

# NEWSLETTER



## BUILDING THE FUTURE, ONE CHILD AT A TIME

*This newsletter, published by the Natick Public Schools, is being sent to all businesses and residences in Natick. The Natick School Committee and the Superintendent of Schools developed this newsletter as part of a broader initiative to promote better communication with the public and to inform people about the achievements of Natick students, the activities of the schools, and the accomplishments of the faculty. Every issue of the newsletter with its variety of topics reflects the guiding mission of the school district.*

***We, the members of the Natick Public Schools Community, are firmly committed to developing students as independent, lifelong learners and leaders who will contribute to a changing and complex global society.***

*Every day, in all eight Natick schools, one sees this mission taking shape in the way educators teach and in the way administration works with families. Our students learn best when educators, in cooperation with parents, use teaching methods that encourage student effort to reach educational goals. When we encourage thoroughness in researching a topic or when we urge persistence in completing an assignment, we reinforce good learning habits - habits, which are consistently linked to student achievement. Setting high expectations for all students and encouraging individual effort are essential to fulfilling our school district's mission. Thank you for your continued support towards this end.*



*Natick Public Schools Administration  
Front Row – Director of Pupil Services, Lauren Gilbert; Director of Human Resources, Marianne Davis  
Back Row – Director of Fiscal and Management Services, William Hurlley; Assistant Superintendent, Karen LeDuc; Director of Technology, Dennis Roche; Superintendent, Peter Sanchioni*

**Peter Sanchioni, Ph.D.  
Superintendent**

who participated or hosted parties last school year to make this happen. The best compliment any of us who works in the schools can receive is community support! Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!!!

### **This Past Summer**

The summer months are one of the busiest times for the technology team as we are usually conducting the major upgrades that can't be done during the school year due to their disruptive nature. This past summer was no exception as we implemented a new email and archiving system and also rebuilt and converted our entire physical backend network infrastructure to a virtual one using VMWare. What was most impressive, all the work was completed on time and under budget by our own staff. While the district benefits from having a more robust and efficient delivery mechanism for technology, these upgrades also allowed us to add redundancies where none previously existed. We were also able to reduce the number of servers required to run our network which has delayed our need for major backend purchases.

### **Faculty Support and Training**

A big initiative we are undertaking this year is to focus on creative and effective ways of providing the faculty and staff the technical training and support they need to successfully integrate technology into their classrooms. While we conduct on-going technology workshops after school, on September 25th the district hosted the first ever district wide Technology Day at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Natick. The day was filled with technology presentations and workshops from Natick Public Schools Technology Staff, District Administrators, and vendors from Discovery Education, Apple and Nettekker. The Natick Education Foundation also announced at this event that it believes so strongly in our mission of providing teachers with on-going development in the area of technology and 21st century skills that it has awarded the district a \$40,000 grant to continue the effort. The district collected a lot of valuable feedback from this event and will continue to collaborate with teachers in developing future professional development activities. Many thanks to our friends at the NEF!



### **Website Improvements**

In early October, the district officially opened up the parent portal of the Student Information System, IPass, to parents of all students grades 6 – 12. The IPass IParent Portal is accessible from our website under the parent section and gives parents on-line access to student grades and attendance.

In late October, all teachers completed the transition to our new website product School World. The School World solution is one that is directly geared for the activities of classroom teachers. All teachers now have web pages that provide a general introduction to their classes, show homework and post a calendar to name a few application uses. This new product from School World was piloted last year by a group of 25 teachers across the district and has simply taken off!!!

During the first week of November, the district implemented a new Point of Sales System for students who purchase their lunch from our food service provider, Aramark. The new system, Nutrikids, allows parents to deposit money electronically on a student's account and view items purchased. All this can be done by visiting our website.

### **New On-Line Learning Opportunities**

We are expanding use of technology and further developing 21st century skills by now offering courses developed within the district that have an on-line component at both the High School and Middle School level. This past summer, 10 teachers participated in an on-line learning workshop and are piloting our new course management system, Moodle. The Moodle system is widely used in higher education and is now being explored by many K12 school districts such as Natick. All of our teachers were introduced to Moodle when we opened the school year and an introduction to Moodle was also offered as a workshop on our Technology Day on September 25th. There is much excitement within our district about its potential and we will keep parents informed as we continue to explore the possibilities.

