



The Rising Star

Swarthmore Rutledge School

Home of the Panther Cubs!

Volume 13, Issue 4

December 2006

From the Principal's Desk

Dear SRS Parents,

Last month we sent home parent evaluation forms requesting feedback regarding our character education program. In response to some of the feedback I received, I'd like to provide more information about our character initiative so that we can work together to support your children.



The SRS character education program is focused on enabling our students to live and learn together well. We teach our students pro-social skills and help them to manage their anger effectively. We also focus on fostering a spirit of community throughout our school.

Because we believe that children learn social skills in the same way they learn academic skills, our students are taught specific social skills in their classrooms that enable them to make good choices. Classroom teachers discuss with their students the rationale for learning a specific skill and model how to use the skill effectively. This allows our students to see clearly what is

expected and how to perform the skill. Often a chart is used to display what the skill "looks like" and "sounds like." Students practice the skill in role playing situations. Afterwards, they are given feedback from their classmates on how they used the skill.

These skills are related to our four cornerstones of pro-social behavior: Manners, Kindness, Courage and Self-Control. Each of our four cornerstones is focused on as a monthly theme throughout the school year. Our teachers weave these themes into their daily instructional programs and emphasize each cornerstone when they reinforce positive behaviors or resolve difficulties. Each theme is highlighted in a developmentally appropriate manner through songs, skits, and literature at our primary and intermediate school meetings.

The SRS community promotes core values that relate to specific student behaviors that can be readily observed. We communicate our core values through a monthly edition of our school newsletter, *The Rising Star*, and through monthly classroom newsletters, interactive bulletin boards, bi-monthly school meetings and the student handbook. Our school meetings feature performances by classes and are designed to instruct the audience on the featured monthly cornerstone in a developmentally appropriate manner. Opportunities to extend these lessons in the classroom are made available to the teachers by the school theme coordinators. Posters are displayed in the classrooms and in other areas of our school which focus on our cornerstones, anti-bullying strategies, and the importance of "Stop and Think."

Two different curriculums are implemented to help students acquire a developmentally appropriate understanding of what our core values mean in everyday behavior. *Second Step*, a social skills development curriculum is taught to students in grades 1 and 2. This program is designed to reduce aggressive and impulsive behavior and increase social competence. *Steps to Respect* is taught to students in grades 3, 4 and 5. It is

designed to decrease bullying and help students build more supportive relationships with each other. It teaches children to recognize bullying, use assertive behaviors and to report bullying to adults.

We define our core principles early in the year with the distribution of a school pact which details our core values, expected behaviors, and appropriate consequences. A particular focus is placed on the prevention of bullying behavior, which has resulted in the development of a school-wide anti-bullying pledge and club, the development of a common vocabulary related to bullying, empowering our students to speak up when they are the victim or witness of bullying, and increased social skill training.

Staff members from each grade level as well as specialist teachers including art, physical education, guidance, enrichment, and foreign language serve on our social awareness committee. This committee helps support the integration of the character education into daily classroom instruction and facilitates the distribution of classroom materials and activities as well as special events.

SRS also has a school goal committee focused on implementing community connections and service projects. Our service projects have included a car wash for Hurricane Katrina relief, book donations for children in Guatemala, canned food drives for needy families in neighboring communities, care packages for area senior citizens, blanket and towel drives for the SPCA, scholarships for summer camp, a fundraiser for the Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and the fifth grade poetry reading/writing project in collaboration with senior citizens. Students frequently initiate self-directed community service projects. We also have an intergenerational program that actively recruits senior citizens to tutor individual students and/or assist in our classrooms and we hold an annual Intergenerational Day each spring. Annually, our fifth grade students participate in the World of Work program with the local Rotary Club that affords them the opportunity to learn about local businesses and service organizations.

We attempt to expand our students' perspectives on various cultures through our primary grade Asian study, our third grade African Dance program, the fourth grade study of Hispanic cultures, and the fifth grade Native American and Colonial simulations. As we teach an understanding of different cultural perspectives, students engage in discussing contemporary issues and values of our society. Our core values are integrated into our instructional program.

