

TULPEHOCKEN TIMES

November 2006

428 New Schaefferstown Road, Bernville, PA 19506-8939
610-488-9955
www.tulpehocken.org



IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

To access this important information about special education services, please visit our district website at:

www.tulpehocken.org

For additional information, contact Rebecca DeLisio, Director of Instructional Support Services at 610-488-9400.

YMCA BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM AT PENN-BERVILLE

The YMCA is providing a before and after school program at the Penn-Bernville Elementary building. There is limited space available. For additional information, visit the Tulpehocken website or call Jessica Vogt at 610-378-4775. Activities provided include games, arts & crafts, recreation, literacy, homework assistance, international awareness, and breakfast/ snack. Drop in care is available on an as needed basis.

The public is invited to attend the Tulpehocken Superintendent's Advisory Council meetings. These meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:00PM in the JR/SR HS Library. The meetings are informative in nature, and feedback among the superintendent, administrators, and community is encouraged. Please contact Mimi Shade @ 610-488-9400, ext 116 if you plan on attending.

AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE

Avian influenza does not pose an immediate threat in Pennsylvania or the United States. However, the Pennsylvania Department of Health has issued a list of guidelines for people to follow in the event of an outbreak of the virus. It is important to note that the purpose of these guidelines is to create awareness and share information. What can you do?

- Get a flu shot
- Stay home when sick
- Avoid contact with people who are ill
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Wash your hands frequently
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Poultry is safe to eat when properly cooked (internal temperature of 160)

November

7 End of 1st quarter
17-18 Senior High School Fall Play
19 NHS Induction Banquet
20-22 K-12 Parent Conferences
23-27 Holiday Recess

2006 CALENDAR



December

10 SH Choral/JSJS Band Concert
11 JHS Choral Concert
12-14 JSJS Musical Auditions 3:00 PM
25 Holiday Recess begins

Students' Performance on the PSSA Tests for the 2005 – 2006 School Year

Following are a series of charts that explain how our students performed on the PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) tests in the spring of 2006. The numbers indicate the percentage of our students that scored either proficient or advanced on these assessments. It is my pleasure to announce that the Tulpehocken Area School District has made adequate yearly progress for the 2005 - 2006 school year. As shown by the graphs below the students in grades 3, 5 and 8 achieved equal to, or better than the state average in math. Our 11th grade students performed slightly below the state average. It is also clearly evident that our scores in all grades have continued to generally show steady improvement throughout the past five years.

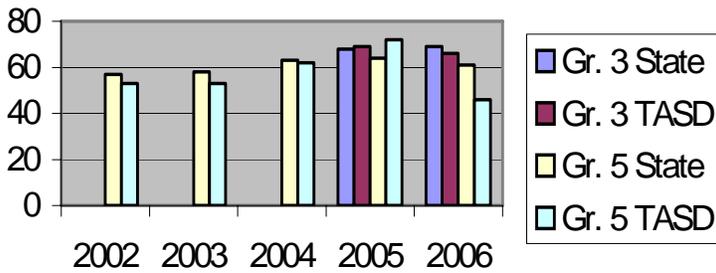
For the Tulpehocken School District to meet AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress), according to the NCLB (No Child Left Behind) Act, the percentage of students needing to score proficient in Reading and Math was 54% and 45% respectively. As shown by the graphs, the Tulpehocken School was above these targets in all grades, and well above these targets in grades 3 & 8.

It is also evident by these graphs that our students in 5th grade struggled in their achievement on these tests especially in the area of reading. These students will be monitored very closely and a special emphasis will be made this year to reach those students that struggled through our Title I Reading Program, as well as other tutoring programs that will be offered at both elementary schools.

