

E•Connect

A newsletter for Saint Paul Public School Staff



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Congratulations

October 24, 2008 - Volume III, Issue III

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and find its contents useful. Please [click here](#) to provide feedback. For a printer-friendly version of this E-Connect and archived versions of past issues, [click here](#).

New district Web site to be launched Oct. 31

Using feedback from surveys and focus groups conducted last spring, the Office of Community Relations (OCR) and the Educational Technology Department have created a new district Web site. We hope you'll find it more user-friendly, better-organized and improved in overall functionality. The main district Web site (www.spps.org) will be switched to the new design on October 31.



RESOURCES Community Resources Parent Resources Staff Resources Student Resources SUBJECTS	 SPPS teacher awarded \$25,000 Tracey Cross, math instructional coach at Galtier, recently honored with a Milken Educator Award.	 SPPS and MN Wild partner to recognize reading success Hayden Heights Elementary awarded traveling trophy for growth in test scores.
	FEATURE STORIES	DISTRICT NEWS RELEASES

Updated page templates also were created for all Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) program and department sites. Throughout November and December all department and program Web sites will be changed to a new template. The new templates continue to utilize Urban Planet, the creator/developer of the school district web Content Management System.

We expect the switch to the new template to be quick and seamless. Department and program webmasters will be

[CALENDAR](#)

October

**24 - Kdgn/Elem Conference Prep
Day Secondary schools in
session**

28 - Committee of the Board

November

6 - End of first quarter (46) days

**7- Secondary
Professional Development
Kdgn/Elem Parent-
Teacher Conference Day**

offered a training session about using the new templates. These sessions will be jointly facilitated by Educational Technology and the OCR . Watch for training session details in next weeks Superintendent's bulletin. Please email questions and comments to: community.relations@spps.org

Superintendent to deliver State of the District Address Nov. 6

Where we have been, where we are today and where are going - this is the focus of Superintendent Meria Carstarphen's annual State of the District address, Nov. 6. The superintendent will deliver the address at A+ Arts at Monroe before an audience of community members and staff. The event is open to the public.

The State of the District, initiated by Carstarphen last year, highlights accomplishments of the Strategic Plan for Continued Excellence and sets the direction for the district over the coming year. In addition, the superintendent will have news about the future of the district and the shared community responsibility for education.

This year's State of the District Community Event is sponsored by the Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation.

- What: Saint Paul Public Schools State of the District 2008 Community Event
- When: Thursday, Nov. 6
- Where: Auditorium at A+ Arts at Monroe, 810 Palace Ave., St. Paul; Note: Only street parking is available, please plan accordingly.
- Time: 6:30 p.m.: Reception and student entertainment; 7 p.m.: State of the District address

An abbreviated version of the address will be broadcast on cable channel 16 beginning the evening of Nov. 6 and will be available online at that time at www.spps.org.

Conversation about the future: Large-scale system change meetings scheduled

Last September SPPS administration presented to the Board of Education carefully prepared data about the past, present and possible future of our school district. This was in response to the academic, financial and operational challenges and trends SPPS has been facing for many years and that are predicted to become more challenging.

To gather input about the future of our district, a series of regional community engagement meetings have been scheduled. Interested staff, parents and community members are encouraged to attend. All community meeting times are from 5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m., (a light dinner will be provided) on the following dates:

November 10; Neighborhood House
November 13; Jimmy Lee Rec Center
November 17; Como Park High School
December 3; Phalen Lake Elementary School
December 4; Gloria Dei Church

These meetings will provide an opportunity for staff and community to understand why we are making the case for change, to help us identify needs and issues as we gather more information, and to determine how they would like to be involved in our change process as we move forward. Input gathered at these meetings will be shared with the SPPS Board of Education and district administration. Contact the [Office of Community Relations](#) at (651) 767-8110 for more information. [Click here](#) for more information about comprehensive large-scale system changes.

SPPS math teacher named 2008 Milken Educator Award winner



The secret to effective teaching shouldn't be a secret, according to 2008 Milken Educator Award winner Tracey Cross, a fifth grade math teacher at Galtier Science, Mathematics and Technology Magnet Elementary School. Moments after receiving word that she was one of only about 80 educators nationally to be honored this year, she summed up her success. "I do what I love to do and what I have a passion for doing, which is building relationships with kids," Cross said.

(Pictured from left, SPPS Chief of School Nancy Stachel, Minnesota First Lady Mary Pawlenty, Tracey Cross, 2008 Milken Educator and Galtier Magnet teacher, and football legend Rosey Grier).

Cross, a math instructional coach who has been a teacher in Saint Paul Public Schools since 2002, was told of the award at an assembly in her school's gymnasium. She was recognized for her ability to bring math alive and for her contributions to the math curriculum throughout the District.

Milken Educator Award winners are selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidence by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school;
- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession;
- Strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

Galtier Principal Adrain Pendelton said that Cross exemplified the quality educators that work at her school. "She has a way of helping the students take what they learn in the classroom to the outside world and making it relevant," Pendelton said.

With the recognition, Cross became the fourth SPPS teacher in a decade to be named a Milken Educator Award winner. Past winners include:

1998: Sheilah Smith, Frost Lake Magnet School of Technology and Global Studies

2001: Lynn Bartol, Chelsea Heights Elementary School

2006: Isis Buchanan, Crossroads Elementary

For more information about the award, go to www.mff.org.

