

December/January 2017 - 2018

PTO Grant Expands Science Studies with new Greenhouse



Summer grant and construction opens new learning opportunities at SCCST

This new garden classroom allows for numerous hands-on learning experiences for years to come. Much thanks to Mr. McMickle, (Head of Maintenance), for the hard work and dedication he put into assembling it with a beautiful tile floor and functional pneumatic vent window on the

roof.

Mrs. Blanchard, hydroponics connoisseur and former SCCST board director, provided the Science and STEM teachers intensive training to be greenhouse/ hydroponics instructors and mentors. SCCST was also fortunate to receive a donation of a gently used hydroponics table.

This past marking period, Greenhouse and Hydroponics Gardening were integrated with chemistry, making connections between nutrients and elements on the periodic table. The 7th grade students started their Butter lettuce seeds. Other students have visited the greenhouse to observe temperature differences inside and outside, and to take dimensional measurements to calculate area and volume. ELA and math teachers are also excited about the mini-field trips they can take there to encourage reflection, observation, and application of subject matter. Not only are lessons fun out-of-classroom experiences, students also learn about alternate means of food growth and life cycles, while recognizing what goes into providing food for a population. Who knows? We may someday become a farm-to-table school.

Bringing American History to Life

Social Studies teacher, Jaime Reader, makes learning about early American History fun by teaching her classes as Pocahontas. The founding of Jamestown is viewed through the eyes of the Native Indigenous Americans as well as the English settlers who crossed the vast Atlantic Ocean to find new opportunities.

Students are encouraged to imagine the impact of the new settlement on the people who already lived in the region, as well as how difficult it was to establish a new community in a “New World.” Ms. Reader’s methods combine the core knowledge requirements of this period in history with a deeper understanding and exercise in critical thinking, leveraging fun activities all along the way.



First SCCST Appalachian Trail Hike



Launching his **6th Grade Appalachian Trail PE Challenge**, Mr. Nick Fialcowitz hosted a hike on a small section of the Appalachian Trail from the beginning of Sunrise Mountain up to the Culver Fire Tower in Branchville, NJ. A total of 3.5 miles round trip, this was the first of many hikes Mr. Fialcowitz will be leading over the course of the school year. Even though there was a small turnout of participants on this very windy day, it was a great experience for all. The student hikers did some small bouldering, tree climbing, and cliff standing

with great views of Culver's Lake, Stokes State Forest, and the High Point Monument.

They saw a sign to be aware of the poisonous snakes that could be found in the area and there was a bear scat sighting. They even met a through-hiker that had been walking south on the A.T. for 67 total days. He started his hike in Maine and was walking south, camping out all along the trail.

In addition to learning about the health benefits of hiking, Mr. Fialcowitz taught the students and parents how to parachute out of trees, care for themselves in cold, windy weather, and increase observation skills and awareness of their surroundings. In all, the students and parents thought it was a great hike and everyone is looking forward to the next hike that will be in the middle of January.



8th Grade Young Writers Program



For the past month, our 8th graders have been participating in NaNoWriMo's Young Writers Program in their writing classes. NaNoWriMo stands for National Novel Writing Month. This project asks students to set a word count goal and draft a short novel. Students focus on story elements such as setting, characters, plot, and sensory details.

Our 8th graders have written a collective 306,034 words, or 1,200 pages, over the past month! They are proud of their accomplishment and we are impressed by their dedication to this project. The students will be finishing their novels, and revising and editing over the next month.



SCCST 20th Anniversary Assembly Honored by Guests and a Grant



Guests included (from left to right) Noreen Lazariuk, Dr. Mark Edgerton, Lesa McGuinness, Jaqueline Espinoza, Dr. Michael Schwartz, Sparta Councilman Gerry Murphy, Charlie Teufert, Rosalie Lamaonte, Michelle Syre, and Dr. Edwin Selby.

On Wednesday, November 22nd, the students and staff held an assembly to recognize the 20th Anniversary of Sussex County Charter School for Technology, the only public charter school in the county. Guest speakers from the Board of Trustees and State commended the incredible achievements of the school and its growth over the decades.

A representative from First Energy (JCP&L) also awarded a **\$1,000 grant** to the school in a State-wide competition designed to teach energy conservation. The event was also featured in the November 23rd issue of *New Jersey Herald*.