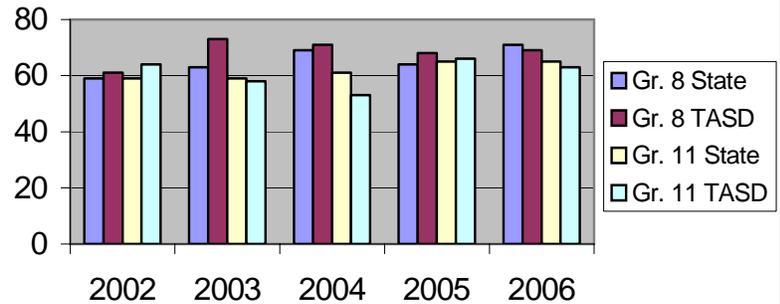
The Tulpehocken Junior Senior High School, along with eight other schools in Berks County, did not meet math and reading proficiency levels for the students in special education. We identified this as an area of need last year and are currently in the second year of implementation of a two-year school improvement plan to meet this challenge. This year we have hired a reading specialist and instituted several sessions of Corrective Reading, a specialized reading program, to address older students that are still struggling with reading skills.

I want to personally congratulate all the students for doing their best on these important assessments as well as the parents, teachers, and fellow administrators for *believing* that our students can do well, having high *expectations* for them; the students' fine *achievement* has been the result.

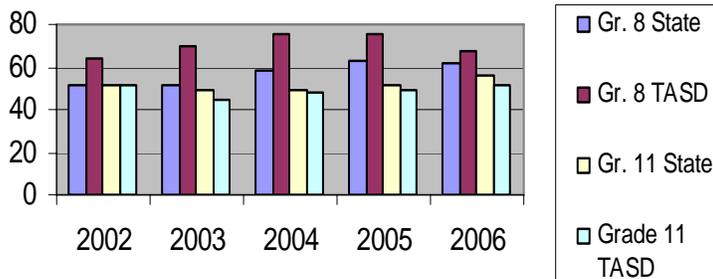
Grades 3 & 5 - Reading Students Scoring Proficient/Advanced



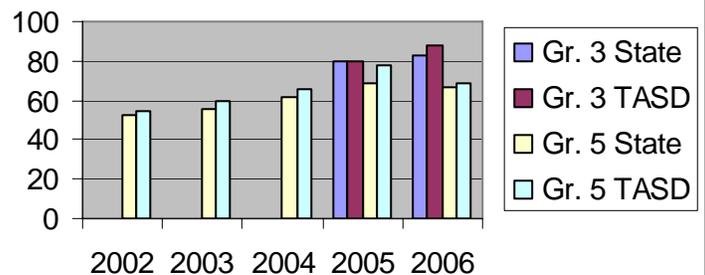
Grades 8 & 11 - Reading Students Scoring Proficient/Advanced



Grades 8 & 11 - Math Students Scoring Proficient/Advanced



Grades 3 & 5 - Math Students Scoring Proficient/Advanced



The Tax Payer Relief Act (a.k.a. Act 1 of 2006)

The Pennsylvania Tax Relief Act of 2006 was signed into law by Governor Ed Rendell on June 27, 2006. This law follows the failed attempts of Act 50 of 1998 and Act 72 of 2004 to address property tax reform. Act 1 changes the timing and methods of school budgeting and how public education is funded. This legislation for property tax relief is merely a shift. It is a shift from a system of using property values to determine taxes to a system that uses income as its base. Taxes will not be eliminated. When one tax goes down, some other tax must go up.

Depending on whether you own or rent, how much money you make, and where you live, how you fund public education may be affected. The key points of Act 1 include an expansion of the property tax and rent rebate program administered by the PA Department of Revenue, a referendum question on the May 2007 primary election ballot authorizing property tax reductions through an increase in earned income tax (EIT) or personal income tax (PIT), backend referenda to approve increases in taxes that are above an inflationary index, and installment payment options for real estate taxes.

Property Tax and Rent Rebate Program

This new piece of legislation expands the property tax and rent rebate program administered by the Department of Revenue. Under the old program, claimants or spouses 65 years of age or older, widows or widowers 50 years of age or older and the permanently disabled 18 years of age or older may qualify for this program. To qualify, a claimant's annual household eligibility income must not exceed \$15,000 (excluding 50% of Social Security payments and 50% of Railroad Retirement benefit payments from eligibility income). Claimants who qualify can be reimbursed up to \$500 a year for the amount they paid in property taxes or rent in the previous year.