### **The Next Natick High School**

Much thought and planning has already begun for the highly anticipated High School building project that will be voted

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## NATICK SCHOOL COMMITTEE

School Committee meetings are broadcast live on the Natick Pegasus Public Access Television - Education Channel (RCN-channel 13, Comcast-channel 26, Verizon-channel 30). Check the broadcast schedule at [www.natickpegasus.org](http://www.natickpegasus.org).

### 2009-2010 SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Back Row: Karen Adelman Foster, Anne Blanchard, David Margil, Vice Chairman, Dirk Coburn, Chairman  
Front Row: David Murphy, Clerk, Amy Mistrot, Anne Zernicke

School Committee meetings are generally held on the first and third Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the School Committee Room, 3rd Floor, Town Hall. Schedules are subject to change. Agendas and meeting minutes are posted to the Natick Public Schools website at [www.natickps.org](http://www.natickps.org) or you may call the School Committee information line at 508-647-6515. Each meeting has a segment devoted to public participation. The Committee welcomes your attendance

### School Committee Meetings

Monday, January 4, 2010	Monday, April 5, 2010
Monday, January 25, 2010	Monday, April 26, 2010
Monday, February 8, 2010	Monday, May 3, 2010
Monday, February 22, 2010	Monday, May 17, 2010
Monday, March 8, 2010	Monday, June 7, 2010
Monday, March 22, 2010	Monday, June 21, 2010

## SUPERINTENDENT'S AWARDS

The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents has designed an award for academic excellence to be presented by the Superintendent of Schools in each community within the Commonwealth. At the School Committee meeting of November 16, 2009, Dr. Peter Sanchioni presented two certificates to Natick High School students, Max Abugov and Jonathan Makransky.

These awards are presented to students who have distinguished themselves in the pursuit of academic excellence during their high school careers.

**Max Abugov** is a senior at Natick High School and is an outstanding student, taking the most challenging program of Advanced Placement classes as well as the languages of German, Latin and French. He has participated in several leadership opportunities supporting local shelters via volunteering and academic clubs at school. He also serves as Captain of the Debate Team. His dedication to the sport of Tennis has earned him a varsity letter and his athletic ability also includes Tang Soo Do and Shooting Sports.

**Jonathan Makransky** is a senior at Natick High School and is an outstanding student, taking the most challenging program of Advanced Placement classes. He started Natick High School with a recommendation from his middle school to skip the second year of French and move directly into French 3. Jonathan is completing a 6th year of the language as an independent study of French Literature at the honors level in order to continue his study of the language. Jonathan plays the French Horn in the Honors Symphonic Band and is in a brass quintet. He has served as both president and vice president for the Natick High School award-winning speech team.



Left to right: Peter Sanchioni, Superintendent; Max Abugov, Jonathan Makransky; John Hughes, Principal

In the spring of 2009, Officer Rodriguez was re-assigned as a School Resource Officer where he could now combine both of his passions, education & law enforcement, and make a difference with the youth in Natick. Officer Rodriguez and Detective Halloran went to the National School Resource Officer convention in Baltimore, MD this past summer where they had intensive training on issues related to bullying, cyber bullying, substance abuse, internet safety, social networking issues and collaboration between police department and school administrators. Besides the training, they were able to develop a positive network with other SRO's from all around the country.

Officer Rodriguez's role at both Wilson and Kennedy will be a combination of counselor, teacher, and police officer. In the role of teacher, Officer Rodriguez will not be teaching academic subject matter but will be teaching students about topics such as bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, internet safety, issues with social networking (Facebook/ Myspace), peer pressure, and the basics of criminal law in Massachusetts as it applies to adolescent behavior. In the role of counselor, Officer Rodriguez will not be doing any psychological counseling but will assist counselors, faculty, and administrators with mediation amongst students. As a police officer, Officer Rodriguez will provide security for the students and faculty. He will be available to assist administration in enforcing any truancy issues and other matters related to the courts.