Fostering self-motivation for moral action and responsible decision making is at the heart of our character education program. Regular school meetings give students the opportunity to reflect on the importance of our four cornerstones. These meetings are planned by students and faculty, and focus on different cornerstones each time, in an entertaining and engaging way. Exemplary student work reflecting core values and moral actions are highlighted at school meetings as well as in our school's newsletter and the local media. The cornerstones are reinforced in all school environments. From learning songs in music class, and playing cooperative games in gym class and at recess, to exploring relevant literature, children have many opportunities to internalize these ideals. In order to further support our vision, each child signs a school pact each year which not only provides guidelines for positive social behaviors, but also details the process for consequences when students fall short of these goals. Behavior issues/problems are approached as learning opportunities. Emphasis is placed on learning from our mistakes and reflecting on our core values.

Our four cornerstone emphasis grew out of training we received from Dr. Jerry McMullen. He trained the SRS staff in his Pro-Social Skills and Stop and Think approach during the 2000-2001 school years. For the last two years, our staff and faculty have received intensive training from college professors and highly respected professionals in the field of autism to help develop inclusive, tolerant classrooms for all children, but specifically for those on the autistic spectrum as part of our NEW-S project program (Neuman College, Elwyn Institute, and the Wallingford-Swarthmore School District). Paulette Meier, another trainer, worked with our students and staff last year on ways to use music to foster peace-making skills in the classroom.

SRS recently formed a Bully Prevention Coordinating Committee. We have representatives from all stakeholder groups on this committee. We are currently in the process of being trained by a certified Olweus Bully Prevention trainer, Carolyn Falcone, from Holcomb Behavior Support Services. The Olweus Bully Prevention Program is widely acknowledged as a research based approach to the prevention of bullying with young people. It will provide us with a unified and systematic approach to bullying behavior in all its forms that supports the victim, gives the bully/bullies a clear message that they must stop and empowers bystanders to follow the steps that they have been trained in when they observe bullying.

In January of 2007, we will hold our first annual SRS Bullying Awareness Week. As part of this week, The Walnut Street Theater Touring Company will kickoff a six-week residency program that will look at the dangers of bullying and the importance of accepting differences, by performing *The Boy Who Cried Bully*, and the Spice Route Ensemble will end the week in a timely manner by demonstrating Middle Eastern music and positive human relationships between musicians of Arab, Israeli, and Greek traditions.

I hope this clarifies our comprehensive approach to character education. In a few weeks, we will post our application for a National School of Character Award on our school website. It will more fully document our character education initiative. When you examine the seven page narrative and the 25 page portfolio application that we are submitting, you will be very proud of our school, our staff and our students.

Pretty soon, most of the members of the SRS community will be celebrating special holidays. These are holidays that are usually associated with families getting together, lights and candles, special food and treats, the retelling of special stories that touch our spirits in special ways. On behalf of the SRS faculty and staff, I wish you and your family the very best of holidays.

Sincerely yours,

Gary Davis

Dear SRS Community,

It's hard to believe that we are already to the point in the school year of Parent/Teacher conferences and the Thanksgiving Holiday. We hope everyone had a happy and healthy Thanksgiving and is looking forward to all the celebrations and "get-togethers" that December holds for each of us.

The SRS faculty led by Dr. Davis and together with student and parent input is ready to submit the application for the "School of Character Award". The work on the application has been lengthy but rewarding. Through the process of completing the application, we have taken a serious look at the "cornerstones" (manners, courage, self control and kindness) which SRS uses to foster pro-social skills and character development. We are pleased with the activities and teachings that we use at SRS to encourage healthy social skills thus far, and have added an "Anti Bullying Program" to this year's curriculum to further enhance our efforts to be on the forefront in promoting character development. The process of completing the application has taken just over a year with many, many hours of work by a devoted group of SRS faculty. Dr. Davis has stated throughout the last several discussions about the application, that although we would love to be chosen for the award, even if we are not, this application process has led us through rewarding reflection of how we are presently teaching character development, and has given us great ideas for our future efforts in this area. We expect the evaluation of our application to take several

weeks, but have not received an exact time frame for when we should hear of the results.