The new legislation increases the income limit up to \$35,000 with the maximum rebate being \$650. Claimants must file form PA-1000 by June 30. Rebate checks are mailed beginning July 1 of each year. Additional information can be found on the Department of Revenue's website at www.revenue.state.pa.us.

Property Tax reduction

Act 1 requires that a referendum question be placed on the May 2007 ballot. The voters will be asked if they would like to increase the earned income tax or create a personal income tax to be used to reduce property taxes. If approved by the voters, the new tax will go into effect July 1, 2007.

The Act also requires all school districts to appoint a tax study commission. The commission's responsibility is to make a non-binding recommendation to the board of school directors on what the May 2007 referendum question should be. The commission will meet several times from September to December. The commission is required to study these four areas: (1) historic and present rates of and revenue from taxes currently levied, assessed and collected, (2) the percentage of total revenues provided by taxes currently levied, assessed, and collected, (3) The age, income, employment, and property use characteristics of the existing tax base, and (4) projected revenues of taxes currently levied, assessed, and collected, including taxes authorized and taxes not levied.

The commission must be appointed no later than September 14, 2006. The commission must make the recommendation no later than December 13, 2006 to the board of school directors. The members should represent, as much as possible, the socioeconomic makeup of the school district.

Gambling Funds

The state will use the gaming revenues to provide further property tax relief to approved homesteads/farmstead properties. Until the gaming revenue fund reaches \$400 million, the state will not make any allocations to school districts for property tax relief. The state estimates, from gaming revenues, that the amount of relief from property taxes for the Tulpehocken Area School District is \$110 to \$275 depending on the funding level. The school board can choose to accept or not to accept the gambling money. If the school board chooses not to accept the gaming funds, they must ask the voters if they would favor accepting the money.

Homestead/Farmstead Applications

For taxpayers to be eligible to see any tax relief from the above provisions, they must send a homestead/farmstead application to the County assessor's office. School districts are required, under Act 1, to mail out applications to all homesteads and farmsteads by December 31 of each year. The mailing can be limited to those properties not currently approved.

Back-end referendum

Starting with the 2007-2008 school year, school districts are not permitted to increase the rate of real estate tax above an inflationary index which is published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) by September of each year. If the school district wishes to raise real estate taxes more than the index, the district must submit for exceptions through PDE or the courts or the district may ask the voters for approval to raise taxes more than the index.

Because of the time lines stipulated in Act 1, the district will begin budgeting in September. The board will adopt a preliminary budget by January. This is three to four months earlier than the previous method of budgeting. Due to the increased timeline, the district does not know what funding will be coming from the state at the time of preliminary budget adoption as well as any other expenditures. This will be challenging for the district to try to estimate these unknowns.

Installment payments

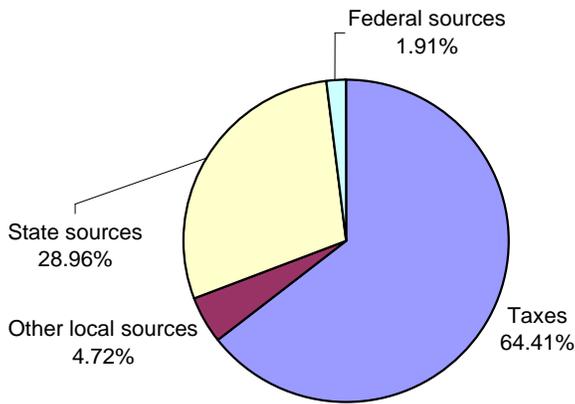
Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, the district must offer the option to pay real estate taxes on an installment basis to those taxpayers who are eligible homestead/farmstead properties. The district can offer taxpayers the ability to make no more than six monthly payments and no less than three equal payments. Any eligible taxpayer who wishes to pay their real estate tax on an installment basis will pay the flat amount. The taxpayer will not receive the 2% discount. If the taxpayer is late in paying an installment, a 10% penalty will be added and they are excluded from paying on an installment basis the following year.

