



December 1, 2018 ● District Newsletter

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Important Dates

(see also school websites)

- 12/3 - School Committee Meeting
- 12/6 - SHS & GMS Professional Development, K-5 Parent/Teacher Conferences
- 12/17 - School Committee Meeting
- 12/24 - 1/1 Holiday Recess

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District Twitter feed

Judy Paolucci's Twitter feed

Find us on

Happy Holidays

December is a special time of year for anyone working with children. From the All Lit Up Parade all the way to the holiday break, special events and a focus on giving bring joy to children and adults alike. We wish you the happiest of times this holiday season and a new year that brings health and prosperity.



~Judy Paolucci

Elementary Reconfiguration Project Moves Forward

On November 6th, Smithfield voters approved a bond for renovating elementary schools in the district. During the first phase of the project, McCabe Elementary School will be expanded to accommodate Winsor students. This phase must be complete before the start of the 2021-2022 school year in order to meet the conditions of the fire code variance. As such, steps will be taken immediately to secure an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) who will serve to provide the district with independent advice on project scope and design, scheduling, and contracts, keeping the interests of the district and the town's taxpayers at the forefront. Like Massachusetts, Rhode Island now requires school building construction projects to have a qualified OPM. The employment of an OPM has been found to save both time and money.

The first job of the OPM will be to help secure an architect for detailed design of school renovations and additions. Studio JAED served as the architect for the preliminary designs, which were used to estimate costs but which did not provide the level of detail necessary for construction.

The work of the OPM will be at the direction of a building committee consisting of Superintendent Judy Paolucci; Assistant Superintendent Sara Monaco; one School Committee Member; Angelo Mencucci, Facilities Director; Kevin Cleary, Town Engineer; Cathy Pleau, McCabe Principal; Brian Ackerman, Winsor Principal; Jim Cambio, Building Inspector; Randy Rossi, Town Administrator; and Michael Iannotti, a member of the Finance Review Commission.



District Policies

School Committee policies are found here: <https://policies.smithfield-ps.org/>.

These policies were introduced recently:

Expense Reimbursements - explains process for expense reimbursements

Community Resource Persons/Speakers

- communicates the process for approval for speakers

Fiscal Management Goals -

communicates to the public the committee's interests for budgeting

Annual Budget - explains the process for budget development

Annual Budget Deadlines & Schedule - provides the timeline for budget development

Annual Report - lists the components of, purpose, and timing of the district's annual report

Smithfield School Committee

Smithfield voters chose incumbents Rosemarie Cipriano and Jean Harnois, as well as Richard Iannitelli to join Cheryl Hirst-Hodgins and Kellie-Ann Heenan to serve on the Smithfield School Committee. Richard Iannitelli previously served on the Smithfield School Committee from 2009 to 2013. Jessica Lawton, a Smithfield High School senior, also joined the committee as student liaison.

The swearing in ceremony for both the Town Council and the School Committee was held at the Senior Center on November 27th. Officers will be chosen at the next regularly scheduled meeting on December 3rd.

'Tis the Season.... For Music!

The poise and confidence of students are strengthened through music performances performed for a variety of audiences. Winter concerts are scheduled throughout the month of December and are great events to bring extended families. The schedule below includes both public and private student performances.



December 1 - (public) SHS chorus and band perform at the town's All Lit Up parade, 4pm

December 3 - (public) SHS chorus performs for the School Comm.

December 4 - (private) McCabe 4th grade students perform for the residents at Cortland Place Assisted Living facilities.

December 7 - (private) SHS chorus and band perform for local nursing homes

December 10 - (private) LaPerche 4th grade students perform for the residents of Brookdale Assisted Living facilities.

December 10 - (public) GMS chorus' winter concert at SHS, 7pm

December 11 and 13 - (private) SHS chorus and band perform for elementary students

December 12 - (private) SHS chorus and band perform for Rotary

December 12 - (public) SHS winter concert featuring SHS chorus and band performances at 7pm

December 18 - (public) McCabe students perform in Sing-Along concerts for family and friends. Gr K-2 9:45am; Gr 3-5 1:45pm

December 19 - (field trip) McCabe and LaPerche 4th grade students perform at the Rhode Island State House at 10:30 a.m.

December 20 - (public) GMS band performs at SHS at 7pm

December 21 - (private) LaPerche students share holiday songs at a school-wide town meeting at 9:30 a.m. at LaPerche.



Smithfield YMCA Partnership

The Smithfield YMCA partners with the school district in a variety of ways. The before and after program is one way this partnership offers more to families than the school district could do on its own.



The Y is now offering a \$8/month youth membership (currently memberships are \$15/month for youth) to all students in the middle and high school students that show a valid student ID or other evidence of school affiliation.

Both the middle school and high school are in walking distance to the Y and it is beneficial to engage those age groups in exercise through utilizing the fitness center, taking wellness classes and/or just free swim time with friends.

