgomery County Public Schools HIAT group has a wonderful webpage on Printable Tools. This page lists printable resources including everything from assignment sheets to writing paper. Take a look!

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/hiat/resources/tools.shtml>

If you like these tips or can't remember a previous tip, please visit [www.psd150ssd.org/at](http://www.psd150ssd.org/at) for an archive. This page also has more Assistive Technology information and links to other AT websites.