The details of Tulpehocken's program are not available. The district is currently working to make the necessary changes to the recordkeeping software, tax bills, and internal processes to handle the installment payments.

School Budget: What does it mean to me?

At the June 20, 2006 school board meeting, the Board of School Directors adopted the budget for the 2006 – 2007 school year. Unfortunately, a tax increase of 2.11 mills (or 9.34% increase) was required to balance the budget. Increased costs in healthcare, retirement, special education, utilities, and the purchase of new textbooks to replace outdated books are among the reasons needed for the increase. The graphs illustrated show a snapshot of where the money is planning to come from and where the money may go.

Where will the money come from?



Value of 1 mill compared to other districts

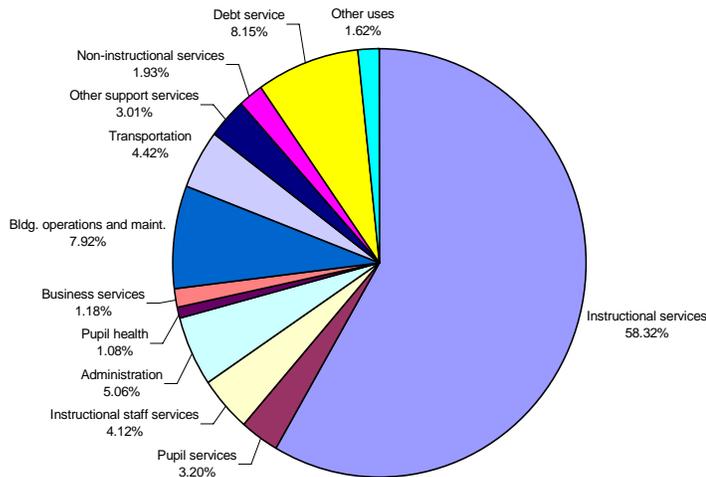
(assumes 100% collection rate based upon 2005 County assessed values)

Tulpehocken	523,891
Schuykill Valley	808,878
Hamburg	767,107
Kutztown	603,505
Wilson	2,296,847
Wyomissing	805,932
Conrad Weiser	869,218
Antietam	255,080

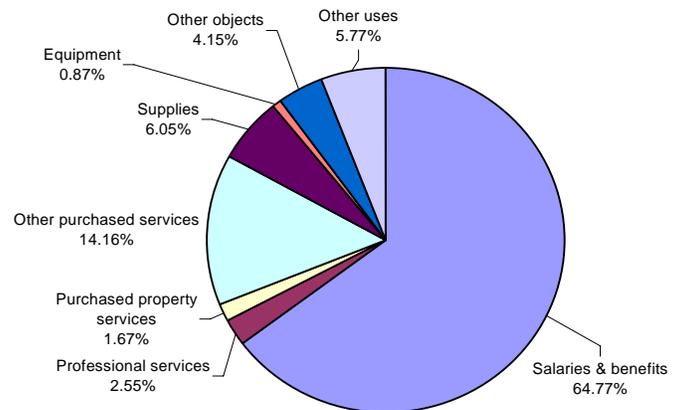
Source: State Tax Equalization Board

Where will the money go?

By Function



By Object



Instructional services – Regular ed, Special ed, Vocational ed, Alternative ed, Summer School, Homebound

Pupil services – Psychological services, Guidance, Child Accounting

Instructional staff services – Special Ed Director, Curriculum Director, Staff development, Library

Administration – School board, Tax collection, Human resources, Legal services, Superintendent, Principals

Other support services – Information Technology, support of Intermediate Unit's mandated budget

Non-instructional services – Student activities, athletics

Other uses – Fund transfers, budgetary reserve

Professional services - Services of architects, engineers, auditors, dentists, medical doctors, lawyers, consultants, teachers, accountants, tax collectors etc. Payments for services provided by Intermediate Units to districts.

Purchased property services - Services purchased to operate, repair, maintain, and rent property owned and/or used by the district.