## NATICK EDUCATION FOUNDATION SUPPORTS TECHNOLOGY



NEF President Rosemary Driscoll presents Superintendent Peter Sanchioni and Technology Director Dennis Roche with a check for \$40,000

Making an unprecedented decision for this year, the **Natick Education Foundation (NEF)** has awarded the Natick Public Schools with a grant totaling \$40,000 to be used to enhance teachers using technology to advance learning. "This is the exact type of funding we needed to take our district from good to great. We have a lot of technology in the district and what we need is teacher professional development to use the technology to advance learning," stated Superintendent Dr. Peter Sanchioni. NEF President Rosemary Driscoll added, "We are very excited about the strong partnership this represents between NEF and the Natick Schools, and we are looking forward to seeing the results of these training efforts in Natick classrooms. We are calling the grant award, "iNatickPS: Empowering Teachers and Students through Technology" because we believe that technology available today has the power to bring enhanced content,

creativity, and excitement across all curricula programs in our schools." The decision to direct NEF's annual grant budget to support "iNatickPS" was an unusual and one-time decision of the NEF Board. The NEF Focus Grant and Rolling Grant Programs will return next year with a more stream-lined application process and more support to teachers and staff along the way.

## ELEMENTARY STUDENTS EXTEND LEARNING THROUGH NATICK'S RICH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The elementary students in Natick benefit from extended learning opportunities by accessing some amazing resources available right here in Natick. Science, history, civic, arts and literary connections come alive for our students through abundant educational partnerships in our community.

Each grade level K-4 makes an annual trip to the Natick Community Organic Farm (NCOF) to extend learning related to one of the grade level's earth, physical, or life science units of study.

- Kindergarten participates in **Close to the Ground: Eating for your Health** Students learn about the new food pyramid and identify foods on the farm related to the food pyramid categories. They experience gardens harvesting and food tasting. Students learn how foods grow with sun, air, water, and soil and become fuel for their bodies.
- First grade participates in **Sheep & Wool: A History of Animals and Fiber** Students experience sheep shearing and learn information about sheep characteristics, their needs as living creatures, and adaptations sheep developed over time to live in their natural habitats. They learn about the main product for which sheep are raised

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from the Metrowest Community Healthcare Foundation submitted by Dr. Sanchioni which provides a 45 minute fitness period for 90 days to students in grades 7 and 8. Noel Vigue is the new fitness instructor at Kennedy Middle School and is using the polar cardiac monitors in the fitness classes.

The use of the new fitness center at Wilson Middle School along with teachers incorporating walking laps before exams has had a positive impact.



“Fit Kids, Fit Minds” at Memorial Elementary School.

The incorporation of dance movements, yoga, and classroom movement at Lilja Elementary School.

Fit kids exercise breaks at Kennedy Middle School.

The post high school program, “ACHIEVE”, goes to the YMCA at least two times per week.

A district wide “blog site” that is available to staff to share ideas on incorporating fitness in the classroom.

The use of exercise stability balls within certain classrooms.

Ongoing programs include:

Before school physical activity programs at Ben-Hem and Memorial Elementary Schools.

Intramural programs including gladiator, snowshoeing, dance team, capture the flag, “fitness chicks”, basketball, volleyball and Wii sports at Wilson Middle School.

Athletic programs available at both middle schools include cross country, field hockey, basketball and track and field. Natick Public Schools held its first annual Special Olympics of Massachusetts track and field school day event last May. Over 40 athletes participated by training in track and field events for many weeks culminating with a day of competition where many gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded.

More than 200 staff members took a page out of Dr. Ratey’s book, *Spark*, and came together to participate in the first annual Natick Public Schools staff flag football game. This fun filled evening brought together the staff and community and showed the students the importance of exercise and play and the benefits of trying something new outside of the classroom. The staff is now engaging in various activities of their own including volleyball, Pilates, circuit training, spin classes, and muscle conditioning.

