

YOUR SCHOOLS

2011

Aurora City School District

From the Superintendent

By RUSS BENNETT
Superintendent of Schools

Without hesitation, I believe that this is going to be an exceptional year for the Aurora Schools. We have lots to do, but luckily we have the support of parents and our staff/administration to see to it that our students are ready and successful. While we have many tasks at hand, including continuing our "Race To The Top" initiative, maintaining our "Excellent with Distinction" recognition by the state, and continuing our effort to find new ways to increase efficiency in the wake of our current economic downturn, I am more than confident that we will rise to the occasion.

Our district has many wonderful tools available that are needed to help ensure our students achieve great success, some of which include numerous volunteers, community support, parental involvement, experienced staff, and support groups (Sports Boosters, Greenmen Pride, Aurora Schools Foundation, etc.). I cannot say enough how much this support is appreciated and how important it has been to the success of our students.

We have already achieved many milestones this year. We were again rated "Excellent with Distinction" by the Ohio Department of Education, which means we have earned the "Excellent" designation for the past 11 years. Our district's Performance Index Score of 108.9 is our highest ever and puts

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AURORA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT RENEWAL LEVY ON NOVEMBER 8, 2011 BALLOT

The Aurora City School District has placed a renewal levy of 7.33 mills on the ballot for the upcoming Tuesday, November 8, 2011 election. This renewal levy ***DOES NOT*** increase taxes for Aurora community members and is a renewal of the levy that was first passed in 1992. The renewal collection rate of 7.33 mills, approximately 4.36 million dollars, makes up over 20% of the Aurora City Schools' daily operating budget.

A renewal of this levy will allow the district to continue to collect the

same level of tax dollars that was originally passed in 1992, maintaining the current level of day-to-day operations. These funds are used to pay for day-to-day operational expenses incurred by the district. Some of these expenses include curriculum, transportation, and utility expenses. Passage of this levy will allow the district to function at its current level with **NO ADDITIONAL COST** to taxpayers.



Issue #14

Aurora City Schools' Reach Many Milestones

The Aurora City School District has recently achieved many milestones. Some of these achievements have been made on a district-wide level, while others have been accomplished at individual school buildings. We are eager to share details of these accolades.

The Aurora City School District was recently recognized by KnowledgeWorks Foundation, a subsidiary of Ohio Education Matters,

as an exemplary district in efficiency at spending non-teaching dollars "We are proud that we have been acknowledged for our efficiency. Being efficient in all areas is something that we strive to achieve here on a daily basis," said Russ Bennett, superintendent, Aurora City Schools. "We are constantly looking for new ways to maximize efficiency and cut costs," Bennett added.

In an attempt to further cut costs,

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MEET THE NEW AHS ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

MIKE ROBERTO ~ Principal, Aurora High School

After eight years as a biology and chemistry teacher and three years as assistant principal here at Aurora High School, Mike Roberto has taken over as principal. He replaces former Principal Pat Ciccantelli, the current Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. He has lived in Aurora since 1999 and, after a brief one-year tenure as assistant principal at Ravenna, returned to Aurora High School as assistant principal. He brings a culmination of 19 years of experience with him, 15 years in the classroom and four here in administration.

Roberto said, "I am very excited to have this opportunity to be the principal at Aurora High School this year." He explained that his new role has changed from assistant principal in "the idea of instructional leader. I think that really is amped up much more in this role as principal. Things like curriculum instruction are an important piece I'll be working with, trying to help teachers have that opportunity to collaborate. Focus on student learning, not just on the scores...but the outcome piece. That is, we want our students to be able to walk out of the building with strong study habits. Being ready for that next level. We've talked about 21st Century skills in the past and the idea of nursing cooperation, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking, all of those skills that will allow them to be successful at the next level. We've heard



Mike Roberto and Brian Brookhart

all kinds of stories of our students coming back being successful, so my role is to continue that."

"The other piece," Roberto explained, "that we really want to focus on this year is the idea that the rigor is very, very important, but also involvement. One of the things we are trying to do more is get more students involved. We are trying to advertise and emphasize our clubs and getting involved that way. We have a lot of successful sports programs to be involved with and we are creating a new group a, student reference group, called the Senior Senate. This will be a group that will be advocates for the students and Brian and I will work with those students on a monthly basis. They will be students elected from their government classes so there will be one representative from each government class, so about 12 seniors," he added.