Other purchased services – Costs for transportation, tuition to other schools, telephone, postage, travel, conferences, insurance, advertising, and printing.

Supplies – Costs for supplies, books, and utilities.

Other objects – Costs for membership dues, fees, interest portion of debt payments, and for budgetary reserve.

Other uses – Costs for fund transfers and for the principal portion of debt payments

2005-2006 A Year In Reflection
Elizabeth Massar, Superintendent

As the 2006-2007 school year begins, let us take a few moments to reflect on the district's accomplishments in the previous school year. The 2005-2006 school year was a busy time for everyone. The district implemented a number of programs and initiatives that aggressively promoted educational opportunities for all of our students.

From a programmatic standpoint:

-To begin to meet the needs of all students, the district focused on providing the least restrictive environments for all students through the implementation of inclusion practices in our classrooms. To date, 124 students have been included in K-12 classrooms giving them the same experiences that their peers have in schools. In addition to inclusion practices, the district has enhanced equal educational opportunities for our special education population needing emotional support and life skills by establishing its own emotional support and life skills programs. 38 students joined our student bodies and thus have benefited academically from our curriculum and socially by being included in these programs as well as saving the district \$386,889.00.

-Another initiative the district embarked on last year, was the Extended Kindergarten Program. To date, the district only offers ½ day kindergarten. For those students who tested "at-risk" at kindergarten screening, the district began an Extended Kindergarten Program. With the offering of this program, eighteen at-risk students participated in full day kindergarten throughout the school year. All but two of these students scored above or at grade level at the end of the school year.

-For primary and intermediate at-risk students, a three-tier reading and a math intervention program was implemented. Students experiencing academic difficulties benefited from on-going progress monitoring and assessment, and placement in interventions of appropriate duration and intensity. A total of 189 students participated in these interventions which resulted in 142 students being exited from these interventions because they made significant progress. The other 47 students made progress but were allowed to continue in the interventions so they could gain greater self-confidence in their reading skills and strategies. Special education referrals also declined as a result of the additional support.

-In addition to examining the students at-risk, the district conducted a self-assessment of its gifted program. Information from staff, parents, community members, and experts in the field of gifted education was gathered to revitalize our current program in order to optimize the gifted program for the children of our district.

From a curricular standpoint:

-The district objectively examined current curriculum at the junior/senior high school and elementary levels. Administration met with teachers at the secondary level who had been offering classes with low enrollments in order to develop a plan for future opportunities in their programs. Elementary curriculum discussions began addressing science and social studies curriculum. Both the science and social studies curriculum needed formalization. Curriculum expansion was the objective at both grade levels. Additionally, at all levels, the district purchased new texts replacing extremely old texts that had been in use.

-To accelerate students at the elementary levels, students in 6th grade math engaged in the Joplin Approach which allowed students to move between math levels. Students began pre-algebra curriculum as a result of this initiative. To further increase the rigor of academic opportunities at the secondary level, students at the senior high school were involved in a Dual Enrollment Program. Students in 11th and 12th grade had the option to enroll in both on and off campus college courses at a reduced tuition rate while receiving college credit and high school credit. In many cases, these credits can be transferred to the student's college choice upon enrollment.

From an organizational standpoint:

-The district is taking all measures to ensure that our staff is "highly qualified". These measures included sending staff to paraprofessional and CPR/First Aid training. Additionally, teachers were provided professional development opportunities in special education, gifted education, effective instruction, and technology.

-The district, likewise, began to update technology. Many of the district's technology efforts had been unsupported, outdated, and inconsistent. The district began identifying the district's technology strengths and deficiencies and exploring options through its Technology Committee. From the software standpoint, Tulpehocken purchased the Odyssey program for the elementary schools. This program gave teachers another tool to assist them in remediating and accelerating students within the classroom in the areas of reading and math. In the near future, the use of this program will be expanded to writing. The district

began to offer professional development opportunities to its staff in order to assist in integrating technology in the classrooms. We also updated our district's website.