Message from
the Board
President, Dr.
Edwin Selby



Last week I had the privilege of attending the celebration of the Sussex County Charter School for Technology's 20th anniversary. Looking back on those 20 years, we see a continuous record of student success, growth, and impact on the lives of young people who have moved on from our school, and the adults who have worked with them. Twenty years ago, charter schools were looked on as an experiment here in New Jersey. The idea that charter schools could be a place where new ideas could be explored with fewer

administrative regulations to slow them down, was not new in 1997. It had been suggested in the 1950s, and was embraced in 1988 by Al Shanker who was President of the American Federation of Teachers at the time. Charter school started to open in states around the country with mixed results. By the mid 1990s, New Jersey had seen what worked in other states and what failed. It was time for the experiment to come to our state.

When we opened, renting rooms at Sussex Tech and working in close collaboration with the staff there, we were only one of a small group of approved charter schools in the state, and the only one in Sussex County. While the number of charter schools has grown around the state.

We remain the only one in Sussex County.

We are also the only middle school in the county with an emphasis on technology.

In this regard, we have blazed trails for other schools to follow. The Board of Trustees made the decision to ensure that an electronic tablet was available to each student to use individually. Our communications with students, staff and parents is computer based. We have set aside funds to train our teachers in, and based an instruction approach on, the latest educational research and theory. Most importantly, we remain a school where each student is recognized as an individual. We believe that each child has a unique potential, and that our job is to help each child reach that potential.

When I say we, I mean all of the adults involved with the school. The Board, the administration, and most importantly

the staff. Looking forward to the next twenty years, the Board membership will change, the administration will change, and there will be changes in the staff. What will remain the same is that the teaching staff will continue to be the foundation of the school's progress. We have been blessed with an outstanding staff. It is they, our teachers, who will be the driving force for the success that we will celebrate in 2037.

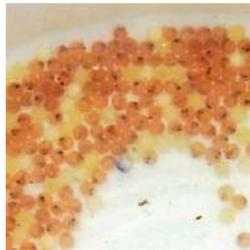
KEY DATES

December 22	½ day of school
December 25 - 29	Winter Recess
January 1, 2018	No School
January 2, 2018	School resumes

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Raising Trout in the Classroom

Trout in the Classroom (TIC) is a science-based program that teaches children about the importance of coldwater conservation through a hands-on approach to learning. Through the process of raising trout from eggs provided by the [Pequest Trout Hatchery](#) to fingerling size for release, students learn about the importance of clean, cold water, not only for the trout they are raising, but also for the other organisms, including people.



Mrs. Jennifer Duncan reintroduced TIC to SCCST and students from all grades have



enthusiastically participated in raising Brook Trout, the official State Fish. The TIC program is cross-curricular and

encompasses many subject areas such as science, math, art, language arts, reading, technology, and more. Future career paths are also introduced including Biologist, Ichthyologist, Limnologist, Aquaculturist, Environmental Scientist, and careers in medicine.

Typically, only 5% of the trout eggs in the TIC program will make it to the wild release stage. The SCCST program currently has a 28% survival rate with inch sized trout swimming happily in the tank.

Mrs. Duncan attributes this level of success to the students' participation in water quality monitoring, temperature monitoring, water changes, and filter maintenance. Everyone is looking forward to a Spring release by the NJ Department of Fish and Wildlife.



8th Grade Discovers Anatomy of Fish



Students at SCCST successfully dissected perch specimens, completing a compare/contrast evaluation of organ systems with an emphasis on the circulatory system; the heart and blood vessels. Divided into small groups, they identified, evaluated, and create diagrams of both external and internal anatomy of carefully preserved perch, learning

some basic surgical skills along the way.

Mrs. Duncan, Science Teacher, led the students through several key stages in studying anatomy, starting with identification of instruments and safe operative procedures. Classmates were given the option to “be the surgeon” or the “physician assistant,” (two major career paths). Careful dissection and organ identification was coupled with organ functions and comparisons to human organs.

Additional focus was given to the differences between how fish breathe via their gills and a 2-chambered heart and how humans breathe via lungs and a 4-chambered heart.



Happy Holidays to all and have wonderful New Year

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