As a new principal, Roberto's advice to freshmen students is to "be involved, to challenge yourself, and make your focus here at school because when you are involved, you are more invested, and when you are more invested, typically you are going to be happier and more successful."

The Aurora School District is very fortunate to have Mike Roberto at the helm of Aurora High School.

BRIAN BROOKHART ~ Assistant Principal, Aurora High School

Aurora High School graduate Brian Brookhart has returned to Aurora High School (AHS), this time in his new position as assistant principal. He has strong ties to the Aurora community. He grew up living in Aurora since he was three years old. His parents, Barb and Gary, were both band directors in the Aurora school system. He is a 1998 AHS graduate.

His background includes an undergraduate degree in music education from Bowling Green State University. He was a middle/high school band director in the Mayfield, Ohio school district for seven years. He earned a Master's degree in education administration from Ursuline College and was an administration intern at Berea High School. He currently lives in Painesville Township with his wife, a music teacher at Riverside and his three year old daughter, Avery.

He said, "When I had the opportunity to come back here, I couldn't pass it up. Aurora's what made me who I am and I want to give a lot back to this district."

As far as his interview process, Brookhart explained, "It was very thorough. For a school of Aurora's caliber, I wouldn't have expected anything less. What I really liked about it was ... the inclusion of all of the very important stakeholders. The fact that there were teachers and other staff members included. There were

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YOUR SCHOOLS

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Your Schools is a publication of the Aurora City School District. Its purpose is to keep residents of Aurora informed of current events and progress in the Aurora City Schools and to foster pride and a continuous communication link between the schools and the community.

Your Schools has been awarded the "Mark of Excellence" and "Best of the Best" Awards by the Ohio Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association for service as a school district newsletter. *Your Schools* is a quarterly publication, mailed to all residents of Aurora. For information, comments, or story ideas, e-mail Editor Stacey DeAnna at: yourschools@aurora-schools.org.

REMINDERS

Parent Communication Forum (PCF) Meetings Held Monthly



Parents and community members are welcome and encouraged to attend the Parent Communication Forum (PCF) meetings that are held monthly. These meetings are held at each school building and address the activities and issues that are specific to that building. They are a valuable resource for learning up-to-date information with different, timely topics each month. Please check the website at aurora-schools.org for monthly topics.

AURORA HIGH SCHOOL

First Thursday of the Month
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

HARMON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Third Thursday of the Month
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

LEIGHTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Refer to Website for Dates and Times

CRADDOCK/MILLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Refer to Website for Dates and Times



CABLE 9 SPOTLIGHT ON AURORA SCHOOLS SHOW AIRS MONTHLY

Each month the Aurora City School District is featured on the Cable Channel 9 *Spotlight on Aurora Schools* television show. The program features a wide variety of timely topics and in-depth interviews with different guests each month. The October 2011 show features Aurora Schools' Treasurer, Bill Volosin, and the Aurora Schools' Director of Bands, Lindsay Draime.

The *Spotlight on Aurora Schools* show airs on Tuesdays at 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Thursdays at 8:30 p.m. and Fridays at 3:30 p.m. The show can also be seen on-line at cable9.org. Click on the "Cable 9 Online" icon in the middle of the webpage. Then click on the "Cable 9 Online" icon under the Video Library title. Use the "All Folders" drop down menu and click on "Cable 9 Schools" to locate episodes of *Spotlight on Aurora Schools*.

This is a great way to stay updated and informed about what is going on in our school system.

DEFIBRILLATORS LOCATED THROUGHOUT AURORA CITY SCHOOLS



The Aurora City School District has defibrillators located in each of the school buildings. It is

very important to know where these are located in case of an emergency. Below is a listing of their locations:

Board Office ~ Superintendent's Office
Miller School ~ Main Office
Craddock School ~ Front Hallway
Behind Office on Hurd Road
Leighton School ~ Main Foyer
Harmon School ~ Main Office
Aurora High School ~ Main Entrance
Across from Guidance Office

Along with these locations, our athletic trainer has a defibrillator in his possession at all times.