-Proactively, the district has employed companies to conduct demographic and feasibility studies to begin exploring the expected growth patterns of the district. The district continues to explore avenues to convert the Tulpehocken Elementary building to a community social service and district office facility. Opportunities were explored to partner with community providers in order to provide necessary services to our community and students.

What is new for the 2006-2007 school year?

Personnel:

-The district hired a Reading Specialist for the Jr/Sr High School. Students experiencing difficulties in reading will now be able to work with the Reading Specialist.

-The district hired an additional math and English teacher to reduce class sizes and to offer remedial classes.

Scheduling:

-As more and more regulations and requirements are being placed on school districts across the country, school districts continue to struggle to balance and maintain course offerings while allotting time for new testing areas such as science and to provide assistance to students with achievement deficits. Since neither the length of the school day nor the number of days in a school year have been changed, administration had to make changes in the amount of time students spend in some course offerings at all grade levels. Some of the time that students are exposed to subject areas has been shortened in order to enhance the increasing time demands of other areas and student academic needs. Unlike other districts, TASD has maintained student exposure to all special areas while adding additional requirements/offerings. In order to achieve this, the district established a 6 day cycle at the elementary levels. The cycle allowed the district to achieve time blocks for math, language arts, and science in addition to providing continuity with inclusion scheduling and support services.

At the junior high level, some changes in scheduling special areas such as geography, computers, family consumer science, technology education, and music, likewise, occurred. At this grade level the focus on scheduling has shifted to students' academic needs. While the elementary schedules permit academic interventions, the secondary schedule requires interventions to be scheduled. As a result, students who are not performing at proficient levels in math and English are assigned additional math and English classes, therefore, the number of special subject areas had to be adjusted. Students needing academic assistance have fewer special courses in certain grade levels. Additionally, some courses such as geography and computers are now being offered only one of the two years as stand alone classes. Within the social studies curriculum, geography is being integrated into the current curriculum. As for computer courses, the district refocused the instruction of computers to the elementary level so that the students entering the junior high will enter at an increased computer competency level.

-The tracking of junior high students has been discontinued. Students are scheduled in flexible groupings; thus, allowing students to take more challenging courses in areas in which they excel.

Curriculum:

-New to Junior high students' schedules is reading, remedial math, and German classes.

-At the elementary levels, new science and social studies materials have been purchased and implemented into the school day.

-Additionally, the district continues to update new texts at all levels.

-The district refreshed the course offerings at the high school by introducing 26 new courses including electives in music, business, computers, English, math, Advanced Placement, Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC), and leveled math and English courses.

-In addition to expanding our curriculum on campus, the district has expanded its dual enrollment college off-campus offerings with Penn State, RACC and HACC.

-Elective courses with low enrollment, less than 10 students, are temporarily not being offered during the 06-07 school year. During this time, staff will continue to be encouraged to revise their course contents in order to generate student interest and to reflect today's workforce needs.

-Some staff in Agriculture and Technology Education Programs are temporarily reassigned this school year due to lack of student enrollment in these programs. The district is providing opportunities for these instructors to redesign and reintroduce their programs for the 07-08 school

school year. Assistance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education has been obtained in order to facilitate the development of our programs.

-To better facilitate the diversity of learners in our classrooms and to offer challenging curriculum to all of our students; English, math, and science courses have been leveled. Leveled courses facilitate differentiated instruction which allows staff to address students' instructional needs.

-In order to improve the performance of our secondary students on the PSSA, the district created English courses at each grade level which use the Corrective Reading Program. Students, based on previous PSSA performances, have been placed in these courses to target reading deficiencies and to enhance skill development.

-Increasing expectations for students and staff will be a continued focus this year.

-Raising the number of credits needed for graduation while reducing the number of study halls has resulted in increased academic expectations for our students.

-In order to guarantee consistency in curriculum and increase expectations, the senior high school will be creating common semester exams.

Technology:

-Continuing with the district's technology expansion, the district purchased the Plato program at the secondary level. Plato compliments and enhances curriculum and student achievement.

-Portable lab carts, Smartboards, and new projectors are now being used in our classrooms. Our staff is being trained on the use of these items.