We should also be aware of some very important tax/budget changes which are on the agenda at the district level this month, which may affect not only our tax bill, but also the SRS budget and therefore our curriculum. Mary Gay Scanlon attended the November H&S meeting and brought us up to speed on the recommendations that will have been presented at the November WSSD School Board meeting. We have also asked Steve Goldfield for an update on this very important issue and he has offered to meet with us. We are looking at some dates in the near future and will keep you informed via the SRSkids.org website and backpack mail.

We want to wish you all a wonderful Holiday Season, and look forward to seeing you again at the January H&S meeting (no December H&S meeting).

Thank You
SRS H&S co-chairs
Kate Dickey dickeys@comcast.net
Beth Resweber sresweber@pol.net

SRS Staff Spotlight
Featuring Jennifer Aboushanab

Interview by Rachel Carp and Emma Frick

What is your favorite color? **Shades of green**

Were you ever afraid of the dark? If so, what age were you? **Yes, around 5 years old.**

What is your favorite holiday? **Thanksgiving**

Where did you go to college? **Rutgers** (undergrad) **Drexel** (graduate)

What is your favorite hobby? **Candle making, soap making and knitting**

What is your favorite sport to watch? **Ice skating**

What is your favorite animal? **A Monkey**

What is your favorite food? **French fries with cheese**

How would you describe yourself? **Silly and friendly**

Do you like to dance, if so what kind? **I love to dance! I like to just move to the music.**

What do you wish you could do? **Fly, be invisible, jump very high, be able to fix stuff and be able to send myself places.**



HANDS ON SCIENCE (HOS)

Spark a child's natural curiosity and interest in science by becoming a Hands on Science (HOS) teacher at SRS. We are looking for adult leaders willing to teach children grades 1-5 for both winter and spring sessions. A science background or formal teaching experience is not required—just a love for science and a willingness to pass your enthusiasm onto our students! All training and materials are provided. Adult Leaders will be compensated for their time and their children may enroll tuition free. If interested, please contact Linnette Reilly at (610) 876-7260. Our winter session, focused on Chemistry, begins the week of January 29, 2007. Training session will take place in early January.



Twelfth Night revelry

A festive evening of music, merriment, food, and cheer!

PLEASE JOIN US

January 6, 2007

7:00 to 10:30 pm

Table in Clothier Hall

Swarthmore College

Must be present to win raffle

Ticket \$25.00 / person



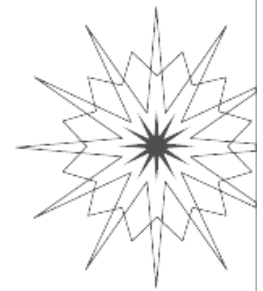
FEATURING

A Silent Auction and Raffle
to benefit the

Strath Haven High School Silvertones
and Choral Department

Entertainment by the Don Jones Band,
and the Silvertones

Food provided by Carrabbas



For tickets: Terrie Maisano 610. 876. 4079 or Debbie Sloman 610. 659. 0917 For information: www.thesilvertones.org

UNITED NATIONS DAY

“From
states across the countries
From countries across the land
United Nations helps the world
And lends a helping hand.”

-3rd Grade Author

This poem is just one of many examples of the wonderful works that the 3rd grade children of SRS created to express their understanding of the importance of the United Nations and the role that it plays in their lives and the world.

On October 24th, the children celebrated United Nations Day with an international luncheon. Each child volunteered to prepare a dish and bring it to school to share. The children had a wonderful time sampling the different foods that were prepared, while at the same time gaining an appreciation of the variety of ingredients and tastes from around the world. There was much excitement as they created flag banners, continent posters, peace messages, and tablecloths. Many of these items are still hanging in the 3rd grade hallway.

In connection with this event, the children will begin to research different countries of the world. Each class will work with a different continent, and each child will be researching a different country in that continent. After the children collect their information, they will work in small groups to organize their research and plan a presentation for all of the 3rd grade classes.

Our hope is that our United Nations unit will increase an appreciation of cultural differences, peacemaking strategies, and conflict resolution skills in our students. In this way, they can see the value of how these ideals apply not only to countries and nations, but also to their everyday lives.



Featured in this photo from the left
*Abby Townend-Park, Sabrina Matheny,
Kei Demand.*

Second row from the left
*Nelly Chernikov, Olivia Laxton, Frances
Resweber, Sameen Oboudiyat*

Come have lunch with the Kids!