The defibrillator batteries are checked monthly by our custodians and are maintained with a yearly check by the Aurora Fire Department. According to the Aurora Schools' Director of Business Affairs and Transportation, Greg Pollock, "We are very proactive in checking them." If a defibrillator is needed, an alarm sounds when it is opened and step-by-step directions are given for usage.

Administrative Team - Continued from p. 2

community members and parents and guidance counselors and even students, which was outstanding. I can say that it was a very well thought out, very complete interview process."

Russ Bennett, superintendent, revealed that during the interview process Brookhart stood out not only by "scoring the highest of all of the candidates, but how he fit. It was the perfect fit."

As the new AHS assistant principal, Brookhart sees his role as, "a divided role. Not only do I see myself as being a strong role model to students and to

primarily handling discipline issues and doing so in a fair manner, taking that as an opportunity for education, but also to still be a support for teachers and other staff members and colleagues in terms of still providing instructional leadership and observation of teachers. Getting into the classrooms and in the hallways as much as I can. Also, just trying to stress how important it is to be involved in the schools in terms of students. Getting as many people, as many students in high school, in as many different activities as possible."

In his new position, Brookhart says, "I want to be viewed as a role model to students, but also as somebody they can come to and talk to. They will never be viewed as any sort of statistic. They each are individuals. That's one of the best parts of this job, watching throughout four years, seeing students grow as people, individuals and making the right decisions. Seeing where they're going to go afterward. They are going to be out there leading someday."

Welcome to the Aurora Schools, Brian. We're happy to have you back!

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Aurora City School District is beginning the process of creating a five-year strategic plan. At this time, the steering committee has designated three strategies that include, Academics, Communication and District Operations.

Action team member volunteers are needed to help in developing these strategies. Over the next few months, the action team member volunteers will expand these strategies by developing and writing in-depth actions steps. Meetings will most likely be held in the evenings so that members that work during the day will be able to attend. Our goal is to have a diverse group of members that will bring a variety of backgrounds and experiences to the table.

This is a wonderful opportunity to take a leadership role and help shape the future of our school district.

If you are interested in volunteering to be a part of this process, please contact the Aurora School Board Office at 330-954-2228.



Aurora Schools' New Classified Staff Informal Recognition Program

The Aurora Schools' Director of Business Affairs and Transportation, **Greg Pollock**, has developed and initiated a Classified Staff Informal Recognition Program to acknowledge "non-certified" staff members (bus drivers, secretaries, para-professionals, kitchen staff, custodians, aides, technology staff, maintenance personnel and lunch aides, etc.) that are deserving of recognition for having done something special.



Superintendent
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us at #7 in the State of Ohio. Cleveland Magazine has also rated us #7. It appears #7 is our lucky number!

Our school buildings have achieved several milestones, too. Aurora High School is ranked #8 in the State of Ohio by the Ohio Department of Education and ranked #538 in the United States by the *Washington Post*. Harmon Middle School is ranked as one of the best middle schools in the State of Ohio by the Ohio Department of Education. Harmon School's Performance Index Score is ranked as #3 in the State of Ohio and they are ranked at #1 in 8th grade science, as well!

These are achievements that we can all be proud of! As the saying goes, "It takes a village to raise a child." While we are extremely happy and proud to have achieved these impressive results, we



The program's stated goal is to "provide ALL STAFF with the opportunity, means, and forum to informally recognize the actions of our most valued employees - our CLASSIFIED STAFF"

Every classified staff member recognized will be entered into a drawing for a gift card to a local restaurant or store. Drawings will be held every time 10-15 recognitions have occurred.

