

# Princeton Regional Schools

A Place for Learning,  
A Commitment to Excellence

Dear Princeton Community Members:

It is a time of exciting programs for our students: Science Olympiad competitions; Nobel Prize winner in economics, Eric Maskin, as a guest speaker; Martin Luther King Day celebrations and performances; family film events; elementary Shakespeare plays; winter dances; and the upcoming April high school spring musical, *Anything Goes*, just to name a few. At the annual Martin Luther King Day event at Princeton University on Jan. 21, many Princeton Regional students were honored for their writing, artwork and videography. On Jan. 25, we celebrated with a ribbon-cutting for the PHS Fitness Center, and on Feb. 1, the PHS Greenhouse was dedicated.

Our students and faculty excel in every dimension of educational life. Most recently, our district has celebrated the *U.S. News & World Report* ranking of PHS as **one of the nation's top 100 public high schools**. Based on how well the high school prepares *all* students for success in advanced coursework and for college readiness, the award captures the essence of our mission and our high level of achievement in meeting educational goals for every student.

Many challenges lie ahead. Under the new funding formula for the public schools, our increase in state aid for 2008-2009 will be just over \$80,000, which will be applied to tax relief and does not expand our budget. Changes in special education funding could result in a negative impact for PRS; those details remain to be calculated. You will receive more information regarding the 2008-2009 school budget in the weeks ahead. Additions to the Memorandum of Agreement between the Attorney General's Office and public school districts include clauses related to technology, security and local enforcement; the Board of Education will analyze these recommendations over the next several weeks. The Mercer Charter Arts School, which originally attracted a handful of our students, closed in December with no PRS pupils. Nonetheless, due to state regulations about payments and projected enrollments, we are owed \$107,000 after all is accounted for—and it remains to be seen when that money will be refunded. New security guidelines and procedures involve policy revision and new protocols for responses to emergency situations.

Some exciting events lie ahead, as well. During the week of Feb. 19, our district will have an artist-in-residence, Terrance Simien, perform for all our students in assemblies K-12. Mr. Simien, a Grammy-award nominee for Zydeco-Creole music, will be the highlight of a benefit community concert on Feb. 22 in the Performing Arts Center at Princeton High School starting at 7:30 p.m. The proceeds of the concert will go toward Katrina Relief, especially to aid students and schools in New Orleans displaced by this tragedy. In observance of Black History Month, various segments of our community—the PRS PTOs, the Y, Arts Council, Township and Borough, Human Services Commission, Princeton Public Library and McCaffrey's, along with other sponsors—have all focused their efforts on special events this week, culminating in the concert. Please attend and show your support of this communitywide celebration.

As we begin the second half of the school year, I hope you pause to celebrate the many accomplishments of our students, teachers, administrators and support staff. Our community's interest in, and support for, the Princeton Regional Schools are deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Judith A. Wilson  
Superintendent

## In the Schools ...

### Princeton High School

A flurry of activities highlighted the first half of the 2007-2008 school year at PHS.

On Sept. 11, the PTO sponsored its annual **New Parent Reception** in an informal gathering. Parents had an opportunity to ask questions directly to PHS Principal Gary Snyder, Director of Guidance Marleen O'Connor and Coordinator of Student Activities Angela Siso.

The Sophomore Class **Community Service Program** had its annual kickoff Sept. 12 in the gym. All of the community service groups were present and students selected their service projects for the year.

**Peer Group** started Sept. 26, with fall events including a field day Oct. 24 and Parents' Night Nov. 19.

The annual **Back to School Night** took place Sept. 27. Many parent and student volunteers helped guide parents to and from classes. Student groups distributed literature in the cafeteria while several of the school's a capella groups entertained during their free periods.

The annual Student Council-sponsored **Fall Fest** took place Oct. 10 on the front lawn of the high school. Student groups and athletic teams were in full fall spirit, selling snacks and gear to the student body and staff—a wonderful way to enjoy an afternoon.

Many **Alumni** events were held at PHS this fall. The Class of '52 visited the school Sept. 29. The Class of '57 was feted at halftime during Homecoming weekend (see below), and the Class of '77 organized an Oct. 5 event highlighted by a performance of the PHS Choir. The Class of '97 visited during Thanksgiving weekend.

