

Kaleidoscope

A Publication of the Katonah-Lewisboro School District



SENIOR EARNS Intel Recognition

John Jay High School is proud to congratulate senior Jack Brotmann on earning semifinalist recognition in the Intel Science Talent Search.

“When I first found out I had been named a semifinalist, I was thrilled and stunned at the same time,” said Brotmann. “I couldn’t believe that all the time I had spent researching my topic, searching for a mentor and conducting experiments in a laboratory had finally come to fruition.”

His project, “Hemoglobin Coated Nanoparticles: A Potential Model for Pro-inflammatory Microparticles in Circulation,” was the result of his growing interest in the wide uses of nanoparticles.

“I thought it would be fun to research such an amazing field with so many potential applications,” Brotmann shared.

He conducted his research last summer at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, mentored by Dr. Joel Friedman and his team of researchers.

There, Brotmann was able to test his hypothesis that “hybrid nanoparticles possessing both magnetic and hydrogel properties would be able to be coated with hemoglobin most effectively.”

Through the hands-on experiment, Brotmann learned that if a model for red blood cell-derived microparticles were to be developed, it would allow scientists to more easily test their treatments and techniques for vascular and other types of inflammation.

Science Research teacher Erin Asaro said she and her colleagues are proud of Brotmann and look forward to his continued success in future endeavors. “Jack’s commitment to the study of nanoparticles has resulted in exciting research,” said Asaro. “He’s worked hard and we are proud of his success.”

Brotmann will attend Tufts University this fall, where he plans to study business and science.

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Calendar Change

Due to a recent snow day, Tuesday, Feb. 16 is now a regular school day for students and staff. We have four weather reserve days remaining in this year’s calendar.

Your Superintendent



In the fall issue of *Kaleidoscope*, I wrote about the 30-year educational movement that placed increasing emphasis on uniform standards, standardized tests, and test-based accountability and simultaneously decreased local control of schools. A few months later, that movement appears to be reversing course.

In December, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (a re-authorization of the law previously known as No Child Left Behind). The new law still mandates the annual ELA and Math tests in grades three through eight, as well as annual high school exams such as our Regents. Civil rights groups fought hard to keep those tests on the books, fearing their removal would allow for even greater inequities of educational opportunity. The new law significantly decreases the federal role in education, restricts the government's ability to mandate common national standards (i.e., Common Core), reduces the punitive aspects of test results on schools, and reduces federal influence over how teachers are

evaluated. The overall shift gives responsibility and control back to the states and local districts for maintaining high standards for our students and teachers.

Here in New York, both our governor and commissioner of education have followed a similar trajectory. The governor has accepted the recommendations of his Common Core Task Force that educators and parents be more involved in decisions about testing, that teachers have greater flexibility to use authentic, formative assessments in their classrooms, that the quantity of and emphasis on testing be reduced, and that linkages between testing and teacher evaluation be put on hold pending further study. Both leaders say they have heard that testing was having too much impact on the daily lives of our students, and they are responding accordingly. Some changes may come quickly (such as the shortening of this year's state tests in grades three through eight); other changes will take longer.

In Katonah-Lewisboro, we are engaged in ongoing discussions with our teachers about the types

of assessments we believe are most meaningful for students, teachers, and families. In the coming months, we look forward to inviting you into conversations with us on this very topic.

In February, we will begin presenting our annual budget to our Board of Education. As of this writing, the governor has proposed a state budget that includes a smaller increase in state aid for our district than we've seen in recent years. That modest increase, coupled with a tax cap limit which is virtually zero and some debt obligation relief, all but guarantees that next year's school budget will again be reduced. I encourage all our community members to be engaged throughout our budgeting process so that we reach decisions we can all support. The next issue of this newsletter will include budget details in advance of May's annual budget vote.

Sincerely,

Andrew Selesnick

Technology Initiatives

MET WITH ENTHUSIASM AT MS

Sixth-grade students in Marcia Daley-Savo's classes this year are reading, researching, writing and collaborating without producing or consuming even a single sheet of paper.

"They are already so successful with the technology that it blows me away," said Daley-Savo, a humanities teacher.

Daley-Savo introduced her sixth-graders to using laptop computers in the classroom in the fall and taught them how to use OneNote, a Microsoft program that allows students to work on assignments digitally, all with teacher oversight.

This approach took traditional parts of projects like the Egyptian Museum's "hundreds of index cards" and put them online, where they can be accessed at any time. "The beauty of OneNote is that it is device agnostic, so it can be accessed on a Mac or a PC or a smartphone."

Students' learning of ancient Egypt was also enhanced through a virtual reality application offered in conjunction with Google Cardboard. Using just a smartphone and



cardboard holder, students were able to step into a pharaoh's tomb and explore it with a 360-degree view. Daley-Savo said additional compatible applications may be introduced in future units.

Dr. Ahunna Margaux Akoma, the district's director of technology, said she wanted to roll out technology in a way that excites teachers as well as students.

"I was trying to figure out how to infuse a new spirit in the teachers that could be carried over to the students," she said. "I introduced OneNote

at a Superintendent's Conference Day, figuring it was one piece of technology that can help teachers and students work efficiently."

OneNote, which comes free with the Microsoft Office suite already used in the district, offers tools like a class notebook to allow for multi-student collaboration, individual student notebooks (which can be viewed only by the student and teacher), a content library for class handouts, and other tools that can reduce the amount of paper printout in the school. Reducing paper

waste, said Dr. Akoma, is a huge benefit of going virtual.

"The paperless program has really taken off," said Dr. Akoma. "Parents have come into [Daley-Savo's] classroom to see how it works, and they can view at home what the students are working on."

Moving forward, Dr. Akoma said other teachers in the district are being offered training on OneNote.

"We now have 107 kids who are really good at this," said Daley-Savo. "I would love to see it expand."

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Performing Arts Thrive

In December, ArtsALIVE, the high school booster club for the arts, brought back John Jay alumni to collaborate with current students for a special performance of *Encore Cabaret IV*. The evening highlighted the school's musical theater talent, past and present, through the celebration of Tony Award-winning musicals. Andrew Catrini ('07) served as the production's musical director, Tom Polos ('06) was master of ceremonies, and saxophonist Alison Shearer ('06) led the band, which was made up of both alumni and current students.

At the elementary, middle school and high school levels, students have

been recognized by the Westchester County School Music Association. Students in grades four through six auditioned for All-County acceptance, while students in grades seven through nine earned recognition based on their NYSSMA scores. Congratulations to the:

- 6 All-County Intermediate Chorus students
- 2 All-County Intermediate Band students
- 2 All-County Intermediate Orchestra students
- 5 All-County Elementary Chorus students
- 3 All-County Elementary Band students
- 5 All-County Elementary Orchestra students



Board of Education Meeting Budget Dates

Budget Presentation:
Thursday, Feb. 25

Budget Workshop:
Saturday, Feb. 27 - 8:30 a.m.

Budget Meetings:
Thursdays, March 10, 17

Budget Adoption: TBD

Budget Vote: Tuesday, May 17