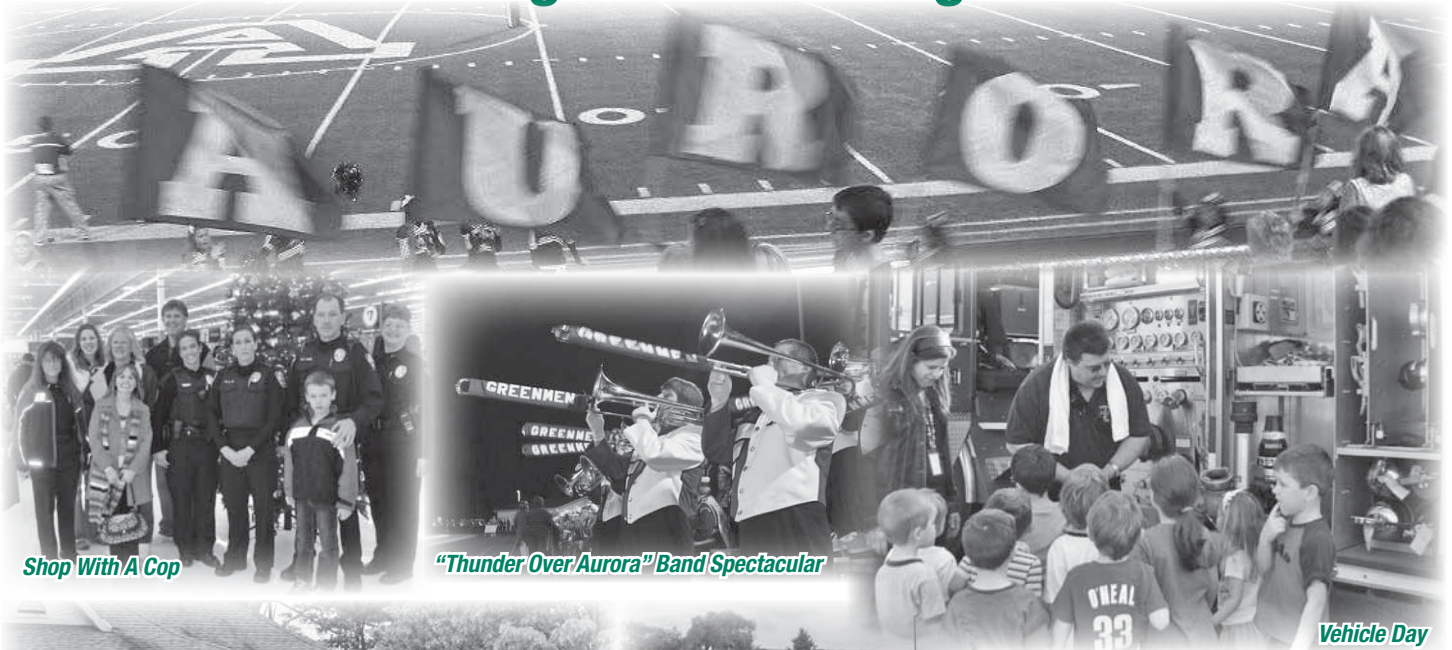
This is an ongoing program that runs throughout the school year and into the summer months. The efforts of all of our staff members are greatly appreciated.

aspire to do still more. We are always raising the bar higher. As I said, we have the tools and support we need to continue our efforts to make sure that each of our students reach their potential and are ready to go on to the next level, be it a four-year college, the work force, the military, or a two-year technical program.

Thank you for all you do to help us achieve such milestones on a district and individual level. On that note, I would like to remind everyone to please remember to vote on Election Day, November 8, 2011. Every vote counts!

“ Do The Right Thing ”
- Harmon School Motto

The Aurora Community and The Aurora City Schools "Building Tomorrow Together"



Shop With A Cop

"Thunder Over Aurora" Band Spectacular

Vehicle Day



Recycling

"Individually, we are one drop, Together, we are an ocean."

~ Ryunosuke Satoro

Wildwater Kingdom Opening

New Veterans Stadium Entrance



Grandparent's Breakfast

Leaping Stars Perform at Cleveland Cavaliers Game

Academic Challenge Game Show Competition

Senior Citizen Luncheon

The Aurora community and the Aurora City Schools have a long tradition of working together!

Who's Who & What's New

A **SENIOR SENATE** is being created at Aurora High School. It will be comprised of approximately 12 senior representatives from each government class. The group will meet once a month to discuss various school issues with AHS school leaders.