**Spirit Week**, Oct. 15-19, put the spotlight on athletic events. It included the annual pep rally recognizing the fall sport teams on Friday, followed by the Homecoming football game on Saturday afternoon and the Homecoming Dance, recognizing the Homecoming Court winners, that evening. The weekend also included the Big Band Dance, with music provided by the PHS Studio Band.

One highlight of **Homecoming** was provided by the Class of '57. Nick Kovalakides, one of many 50th Reunion organizers, had been planning a weekend of memories, laughs and nostalgia for the past two years. During

### Spectacle Theatre Presents 'Pride and Prejudice'

PHS Spectacle Theatre presented two performances of the theatrical version of Jane Austen's enduring novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, at the Trego-Biancosino Performing Arts Center on Nov. 16 and 17.

Written by Helen Jerome, this theatrical version of *Pride and Prejudice* offered an enchanting romantic plot, unforgettable characters, gossipy conversations, witty dialogue, beautiful costumes and Victorian sets. The audience found this peek into 19th-century drawing room society highly entertaining. Misconceptions, games of truth and fiction, and especially Mrs. Bennet's unwavering determination to secure husbands for all of her daughters before the final curtain added to the fun.

The cast of 33 included students from grades 9-12—nine of them freshmen. Professional set designer Drew Francis created the charming "home" where the characters resided and romped. Mr. Francis, a professor at Lehigh University, collaborated with JW teacher Paul Skalka and a PHS student crew on building and painting the set. Some of the 60+ period costumes were rented, while others were designed and sewn by students.



*All's well that ends well for Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy in PHS Spectacle Theatre's production of 'Pride and Prejudice.'*

halftime of the football game, Nick drove around the track with a special gift for the school that he personally created: a three-foot replica of the PHS Tower. The Class of 57 then graciously offered the Tower as a gift for display in the high school.

On Oct. 27, the third annual **Athletic Hall of Fame** awards ceremony took place at the Nottingham Ballroom in Hamilton Square. The 2007 inductees are: Larry Ivan, coach; Becky Mackey, coach (deceased); Norman VanArsdalen, contributor; Andrew "Bucky" Couples, 1948; Tom Perks, 1951 (deceased); Robert Taylor, 1954; Robert Montgomery, 1955; Herbert "Bart" Bennett, 1966; Nicholas Joseph Arcaro, 1969 (deceased); Heidi Faith, 1973; Royce Flippin III, 1976; Margaret C. Wood, 1977; and Ron Celestin, 1980. Team induction: 1981 Indoor and Outdoor Track and Field Team. Two \$1,000 scholarships from Friends of Princeton Athletics were awarded to PHS seniors Ari Silver and Molly Johnson.

Also on Oct. 27, PHS hosted the annual **Gay-Straight Alliance Forum**. Many schools participated in this event, featuring group presentations with break-out sessions on a wide range of topics.

On Nov. 14, the PHS administration and PTO co-sponsored the **PTO Parents' Night**, an evening of discussion surrounding substance-use issues among teens in the Princeton community. This special program was the first of two discussion meetings with PHS parents; the second one took place on Jan. 14.

PHS co-sponsored the **Not In Our Town** Conference with several community organizations on Nov. 18. Students from several area schools performed skits highlighting issues, obstacles and successes of growing up in the Princeton community. Issues included diversity, bullying, sexual orientation, acceptance, success in school, feeling comfortable and challenged in high school, and making good choices. The skits will be an integral part of the upcoming Day of Dialogue on Feb. 27.

PHS hosted the annual **Dodgeball Tournament** on Nov. 30 with Corner House. The tournament included all of the area schools and provided a drug-free environment for all students to have fun. More than 50 teams participated and both gyms were packed with spectators.

The weekend of Dec. 1 proved to be very successful for PHS's **Model UN Team**, with 72 PHS students among 1,050 students from 62 schools participating in the Model UN Conference at Princeton University.



*Celebrating the grand opening of the PHS Library on Oct. 12 are, from left, Kristin Appelget and Bob Durkee of Princeton University; Holly Holcombe representing the Princeton Education Foundation; and Superintendent of Schools Judy Wilson.*

### **PHS Library Celebrates Grand Opening**

On Oct. 12, supporters of the **Princeton High School Library** celebrated the grand opening of its new facility, located in the former auditorium.