## LT. GOVERNOR TIMOTHY MURRAY VISITS NHS

On Thursday morning, October 8, 2009, Natick High School received a special visit from: *Lt. Governor, Timothy Murray*, *State Senator, Karen Spilka*, *State Representative, David Linsky*, and *Mr. Jim Stanton* Director of *The Technology Initiative*, *MetroSouthwest Regional Employment Board*

The Lt. Governor has been appointed the Chair of the Governor’s Advisory Council on STEM Education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and will oversee STEM activities, specifically LIFT program(s) and their impact on student learning. Natick High School teachers have been very involved in the STEM and LIFT (2) programs (Leadership Initiatives for Teaching and Technology), a professional learning program that integrates graduate coursework with authentic and relevant externships in “innovative” industries in Massachusetts.

The guests sat in on Mr. Hollins’ Algebra class and participated in small group activities as students worked through “real world” applications. After the class, the guests met with teachers Dan Hinnenkamp - Biology, Suzanna Magnuson - Chemistry, Andy Hollins - Mathematics and Valerie Washburn - Mathematics.

These teachers have participated in the program and served summer externships with the following companies: Raytheon, Biogen, Lincoln Laboratory and Camp, Dresser and McKee, Inc.



Front Row: Ms. Valerie Washburn, NHS Math; Mr. Andy Hollins, NHS Math; Lieutenant Governor, Timothy Murray; Suzanna Magnuson, NHS Science; State Senator, Karen Spilka

Back Row: Dr. Peter Sanchioni, Superintendent of Schools; Dan Hinnenkamp, NHS Science; State Representative, David Linsky; John Hughes, NHS Principal; James Stanton, Director MSRB - The Technology Initiative

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**“Bring a Friend. Bring your Questions.”**

A special need in Natick means something different to each of us. Please come to this final SEPAC meeting of the school year, and bring your ideas, questions and feedback.

Date: Thursday, May 20th

Time: 7-9pm

Place: Natick Town Hall

**If you have any questions or would be interested in becoming a board member, please contact us.**

Jody Robie: [Jody@NatickSepac.org](mailto:Jody@NatickSepac.org)

Carla Binswanger: [Carla@NatickSepac.org](mailto:Carla@NatickSepac.org)

**Natick Sepac Co-Chairs**

**[www. NatickSepac.org](http://www.NatickSepac.org)**

## WORKING FOR THE NATICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*by Marianne Davis*

As a result of extensive recruiting efforts, the Natick Public Schools is fortunate to have a large pool of candidates from which to choose. Once the most outstanding candidates have been selected through a rigorous hiring process, those candidates will consider Natick in light of other job offers they may have received. In order to ensure that an offer of employment is accepted, Natick must present as an attractive place to work that meets most, if not all, of a candidate's criteria.

Here are some of the reasons given by this year's hires as to why they accepted a position with the Natick Public Schools:

- Goals for school aligned with my own personal pedagogical goals
- Natick seemed like a really welcoming, pro-education community; a place that would help me
- It looks to the future and encourages modern teaching strategies/resources
- I had previous experience with the district and really loved the “community” feeling that the schools have
- I was particularly impressed with the supportiveness of all faculty/staff I met with and their commitment to providing high quality education for all students while creating a positive work environment for teachers
- Reputation as a solid system with ambitious visions

Once a candidate accepts our offer, the retention process begins. Does working in Natick meet the candidate's expectations? What can we do to ensure that all staff members will want to remain here in Natick? We offer programs to support, engage and challenge our educators such as:

- A full year mentoring program for first year teachers. Facilitated by a trained mentor, this program includes ten hours of mentoring in the summer to ensure that the new teacher is well-prepared for the first day of school.
  - An ongoing induction program for teachers in their first three years of teaching, or just new to the district.
- Monthly meetings are held in both structured and unstructured formats to identify and meet the needs of all new professional staff members.
- The opportunity to collaborate with grade or subject level colleagues on a regular basis as part of a Professional Learning Community.
  - Access to graduate courses offered on-site and on-line
  - All teachers are required to take two graduate courses within their first three years at no cost to them (The Skillful Teacher and Expectations for Student Success).
  - A four year evaluation cycle that includes collaboration and peer observation and promotes professional growth

- A range of opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles in the district (e.g. mentoring, instructional leadership, curriculum leadership, advisory boards, team leadership...)

We also have several programs in place that may actually exceed candidates' expectations:

- Every teacher is provided with a laptop. This year a full day of professional development was devoted to using technology to enhance student learning.

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