Honors and AP Chemistry Instructor, **DAVE MUNSON**, utilizes **VIMEO** (a video-sharing website where users can upload, share and view videos) to tape his lectures. Students then view his lectures outside of class allowing Munson to utilize class time for review, elaboration, and questions.

The **"THUNDER OVER AURORA"** Band Spectacular had over **700 students** perform and over **90 Aurora parents** that helped to make this evening so special and such a success.



The **AURORA SCHOOLS' TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT** recently conducted Ohio Department of Transportation **mandated student bus evacuation drills**.

The bus drivers performed a "Front Door Evacuation," where students disembarked at a school building without their belongings and walked to a designated safe area. Once the bus was checked, students returned to the bus, which then continued on to the usual bus dismissal location.

"Rear Door Evacuations" will also be conducted and are currently being scheduled. Russ Bennett, superintendent, said, "Our bus safety record is tremendous."

Sport Report

There will be a new **Basketball Club at Harmon School** for the 2011-12 school year. The club will be open for students of all skill levels and is a great way to meet new friends, learn the game, work together and have fun! Contact **Mrs. Megan Wesoloski** at mwesoloski@aurora-schools.org with questions or for more information.

When the votes were counted, Aurora High School senior, **Anthony Melchiori**, was recognized by the Marine Corps Recruiting Station as the **Marine Corps Elite Warrior of the Week for Ohio**. Melchiori was announced as the winner for Week #3.

The campaign honors the best high school football players in Ohio. Melchiori had 256 all-purpose yards in the Aurora 52-21 win over Revere on September 9, 2011. He returned two kick-offs for touchdowns (one for 85 yards, one for 87 yards), caught a 50-yard scoring pass, kicked a 22-yard field goal and kicked seven extra points. Melchiori is now a finalist for the Marine Corps Elite Warrior of the Year for Ohio. Congratulations and Good Luck!



Congratulations to the **Boys Golf Team** for winning the **CVC Championship Title** for the second year in a row! Golf team member Scott Schroeder shot a 31, the lowest score in Aurora history!

The **Girls Tennis Team** won the Chagrin Valley Conference (C.V.C.) title. Maddie Gilley took first place at first singles and was named all conference MVP!

The Friday night Aurora Greenmen vs. Chagrin Falls football game played on Friday, September 16, 2011 was televised by **SportsTime Ohio**. **Radio station WKNR (850 AM)** also aired the game with **Tony Rizzo** announcing.

Prayag Jina Selected for Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program

Aurora Greenmen sophomore soccer player, Prayag Jina, was selected for the U.S. Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program in Region II (comprised of approximately 850,000 soccer players) for the third year. He was one of only 36 U15 players selected and one of two from Ohio.

Jina began playing organized soccer for the Aurora Recreation U7 team. He joined Aurora United in 2001 and the Cleveland Whitecaps at the premier level in 2004. As a U10 player, Jina went on to captain the Premier Select team CASA and Northern Alliance.

In 2009, Jina attended the U.S. Soccer Club's Id2 National Identification and Development Program, a national camp that identifies top players in the U.S. This event is held yearly by invitation only. Jina was the only player from Ohio to



attend at the recommendation of Mike Sweeny, a Cleveland Whitecap's coach. He played in the Midwest Regional League (MRL) for the Everest Soccer Club in 2011. The MRL's mission is to assure the continued growth and development of elite level players.

Jina said his goal "is to continue to work hard and improve every day, hopefully to play in college and maybe more if I continue to develop."

Milestones – Continued from p. 1

the district has reduced \$1.5 million in the last two years by eliminating staff positions, cutting educational programs and reducing curriculum/supply costs. The teaching staff, administrators, and support staff have all taken a salary freeze for the next two years and raised their medical deductibles.

Aurora School Board President, Gerald Kohanski, said, “The Board and administration have been operating within budgeted amounts for many years and have made every effort to reduce current expenditures.”