Superintendent of Schools Judith Wilson, PHS Principal Gary Snyder, members of the Princeton Education Foundation, the PHS PTO and the school board joined librarian Arlene Sinding and students, parents and administrators in honoring Princeton University for its generous donation of \$500,000 for the new library. Bob Durkee, vice president and secretary of Princeton University, and Kristin Appelget, director of community affairs, represented the university.

Lisa Payne of the PEF displayed boards of historic photographs obtained in the high school archives and from the Princeton Historical Society depicting the changing face of the PHS Library over the years.

The PEF encourages community members to donate money for book purchases in order to update the book collection, many of which date from 1970.

PHS students received the Best Delegate Award on five of the 20 committees comprising the conference.

On Dec. 11, the **IDEAS Center** celebrated its grand opening with open sessions and food to invite students and faculty to get a glimpse of the new venue and support services provided all day and after school.

**In the Dec. 10 issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, PHS was the 94th ranked public high school in the nation and the third-highest ranked school in New Jersey.**

**Amnesty International** hosted a Hunger Banquet on Dec. 17 to raise money and awareness of hunger in the world. The students offered a simulation that provided opportunity for visitors and guests to visualize how “hungry” our world is outside the United States.

The Princeton University Chapel was filled to capacity Dec. 20 for the annual **Winter Concert** featuring all the PHS orchestras and choirs, which concluded as always with Handel’s *Hallelujah Chorus* combining the voices of students and alumni alike.

## John Witherspoon Middle School

The John Witherspoon Middle School and Princeton University Community House are offering a course—“**Crossings: From Prejudice to Acceptance**”—at the middle school throughout the school year.

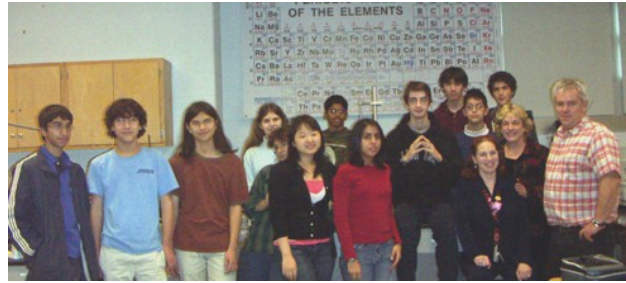
“Crossings” made its debut six years ago with a group of 12 seventh-graders. This year, the program includes 16 JWMS students.

The course began Sept. 28 and is meeting on Fridays through the end of the school year from 2:05 p.m. until 2:55 p.m. Instructors from Community House at Princeton University are leading or facilitating the course.

Identifying, understanding, appreciating and celebrating differences are the major topics to be studied. Students are selected by their school counselors in consultation with their teachers and JW administrators. Students are chosen for their insightfulness, communication skills and leadership abilities, which will be utilized as each topic is explored.

A group of 18 eighth-grade peer leaders at JWMS has begun exploring the many aspects of bullying behavior and what can be done about it as part of **Peer To Peer**, a statewide substance-abuse and violence-prevention initiative.

Peer to Peer provides students with information about identifying bullying so that the students can then problem-solve solutions to uncomfortable situations. The peer leaders create skits and strategies for reaching seventh-graders with this information.



*The PHS Science Olympiad team garners top honors in the Central Jersey Regional Competition.*

The **PHS Science Olympiad Team** earned first place overall in the New Jersey Science Olympiad Central Jersey Regional Competition at Princeton University on Jan. 8. Eighteen high school teams competed, with the top 10 invited to the Final State Competition on March 11. Four PHS students took home gold medals.

This leadership group takes seriously their charge to model friendly, inclusive behavior as they go through their days at school and in the community. Bullying was the topic of the first workshop the group conducted in two of the seventh-grade health classes in October.

In November, the peer leaders teamed with the PHS GAIA leadership group to conduct a half-day workshop for the entire eighth grade, including the eighth-graders at the Cranbury School, on being accepting, kind and inclusive. The workshop, titled “Rising Above,” encourages all students to examine their behavior toward their classmates, and to commit to bringing a positive, accepting attitude to their interactions with others. This fall workshop will be followed up with one in the spring, during which students will be asked to reflect upon their success in this area.

Throughout the year, needs arise and special events occur when JWMS Principal William Johnson calls upon the peer leaders to represent the school. These special honors become highlights of the Peer to Peer experience.

**Gents** is a group of 15 to 20 eighth-grade students who meet with a trained social worker from the Children’s Home Society of New Jersey every Thursday. The program meets for lunch and period six, discussing adolescent male issues, decision making, goal setting, anger management, peer relationships and current problems facing young men in America.