Paper Store Fundraisers

The Paper Store offers a 10% teacher discount as well as shopping fundraisers - Shop and Share the Love Events - to groups. To find out more, email: event@thepaperstore.com



Super Scoop blog post for November is titled, "Writing - A Key to Academic Success." To access this blog, go to: www.judypaolucci.edublogs.org

State Aid for Education

Last year, the district questioned the large increase in state aid to Smithfield. The additional funds brought both joy and fear.... Joy because a budget could be devised with no tax impact and fear because the swing could go the other way in years to come. It's never advisable to approach a budget with only one year in mind.

The increase was questioned at the time and we were informed that the state share ratio was reviewed and, due to the tax base in Smithfield, it was adjusted but not to expect further adjustments in the state share ratio in the next few years. Since our enrollment was the same this year as last year, the district assumed our state aid would be as well.

Overall, the formula is fairly simple. A foundation budget is determined then a state share ratio is applied to determine the amount of that foundation budget that will be the state contribution. The state share ratio is assessed based on the town's ability to pay --- its tax base.

The state share ratio for Smithfield was 32.8% in FY18 then jumped up to 41.5% for FY19 then jumped back down to 30.1 for FY20. This is befuddling, since the tax base simply doesn't change all that much from year to year.

As a result of these swings, the state aid to Smithfield has changed dramatically. For FY20, the state has reported a preliminary figure that is over \$1.5 less than the FY19 aid (over 20% decrease). Even if the FY20 general operating budget were to remain flat (0% increase), a 4.8% increase in the town appropriation would be necessary.

Granted, last year, due to the large state aid increase, the town's appropriation to the schools did not increase over FY18 values. But taxpayers should not be winners in one year and losers in the next. Stability is valued. Also, with large swings like this, districts cannot, as good fiscal managers for the town, plan ahead.

We are reaching out to the RIDE finance office and legislators to help them to understand the challenge districts face when year-to-year state aid varies so widely. Rhode Island needs legislation that limits these large variations.



New District Website and App

Over the past 6 months, SPS staff have worked with Apptegy, a digital communications company, to move content from the current district website to a new, ADA-compliant and mobile-friendly website.

Apptegy tools bring everything school leaders need for school marketing and communications together into a single mobile app, allowing administrators to write a story once and send it across a website, mobile app, Facebook, Twitter, text messages, and voice calls. By making it easy to share stories, districts can better communicate with constituents throughout the community.

With any new tool, it will take some time to ensure that everything stakeholders need can be found readily.

To download the district app, search for “smithfield ri” (no quotes necessary), download the app, then use the settings to turn on notifications for the district as well as for the specific school desired.

From the app, chose live feed for Facebook-like notices, news for longer stories, events for a calendar of upcoming events, directory for a list of staff and their contact information,

documents for pdf documents found on the website, and athletic schedules for a listing of games and practices.



SMITHFIELD
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Safe Havens International Chosen for Safety Audits

A competitive RFP process yielded proposals from six national school safety companies to conduct school safety audits for Smithfield. The successful bidder, Safe Havens International, is a renowned safety organization that helps school systems improve crisis preparedness and school safety, identifying opportunities for improvement.

In addition to assessing the security of the school facilities, these safety experts assess perimeter access control, visitor screening procedures, alarm and camera systems, interior access control, student supervision, school climate, bullying abatement strategies, crime prevention, written procedures, training, and emotional security measures.

As opposed to companies that aim to sell products to clients, Safe Havens focuses on no-cost and low-cost ways to improve safety, security and emergency preparedness while helping schools provide more pleasant and effective learning environments.

Safe Havens will begin to assess Smithfield’s written plans in the upcoming months and will have site visits to each of our schools in March. The written report will be available in May. The District Emergency Operations team will use the report to establish goals for improving school safety and inform future renovations at all our schools.

The school safety audits are being paid through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice.



The week of November 26th was “Share your Favorites” week. The Chronicles of Narnia by C. S. Lewis were 7 of my favorite books as a child. What were yours? Share your favorites and encourage reading. Consider buying books as presents this holiday season.



RICAS Data Released

On November 29th, the RI Department of Education released the results the RI Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS), administered to students in grades 3 through 8 in April. RICAS replaces PARCC and measures the same skills and standards. Students, however, are expected to perform at higher levels to achieve proficiency, resulting in a significant decrease in the percentage of students meeting and exceeding expectations throughout the state. Below are the results of the PARCC '17 and RICAS '18 assessments for Smithfield and the state.

District and (State) Percentages of Students Meeting and Exceeding Expectations

	PARCC 2017	RICAS 2018
ELA	54(39)	52(33)
Math	45(32)	30(27)

Student growth percentiles (SGPs) were calculated to better communicate student progress. SGPs describe a student's growth compared to her "academic peers," students in the same grade level who scored similarly on PARCC. For example, an SGP of 45 tells us that a student scored higher than 45 percent of her peers on RICAS. The table at right depicts the percentage of Smithfield students in each growth range.

Student Growth: Grades 4-8*

	Low (<35 SGP)	Typical (35-69 SGP)	High (>69 SGP)
ELA	27%	35.5%	37.5%
Math	22.5%	34.8%	42.7%

*Students in grade 3 do not have growth percentiles; they did not take a state assessment in 2017.