Lunchtime is a wonderful time at SRS, but it can be particularly challenging and sometimes daunting for the youngest students in our school community. For many children in first grade, the SRS cafeteria is their first school lunchroom experience. In an effort to help provide our youngest kids with a smooth transition between meals at home and those at school, the lunchroom staff and Home & School will be joining forces to create a parent volunteer lunch-buddy program. **Parent volunteers are being sought to come to SRS and have lunch with the kids during the first lunch period from 11:15 a.m. to 12 noon.** Parents are needed to sit at the tables with the kids and be available to help with such things as listening for instructions from lunchroom staff, loosening tight lids from food containers and reminding kids to sit safely in their chairs so they don't tip over. Ultimately, the goal is to support our youngest students by modeling and participating in appropriate lunchroom behavior and conversation.

You are invited to become a lunchtime volunteer, which will greatly enhance the lunchtime experience for the entire SRS community.

To volunteer, please complete the form below and return it to your child's classroom. A regular weekly or bi-weekly commitment is encouraged in order to provide consistency for the children. However, if your schedule does not permit you to make this kind of commitment, we will do our best to accommodate you.

For more information, contact Laura Maola at (610) 338-8166 or lauram62@comcast.net.

Lunch-buddy Volunteer Form

Your Name _____ Your Child(ren)'s Teacher _____
 Tele. _____ Email _____

When can you volunteer?

Every Week _____ Every Other Week _____ Other _____

And on what day(s)?

Monday _____ Tuesday _____ Wednesday _____
 Thursday _____ Friday _____ Other _____

Thank you for volunteering. You will be contacted by telephone to confirm the details.

NEWS FROM THE HEALTH OFFICE



Cover All Kids Health Care Program

Pennsylvania has become one of six states to offer health care access to all uninsured children. Under **Cover All Kids**, parents will be able to afford to insure their children because the monthly premiums will be based on family income. Currently, the Children's Health Insurance Program – known as CHIP – is free for children from families with annual incomes under \$40,000 and available at a reduced cost for children from families with incomes up to \$47,000.

Under **Cover All Kids**, 100% of the parents who currently cannot afford to insure their children will get assistance from the state to ensure that the cost of health insurance for their children is reasonable.

Under the new law, the approximate monthly cost for parents is based on a sliding scale. If parents can buy employer-sponsored coverage for their children but cannot afford the premium, the state will help the family to pay the premiums for private insurance, rather than enrolling the child in CHIP – if the cost of private coverage is lower.

Pennsylvania's CHIP program is one of the most successful children's health insurance programs in the nation. More information on the CHIP program can be found at www.chipcoverspakids.com or 1-800-986-kids.



At times it may be necessary for your child to use crutches in school. Adults may not realize that the use of crutches could be unsafe if used improperly and may also aggravate the existing injury. **If your child needs to use crutches in school, you must bring a doctor's note to the health office indicating that your child's injury was assessed by the doctor, that crutches are indicated and that the child has received proper instruction in their use.** This requirement will help us continue to provide the safest school environment possible. Your cooperation is appreciated.



The Rising Star

Published monthly

Deadlines: 20th of each month

Submit materials to:

Robin Boyer

Rdgenter@aol.com

**Swarthmore-Rutledge
School**

100 College Avenue
Swarthmore, PA 19081
610-544-5700

Attendance Line:
610-544-5702

Check out our Website!

<http://wssd.org/>

(click on SRS)

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*A proud member of Wallingford-
Swarthmore
School District*



Dates to Remember

**** There are still plenty of volunteer opportunities available. Log on to www.srskids.org and choose from the volunteer list!**

***12/6: "Everyday Mathematics"
Parents Meeting at WES - 7pm**

***12/25-29: Winter Break**

**THERE WILL BE NO H&S MEETING
THIS MONTH.**

Future Reporters Still Needed

Parents, encourage your child to interview a staff member of SRS for the Rising Star. They can do it alone or with a friend. Please send me an email (rdgenter@aol.com), call me (484-477-3905), or send me home a note via backpack express. Notes can be sent by Bryan Boyer (Ms. Benson's class).