Although these budget reductions have been necessary, the Aurora City School District continues to offer a high quality education at a lower cost than comparable State of Ohio school districts. Aurora High School has achieved many successes and as a building we had “some of the best test scores we’ve had in terms of AP and IB scores,” explained Aurora High School principal, Mike Roberto. Aurora High School students passed their OGT (Ohio Graduation Test) with a passing proficiency of 97.8% in math (97% at advanced and accelerated levels), 96% in science, 98% in social studies, 97% in reading and 98% in writing. The percentage of students that passed all five tests was 95%. Also, 100% of International Baccalaureate (IB) students received their IB diploma and ranked above the world average. As a building, Aurora High School scored 112.2.

“That’s the highest we’ve ever scored as a district. Anything above 105 is really outstanding, so for us to be at 112.2, we are very excited about that,” Roberto added.

Harmon School has also made some very notable achievements. Not only have they been ranked as one of the best middle schools in the State of Ohio, coming in at #3, by the Ohio Department of Education, but also achieved the ranking of #1 in 8th grade science in the State of Ohio!

Recent district and school building accomplishments include:

District ~

- Earned the “Excellent with Distinction” title for 2011 by the Ohio Department of Education
- Ranked #7 in State of Ohio by the Ohio Department of Education
- Performance Index Score of 108.9 (7th in Ohio) is the highest score ever for the Aurora Schools
- One of only a few school districts recognized as efficient by Ohio Education Matter’s subsidiary KnowledgeWorks
- Ranked #7 by *Cleveland Magazine*

Aurora High School ~

- National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education
- “School of Distinction” by the Ohio Department of Education
- Ranked #8 in the State of Ohio by the Ohio Department of Education
- Ranked #538 in the United States by the Washington Post

Harmon Middle School ~

- Ranked one of the best middle schools in the State of Ohio by the Ohio Department of Education
- Ranked #3 in the State of Ohio by the Ohio Department of Education
- Ranked #1 in 8th grade science in the State of Ohio

Leighton Elementary School ~

- Named Hall of Fame School by the Department of Education
- Earned Buckeye Best Gold Award by the Ohio Department of Health

Craddock/Miller Elementary School ~

- Earned Buckeye Best Award by the Ohio Department of Health

These are achievements that we can all be proud of and have been made by working together. We look forward to reaching many more important milestones with the help of the Aurora community, parents, volunteers, administration, staff and students. Thank you!



FIFTEEN YEARS OF GIVING MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

Thank you to the Aurora community members and Aurora City Schools’ families that donate their “leftover” and unused bags of candy to Miller School after Halloween. A tradition for 15 years, the donated candy is given to the Ronald McDonald House, Harvest for Hunger and other agencies. Just a few years ago, over 350 pounds of candy was collected after Halloween! Please remember to drop off your donations again this year after Halloween. These donations are extremely appreciated by these agencies and their recipients!



CLASS ACTS

A big "THANK YOU" to our entire **Custodial Crew** for the fantastic job they did in getting our school buildings ready for another busy year.

Target Corporation contributed \$500 book grant to the Craddock School library as part of their **Books for Schools Award** program. The award is part of Target's neighborhood giving plan. Pictured receiving the award are, from left to right, Tammy Mazzella, Miller/Craddock School counselor; Gwen Benavides, 2nd grade student in Miss Williams' class; Erin Hrouda, Target Corp. representative; and Patty Minrovic, Miller/Craddock School principal.

Pete Knispel, a custodian at Aurora High School, saved the district time and money by permanently mounting four SMART Boards and relocating numerous white boards over the summer, thus

making it unnecessary to contract an outside company for installation.

The **Aurora High School Philharmonic Orchestra** performed at the **Aurora Family Fall Festival** at Sunny Lake Park the weekend of September 24, 2011. They performed fiddle and Irish music that coincided with the "Pioneer Days" theme.

Thank you to the **Aurora PTO** for sponsoring our annual **Ice Cream Socials** for Craddock and Leighton School students. Teachers were on hand to help with the toppings and everyone had a "sweet" time!

The **parents of Aurora students** are always extremely supportive and parent attendance at the **Aurora Schools' Open House** nights are very well attended. Thank you for

the support that you give your student by staying informed and showing them how important their educational success is to you!



Tammy Mazzella, Gwen Benavides, Erin Hrouda, and Patty Minrovic

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