

Explore and Soar



Rocky Hill Public Schools

Explore and SOAR Mini-grants Round I Board of Education Report October 16, 2008

The Enrichment Committee has awarded nearly \$6,000 in grants during its first round of the 2008-2009 school years. Ten requests were submitted and eight were approved. All of the funds granted aimed to strike a balance between schools, grades, disciplines and curriculum connections while working within the confines of the budget. Every effort was made to share ideas and programs across the district to establish equity among the schools.

Collaborations with an Environmental Flair

In June, 2008, Enrichment Coordinator, **Marguerite Alpert** met with PTO members at each school to develop a district-wide environmental theme for enrichment for the 2008-2009 school year. All school administrators have agreed to adopt this theme. This theme will be started this year and expanded to next year. Beth Byron-Piggush, Project Associate from the Clean Energy Task Force, along with Ed Chicucarello have agreed to help us pursue funding.

Some of the first environmental programs going on include a **composting system at Stevens School**. Teacher **Kristen Spain** initiated this effort and her students (paired with a student from another fifth grade class) are responsible for emptying the fifth grade fruits and veggies into the composting bin. This program is in its beginning stage but promises to be a wonderful model for the school as well as the entire district.

At **West Hill's Spirit Night** in October, Young Audiences **artist Susan Romano** will guide students to create designs and paint large 55 gallon recycled oil drums. Eco-friendly themes such as rain forest, oceans plant and animal life themes will be used. The oil drums will be used as receptacles for recycling during a coat drive later in the fall and a magazine recycling drive. One drum per grade will be painted. Also, this event will be recycling gently-used Halloween costumes.

At **Griswold Middle School**, grade 6 students in the Family and Consumer Science classes attended the "One Thing" activities at the Connecticut Convention Center. All grade 7 and grade 8 participated in an assembly entitled, "Bin Busters and Trash to Energy". Our Family and Consumer Science classes are working with our students making "One Thing" pledges. Grade 7 teachers are collaborating to create an interdisciplinary unit based on the "One Thing" idea.



Explore and Soar granted requests for funding:

Rocky Hill High School

Science teachers, **Sharon Parker** and **Linda Ceruzzi** continue to develop their uses for the nano-reef aquarium established last year. They plan to gradually alter the temperature of the tank to assess the effects on the invertebrate population, thus mimicking global warming on a small scale. They will observe the deleterious effects of temperature changes and design experiments to see if the effects are reversible. The students will also monitor CO₂ a fresh water algae-filled tank. About 150 biology and chemistry students will participate throughout the year.

Griswold Middle School

Language Arts consultant, **Gail Thibodeau** and Enrichment Coordinator, **Marguerite Alpert** worked together to bring Will Hobbs to all the students at the middle school. GMS collaborated with Leslie Poulos, Media Specialist at Wethersfield's Silas Deane Middle School to have consecutive presentations. **Will Hobbs** writes exciting outdoor adventure stories, picture books and award-winning young adult novels. Mr. Hobbs will conduct three presentations that include exciting slides of the settings of his stories and of Will's adventures that inspire his books. He also will talk about the reading/writing connection and related topics. Students have read Will Hobbs' books for summer and in-school reading.

Read more about the special collaboration Wethersfield and Rocky Hill School districts in your upcoming Rocky Hill Post.

Language Arts consultant, **Lisa Cooney**, is introducing an Egyptian Mummy Mask program to her sixth graders. This culminating arts program ties in the ancient Egypt social studies curriculum. Young Audiences artist Susan Romano will work with about 195 students, supported by teachers, paraprofessionals and parents.

An after-school program, "Wood-framed mirror building workshop" is ready to begin in November thanks to the efforts of technology teacher **Steve Patarini**. This wood lab will allow the students to create a wooden framed mirror which they will be able to keep. Students who participate in this program will visit the Rocky Hill High School wood lab to encourage interest and enrollment in this area.

Please read about the amazing gift that Hartford Stage granted Griswold Middle School in this week's Rocky Hill Post.

West Hill School

No applications were granted for West Hill School for Round I.



Steven's School

First grade teacher, **Patricia Saponare**, will use "Smarty Plants" a High Touch, High Tech program aimed to teach the children how plants make food and oxygen, transport water, learn about tree rings and seed germination. An instructor will visit the school and bring all necessary equipment and materials for 60 children.

Fifth grade teacher, **Kristen Spain** brought an Electronic Field Trip called "Jamestown Unearthed" to her social studies classes during Round I of Explore and Soar this year. This was a live television broadcast that is an interactive history lesson. The students were able to ask questions to a panel of experts including an archaeologist, an historian and an actor dressed in period clothes. There were many questions and emails exchanged for a very positive experience. This program was continued into the second part of this year by a grant provided by PSCU Financial Services for six more trips! Please refer to the Good News Gram for more details of this terrific use of technology in history.

Moser School

First year teacher, **Krista Vermeal**, arranged a school-wide (K-2) program for Moser School students. The Sharon Audubon Society will present its "Hawk and Owl" program. The Enrichment Committee applauds Ms. Vermeal's motivation and efforts to enhance the curriculum for Rocky Hill's youngest students.