Mykal Pemberton, social worker from the Children’s Home Society of New Jersey, has implemented the

program for the past seven years. He has Gents groups in Hightstown, Cranbury and Trenton. Last year, a joint Gents meeting took place among schools.

Students have been selected by teachers, guidance counselors and administration to become members of the group. The group is heterogeneous, providing a wide range of experiences and ideas. Participation is voluntary.

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## Littlebrook

With almost the entire staff trained in **The Responsive Classroom**, a social curriculum, Littlebrook works to develop students' social skills and to build a caring community. Each day begins with a Morning Meeting, a time when students are greeted, play cooperatively, share news and take a forward look at the academics of the day. This brief time each day helps to develop children's emotional, social and academic skills.



Littlebrook is continuing its commitment to **service learning**. Reflection is key to developing service as a lifelong experience. All grades participate in service activities that relate to a curriculum focus and a community-service theme. Grade level themes are:

- Kindergarten:** Hunger and Homelessness
- First Grade:** Peace
- Second Grade:** The Elderly
- Third Grade:** The Environment
- Fourth Grade:** Poverty
- Fifth Grade:** Literacy

The fifth-grade **McCarter Theater Residency** began in November. This year's performance was Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. The students learned the story, wrote additional scenes and acted their parts in a creative version of Shakespeare's work.

Another residency will occur in the spring. Pre-Kindergarten through grade four students will be participating in a **naturalist-in-residence program** with environmentalist Pam Newitt. Students will be studying the schoolyard habitat through hands-on learning.

The annual third-grade **Family Arts and Creativity**

**Nights** were presented by Littlebrook teachers Muriel Lewis and Beverly Mills, and professional artist Maureen Heffernan.

Littlebrook's **courtyard gardens** are flourishing. Thanks to the consistent and dedicated work of many Littlebrook families and of Eagle Scout Robby Shaughnessy, the students have a beautiful, protected habitat where they can study and learn. The courtyard is graced with an outdoor classroom, with natural furniture made by students through a Natural Woodworking Residency during the 2005–2006 school year. Visitors are welcome.

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## Riverside

Riverside's exciting and successful fall term was attributable to the enthusiasm, planning, cooperation and commitments of the entire school community. The school is overflowing with energy about the good things the Riverside professional staff and community have planned and built this year.

While Riverside continues to focus on each child's learning program and strives to create open-ended possibilities for student success, the school also looks at what the staff and community can do together to offer rich and stimulating educational experiences for all.

The **Organic Garden** (the Organic Garden Slumber Party was held Oct. 20) and other expanded environmental projects at Riverside serve to teach us about our relationship to the local environment and also create exciting opportunities for teachers, parents and students to work together in meaningful ways.

Evenings like the well-attended and highly successful "**Pesto and Pasta Night**" (Oct. 19) draw the community to the table to share mutual interests and to build the relationships needed to broaden the school experience.

While Riverside is developing stronger academic programs and experiences for students, it is, at the same time, developing support systems to enhance and expand the school's ability to create a successful and happy place for all members of the Riverside community.

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## Johnson Park

Following a summer during which Johnson Park hosted districtwide programs serving children who were transi-

tioning from kindergarten to first grade and from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten, as well as youngsters with language learning disabilities, JP has launched its **Positive Behavior Support in Schools** program during the

2007-2008 school year. PBSIS is a nationally validated, research-based program that helps build an affirmative community within a school by providing universal behavioral interventions including a recognition system for



*Princeton Regional Schools now has outdoor garden classrooms at each elementary school. The Princeton School Garden Cooperative has worked with committed teachers, principals, parent volunteers and students at each of these schools to design, plant, water, weed and nurture the gardens into being. In addition, they have written a guide that contains the steps for composting, planning and planting edible gardens, as well as lesson plans and curriculum links for math, social studies, language arts, science, visual arts and health.*

all children, small-group interventions for some pupils and individual interventions for a handful of youngsters.

Through a grant-funded process that included input from parents, pupils and staff members, the school developed guiding principles, summarized in “**The JP Pledge**”:

- **Be responsible**
- **Be respectful**
- **Be safe**
- **Be kind**
- **Be successful**

Staff members receive ongoing support to enhance the children’s emotional, social and academic development.