The focus for instructional improvements this year is expected to result in a higher percentage of students meeting and exceeding expectations on the next RICAS assessment. Teachers have participated in several days of professional development using the Collins Writing approach. In addition, the district instituted common writing assessments, which allow teachers to gauge their students' progress and determine focus areas for instruction.

Individual student score reports will be sent home during the month of December. Parents should focus on growth in addition to achievement in order to get a full picture of their child's progress.

High-Quality Instructional Materials

Teachers and instructional materials are the two biggest predictors of student success. For this reason, Smithfield is in the process of reviewing and updating instructional materials to ensure high quality. To be considered for adoption, instructional materials must align to standards, ensure adequate depth, be rigorous, support best practices in instruction, and promote student engagement.

This year, teams are exploring secondary mathematics programs. For elementary English Language Arts, teachers are piloting an informational unit of study from the American Reading Company that is aligned with topics in our science curriculum. Each unit contains books at a wide range of reading levels. Over a 10 week period, instruction engages students in research-based reading and writing, culminating in an authentic, final project, such as a book. Pilot teachers will meet in early December to determine next steps.



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Art work will be on display Thursday evening through Friday. A reception for the artists will be held 4:30-6:30 with a performance by the GMS

LaPerche Elementary School Results Impressive

Upon first glance of Smithfield's RICAS assessment data, one quickly notes the exceptional results of LaPerche students in both mathematics and English Language Arts. Investigating why the school did so well is an enjoyable puzzle to solve.

While more analysis of the data is necessary to learn from these results, we know that LaPerche educators have put significant efforts into teaching students how to "show what they know," focusing teaching on a specific structure (a "recipe") to respond to certain types of questions, such as essays about point of view or theme. Students learned how to respond to constructed response questions by supporting their ideas and citing evidence. Also, second grade teachers provide opportunities for students to keyboard, increasing fluency for writing with the computer.

Teachers also review released items and students used an online tool to feel comfortable with the test structure and to build stamina.

LaPerche students spent a significant amount of time on the test; no one rushed. They were encouraged to take their time, review their work and put forth their best effort - not just on that test - but on everything.

At all our schools, attending to the needs of the whole child is most important. Student leadership, physical activity, the arts, and character are areas of focus that are not set aside in order to concentrate solely on test scores. We also, however, want our students to be strong readers, writers, and math problem-solvers and these assessments measure these important skills.





Federal Lawsuit Filed Against RI

A federal lawsuit was recently filed against the state that links student access to a quality education and participation in our civic society. The suit accuses the state of failing to provide students with the skills they need to participate in a democracy. [The Atlantic published a preview](#) of the suit and an [article was published in the NY Times](#).

Unlike many nations, the US does not include education as a foundational right. Such an omission has been cited as a root cause of the variance in both funding and qualify throughout our nation's K-12 educational institutions. Regarding the RI suit, the lack of civics education is specifically cited.

Although prior suits that focused on this topic have failed to make the argument that there is an "implied" right to an education in the Constitution, the current plaintiffs hope to argue that in denying citizens a quality education, these citizens are unable to exercise constitutional rights, including voting.

There are 14 plaintiffs named in the lawsuit, Cook v. Raimondo. These students and parents claim that their education is so inferior that the state is failing to fulfill its obligations. Although this suit does not directly affect Smithfield, implications may be felt throughout the state if the results find that RI is failing to provide all students equal access to a quality education.

Data Days

Elementary teachers have just completed a first round of data days. At the end of each trimester, grade-level teams meet to examine the results of assessments such as STAR Reading, STAR Math, Fountas and Pinnell Reading Assessment, and early literacy/numeracy measures; discuss the overall progress of the grade level and make needs-based changes to instruction for both individual students and the class as a whole. For example, if a student is closing a skills gap in reading, the student may transfer from an intensive intervention that meets 5 days per week to a targeted intervention that only meets 3 days per week. Changes are communicated to parents following the data meetings.

Smithfield High School

School Showcase

December 5, 2018
6:00 - 8:00 pm

Career & Technical Programs

Engineering Technology

Teacher Preparation

Academy of Finance

Information Technology (Cybersecurity)

Construction Management

Law & Public Safety

Computer Science

A Tradition of Innovation

www.shsri.org

90 Pleasant View Ave. Smithfield, RI 02917

#SHSLegacy



This Month's Spotlight: Old County Road School

At Left: Teachers and staff take pride in working together to support our students. Teachers and staff have participated in Responsive Classroom training to improve the culture in our school. The core beliefs of Responsive Classroom are Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-control, which are addressed every morning during School Meeting.

Below: students are also learning to support each other. 5th graders helped our kindergarteners learn the end of the day routine and escorted the K students to their buses during September.



At Left: For Thanksgiving, students from each classroom volunteered to share what they are thankful for at the morning School Meeting. We are so proud of these students for sharing and for the 5th graders for helping the Kindergarten students share.



Below Right: 4th graders partnered with 1st graders to share songs and activities. The 4th graders are excited to serve as role models for their 1st grade partners and 1st graders love working with their "buddies." Why do 1st graders like working with 4th graders? "Because we do cool stuff!" "Because they are older than us and can teach us things." "Because they like us!" "Because they are our friends."