Saint Paul Public Schools and Minnesota Wild partner to recognize reading success



The Minnesota WILD and Saint Paul Public Schools are partnering to help emphasize the importance of reading. The Wild's "Wild about Reading" program along with the district's power action item to have all students reading at or above grade level by third grade, make perfect partners. The WILD have donated their dinosaur "Stanley" to become a traveling trophy given each fall to an elementary school in SPPS that has achieved the highest percentage of growth on the MCA-II reading tests. This year, Hayden Heights Elementary School achieved a 15 per cent growth rate.

On Oct. 15, a short ceremony for students to celebrate their success in reading and the arrival of Stanley was held at the school. Principal, Kris Peterson introduced speakers including SPPS Chief Academic Officer Nancy Stachel and WILD Director of Community Partnerships Brad Bombardir. Also making an appearance was "Nordy" the new WILD mascot. Each student at the school was sporting a Stanley button that they made.

SPPS takes Read for the Record district-wide

For the first time, SPPS is taking the national Read for the Record campaign district-wide. On Oct. 2, Superintendent Meria Carstarphen and Minnesota Department of Education Commissioner Alice Seagren joined hundreds of thousands of children and adults across the country in reading *Corduroy* as they worked to increase awareness about the importance of reading to children.

"Like one of our key goals in our Strategic Plan for Continued Excellence, this event helps to illuminate the importance of reading to our children and teaching them good reading habits," Carstarphen said. "If our children don't get a good start at literacy, they are fighting an uphill battle when it comes to educational success."

A key focus for SPPS is to have all children reading at or above proficiency levels by the time they finish third-grade. As part of this year's campaign, all SPPS pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers were given the children's book *Corduroy* to read to their students. In past years, several schools have taken part in the campaign, but this year all SPPS elementary schools participated.

The national event is organized in part by Jumpstart, a national non-profit organization that engages preschool children from low-income communities in an intensive early education program and the Pearson Foundation.

Open Enrollment Deadline is Oct. 31

Open Enrollment for Saint Paul Public Schools employees selecting benefits plans ends Friday, Oct. 31. Employees should have received their enrollment packets in the mail last week and have five more opportunities to get questions answered at Open Enrollment meetings, all being held at the District Administration building, 360 Colborne St.:

Friday, Oct. 24: 9 a.m. to noon

Monday, Oct. 27: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 29: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 30: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 31: noon to 4 p.m.

Employees who may not have received a packet in the mail can call Human Resources at (651) 767-8200.

Scholarships from St. Paul Retired Teachers, Inc. available in November

Once again, The Saint Paul Retired Teachers, Inc. is pleased to offer scholarships for tenured licensed staff members. This year a limited number of scholarships will be available in the amount of \$2,000 each. The retired teachers' group offers these scholarships in support of current staff members who are enrolled in graduate programs. An application, along with enrollment information will be available in an upcoming edition of E-Connect. Watch for more details in November.

Balancing the demands of work and family: New Life Balance Digest available

Life Balance Digest is an award-winning quick-to-read electronic newsletter with informative articles for SPPS employees. Published by the Working Family Resource Center, it contains information on personal, family, and consumer issues. It is based on the philosophy that the quality of both personal and work experiences is enhanced when employees have access to the most up-to-date information.

Subjects in November's issue include, creating vital friendships at work, tips for safe food handling and information about immunizations. November's issue, as well as other issues published this school year, are available here:

<http://www.workingfamilyresourcecenter.org/wfrc/en/SPPSLBD.asp>

District co-sponsors sessions on diversity leadership

SPPS is a co-sponsor of several upcoming events featuring Victor Lee Lewis Nov. 13 - 16, in Saint Paul. Two of the events are free lectures and one is a fee based (\$40) 2 day workshop on Diversity Leadership.

Lewis is an internationally recognized leader in the field of anti-oppression diversity work and alliance building. As an educator, trainer and activist, Lewis has conducted keynote speeches, seminars, and "train the trainer" programs throughout the U.S. and abroad. He has more than twenty years experience in the field. He is perhaps best known for his inspiring and catalytic leadership role in the award winning race relations documentary, "The Color of Fear."

[Click here](#) for locations and more information.

Congratulations to:

Jeanne Sedgwick, school nurse at Bridge View in St. Paul, who has been named Minnesota School Nurse of the Year by the School Nurse Organization of Minnesota. As part of the honor, she will receive a \$4,000 scholarship for leadership classes at Harvard University from the university's foundation.

Ethan Cherin, Central High School teacher, who received the Minnesota Council on Economic Education Economic Educator Award for his sustained commitment and contributions to economic education.

Send us more!

[Please click here](#) if you want to recognize an outstanding staff member or program in the next edition of E-Connect.

Morning Edition: news you can use

Each weekday, the Office of Community Relations sends out news clippings electronically to any staff person who subscribes. It includes electronic links to news articles about our school district as well as other local, state and national education stories. To subscribe, send an e-mail to community.relations@spps.org with "subscribe" in the subject line. (If you are currently a subscriber, you do not need to re-subscribe.) [Click here](#) to view Morning Edition archives.

E-Connect is a service of the Saint Paul Public Schools [Office of Community Relations](#), 360 Colborne St., Saint Paul, MN 55102. Please send story ideas, questions or comments to [Jerry Skelly](#), Editor - (651) 632-6014.

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