During 2007-2008, JP continues to offer pupils varied

enrichment experiences through the generous support of the PTO. All youngsters are engaging in **environmental education** activities on the school’s nature trail.

In addition, children in each grade are participating in **arts-related projects**. For example, fifth-graders read Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* and then, under the guidance of their classroom teachers in partnership with McCarter Theatre’s Education Department, rewrote and performed the play. Other exciting projects take place in all grades.

The JP family of pupils, parents and staff members has begun planning for the yearlong celebration of JP’s **50th Anniversary** during the 2008-2009 school year. Community members who have had any connection to JP over the past 49 years are invited to call (609) 806-4240 so the school can memorialize your experiences at JP and welcome you to its upcoming events.

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## Community Park

Community Park started the school year with its annual **Fall Picnic**. CP families brought home cooked meals, which included appetizers, salads, main dishes and desserts for all to share. This international food fest took place in the school’s backyard. Many families brought their picnic blankets and enjoyed the company of friends, neighbors and teachers as they relaxed and enjoyed the beautiful fall party.

Another evening event enjoyed by the CP community was the **Starlight Café and Book Fair**. The PTO turned CP’s All Purpose Room into a café-like atmosphere, where everyone enjoyed delicious home-baked treats, cappuccino and other beverages while mingling with other CP families. In addition, families wandered through the book fair in the gym reviewing and selecting books.

The first full year of CP’s **vegetable and flower garden** has been a great success. The garden was weeded and watered during the summer by staff and CP families on a rotating basis. Tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, beets, garlic, lettuce, peppers and various herbs were abundant during the summer.

The garden continued into the fall with kindergartners visiting the CP garden to harvest pumpkins.

CP students enjoyed several **all-school assemblies**. Through one assembly, students learned about



*Proving you’re never too young to pick up a paint brush, Community Park first-graders hone their artistic skills.*

tolerance, self-respect and respect for others. At another assembly, a well-known poet of children’s books showed how he writes his poems and adds his illustrations. As a result of this program, the school has a display of student and teacher poetry.

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**Calendar of Events**

**FEBRUARY**

- 4 **1 p.m. Dismissal for Grades K-8**
- 6 PHS PTO Meeting, 8:30 a.m.
- 7 Special Ed PTO Meeting at JW, 8 p.m.
- 8 PRS/Crisis Ministry Food Drive Begins  
JW PTO Meeting, 8:30 a.m.
- 9 Riverside Pancake Breakfast, 8:30 a.m.
- 12 JP PTO Meeting, 9:15 a.m.  
JW PTO Evening, 7:30 p.m.
- 14 CP PTO Meeting, 8:30 a.m.
- 15 **No classes-Staff Development Day**
- 18 **No classes-Presidents Day**
- 20 Littlebrook PTO Meeting, 8:45 a.m.  
PHS College Workshop, 7 p.m.
- 22 **Katrina Relief: The Concert for New Orleans  
PHS Performing Arts Center, 7:30 p.m.  
Terrance Simien and the Zydeco Experience**
- 26 Littlebrook Family Math Night for Grade 1  
Board of Education Meeting at JW, 8 p.m.
- 28 CP PTO Music Recital, 7 p.m.
- 29 JW Winter Dance, 7:30 p.m.

**MARCH**

- 1 JP Pancake Breakfast, 8:30 a.m.
- 3 **1 p.m. Dismissal for Grades K-8**
- 4-6 Terra Nova Testing and HSPA Testing
- 4 Pre-K/K Registration, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
Princeton Education Foundation  
Meeting, 7 p.m.
- 6 CP Spaghetti Dinner, 5:30-7:30 p.m.  
JW Drama Presentation, 7:30 p.m.
- 7 Littlebrook School Play
- 10-21 NJ Ask 3&4 Testing and Makeups
- 11-13 HSPA Testing Make-Ups
- 12 Littlebrook PTO Meeting, 8:45 a.m.  
PHS PTO Meeting, 7p.m.
- 13 Riverside PTO Meeting, 7 p.m.  
CP PTO Meeting, 8:30 a.m.
- 14 JW PTO Meeting, 8:30 a.m.  
Littlebrook Art Show
- 19 PHS PTO Meeting, 9 a.m.
- 21-30 **No classes-Spring Recess**
- 25 Board of Education Meeting at JW, 8 p.m.

**REMINDER: The Annual School Board Elections are Tuesday, April 15. Please remember to vote.**