-All PCs have been equipped with the latest software.

-New servers and networking technology have been purchased to help improve connectivity.

-Our bandwidth to the internet has been expanded to enhance speed.

-We are continuing to offer professional development opportunities in technology to staff and have started to offer these programs to the community.

-The district is working on obtaining student information databases and data warehousing abilities.

-The technology department is creating an intranet.

-Our website is constantly being improved to stimulate communication between the district, staff, and the community.

In the future, we will continue to:

-pursue the Tulpehocken Elementary Project

-provide expanded learning opportunities for all students

-enhance our technology

-provide learning opportunities for all of our staff

-explore building projects for expected district growth

NHS Induction

This year the Tulpehocken Chapter of the National Honor Society will induct new members in the spring and the fall. In order to be selected as a member the student must:

- Be an 11th or 12th grade student
- Have a cumulative GPA of at least 90% from 9th grade to present
- Be selected by the principal as having a good discipline record
- Complete and return the student information packet on time
- Be selected by the NHS Faculty Council as showing scholarship, leadership, service and character

Questions can be directed to Mrs. B. Davis, Advisor
(bdavis@tulpehocken.org)



Mrs. Hamrick's 6th grade students enjoyed participating in Penn-Bernville Elementary School's Spirit Week. They are dressed for Wacky Wednesday.



Elizabeth Massar, Superintendent
Board of School Directors

- Earl E. Brown
- Marilyn J. Burkhart
- Evelyn F. Fox
- Jason L. Huey
- Scott W. Klopp
- Oscar J. Manbeck
- Ralph E. Moyer
- William T. Palmer, Jr.
- John C. Zimmerman

TULPEHOCKEN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
428 New Schaefferstown Road
Bernville, PA 19506-8939

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Bernville, PA
PERMIT NO. 34

Penn-Bernville's Balcony People

Everyone understands the exhilaration of being on the balcony of a building. Students at Penn-Bernville will soon understand that feeling when the district's bullying prevention program, which has been in place for five years, is merged with the Anti-Defamation League's Program, "No Place for Hate Schools". The No Place for Hate program in schools seeks to provide a model for combating intolerance, bullying and hatred, leading to long-term solutions to these problems in schools. Penn-Bernville students will have to choose and complete, within the year, three or more activities that celebrate diversity and promote respect.

For one of the activities, the Bullying Prevention Committee has asked Art Teacher, Marie DeFillips, to help the committee to design a paper balcony, which will be placed in the cafeteria. Each row of the balcony will designate a grade level. All students will have their pictures on the balcony to start the project. As long as students affirm other students and encourage diversity and respect in the school community, they will be considered to be Balcony People, pulling other people up by encouragement. Those who bully or who are intolerant, taking people down emotionally, will be removed from the balcony, during a private conference with a faculty member. Their photos will be kept with the School Counselor and they will be given an opportunity to go back onto the balcony by contracting to restore a relationship, enhance their social skills, or encourage another student.

We hope to see everyone on the balcony!

The members of the Bullying Prevention Committee are: Mrs. Benfer, Mrs. DeFillips, Mrs. Gilson, Mrs. Keller, Mrs. Ritchie, Mrs. Weidman and Mrs. White.

GOLDEN PASSES

*Residents of Tulpehocken Area School District, 55 years of age or older, are invited to attend school district sporting events and plays for **FREE**. Please stop by the high school office or superintendent's office to pick up your **GOLDEN PASS** today.*



Students, staff, family, and friends enjoying the Bethel PTO Harvest Festival. The food games, and activities were a big success.

TULPEHOCKEN JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL DESIGNATED POD SITE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Tulpehocken has been designated a point-of-distribution site by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. In the event of a national emergency, epidemic, earthquake, or flood, Tulpehocken may be activated to provide mass vaccinations or other preventative medicines. Volunteers are needed to staff the Tulpehocken POD site. For additional information or to volunteer, please contact Gerri Anne Brubaker, Coordinator of Special Programs, at 610-488-9400.