

APRIL 2024



SOMERS CENTRAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT
NEWS FOR FAMILIES

TUSKER NATION

□ Creating community and belonging among Tuskers □

Special Theme April Newsletter

Page-Turning Partnerships in Reading Lab



Primrose students play games with high school volunteers to develop their reading skills.

Showing up for younger kids shows them that what they are doing matters. That they matter. Every week at Primrose Elementary, Somers High School student-volunteers visit the younger students during reading lab.

“They [high school students] come and help us like teachers,” said first-grader Lola. “They’re fun. I like playing games and joking around with them.”

Earlier in the fall, the high school students helped in reading lab to log volunteer hours for the National Honor Society, but after completing their hours, they continued to support the children. The younger students look forward to working on their reading skills and hanging out with the older students, making the reading lab both a successful educational tool and an activity that promotes a deeper sense of community between schools and students.

"I decided to volunteer because I love working with little kids who still look at the world with such excitement and have so much enthusiasm for learning," said Taylor. "I stayed because of how rewarding it is and how excited the kids are to be around a high school student."

Reading lab takes place in small groups for all grades. The groups meet twice a week after school for approximately forty-five minutes. There are three sessions each year, with each session lasting fourteen weeks.

"The reading lab helps us learn trick words and sight words," said Lola.

The older students help support the reading progress of younger students, working under the supervision of Primrose teachers. They play literacy-based games and read books with half of the students. The other half of the students are in another small group with a teacher, working on reading passages, letter and word awareness, and word strategies. The groups switch partway through so that every student gets the same experience.

"Watching students overcome their challenges and work to break down words and read sentences after coming from a challenging day at school always makes me proud," said high school student Taylor Bassi. "Seeing their persistence result in improvement is inspiring and reminds me to do the same in my own life."

Sharing a Love of Languages



Fifth-graders at Somers Intermediate School participate in French and Italian language lessons taught by high school students.

Sharing a love of languages is connecting Somers High School French and Italian language students with fifth graders at the intermediate school.

"Don't be intimidated about learning a new language," advised Chloe Groarke. "It can be scary when you first start, but once you begin to understand it, it's really fun."

“Learning the same language at the same time helps connect you to others,” said Chloe Pietrangolare. “Remembering the basics and learning so many new things is challenging, but we work together and kind of help each other out along the way.”

High school students, organized into groups of four to six, were given language lesson slides and then had to decide how best to convey the information to the younger students at Somers Intermediate School. The presentations helped introduce the fifth graders to the choices they have for learning a language starting in middle school. Students in Somers study a language for three years in middle school and at least two years in high school. Some students take language for all four years in high school. There is also the option to take an additional language class in their junior or senior year as an elective.

“It’s interesting to see the progression we’ve made now compared to what we were doing in seventh and eighth grade,” said Sienna DeMarinis. “Learning a language is a great gateway to opening yourself up to new ideas and types of cultures.”

“It could also help you career-wise,” added Mario Mancini. “If you’re applying for a job, being fluent in another language could make you more qualified than other candidates.”

Presentations were approximately twenty minutes long and included a variety of learning aids such as vocabulary about destinations in France and Italy, foods specific to each country and culture, videos, songs, and engaging activities.

“It was up to us to make it a lesson, make it fun for the students, and make it interesting,” said Jesse Manginelli. “Figuring out what to say to the students and how to keep them engaged and entertained was challenging, but it was also a lot of fun.”

After their presentations, students answered questions about what it was like taking a language in school, and what they enjoyed about the experience. They spoke about the different parties they hold in class that celebrate the language with music and foods from the culture they are studying. Students also take field trips for cultural experiences. For example, senior Italian students recently took a trip to New York City for a pasta-making class.

“We went on the train into the city together. It felt like we were a family,” said Angelica Salinas. “We made the pasta then we ate together, family-style.”

High school students also shared information about the chance to visit other countries with Tusker Travels. While students do not need to be enrolled in a language class to take part in a trip, students who are in language classes gain an extra opportunity to strengthen their understanding of the languages they’ve been studying, experience different cultures, and make memories with their schoolmates.

“I’ve been to Italy with my family,” said Sienna. “I could hold a conversation pretty well, which made me very proud.”

“I have an Italian family and interact with other Italians who don’t speak much English,” said Jesse. “I didn’t realize how much this class would help me hold conversations with my grandparents.”

You Belong in Somers



The Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee is conducting research on belongingness in Somers schools. These high school students are holding focus groups with teachers and running activities with students to determine how students experience belonging in Somers schools, and how to improve or enhance that experience. Stay tuned for the results of their research.



Emma Gordon, a junior at Somers High School, led a creative writing workshop in Cherie Stietzel's second-grade classroom. Emma was Stietzel's student in 2013 and was excited to share her passion for writing. The kids loved the workshop and Emma is already asking when she can visit again!



The Science National Honor Society hosted the 2nd Annual Somers Middle School Science Club Fair Convention. High school students showcased the science clubs that will be available to the 8th graders when they enter high school this fall, including the Criminology Club, Environmental Club, Cancer Research Club, and the BioMed Club.

Community STEMs From Support



Students at Somers Intermediate School work with Somers High School science students to refine and practice their science fair projects.

Collaborating with older students exemplifies the power of mentorship in nurturing interest in science. At Somers Intermediate School, high school science students volunteered their time and experience with the younger kids, helping them prepare their science projects for Science Night.

"When you asked them a question, they explained the answer with detail," said fifth-grader Eva Rosetti when asked about her experience.

High schoolers met after school at SIS to work on science projects with the younger students, offering support, guidance, and design advice, as well as answering questions about the ins and outs of making a science project.

"I had so much fun helping the SIS Science Fair students," said sophomore Isabella Wissa. "It was a pleasure to see the students work hard, ask questions, and enjoy the process of making their projects."

"They helped me improve my skills by making suggestions about how I could make my project better," said fifth-grader Leo Newman.

This was the third year that older and younger students worked together in this way. SHS students earned service hours for the National Honor Society, but the reward went far beyond those hours.

"Helping the students brought back lots of memories of when we were in SIS doing science projects," said sophomore Makaila Eagleton.

The younger students also benefited from the older students' mentorship in ways they didn't expect and looked forward to their time together.

"They helped me a lot with my hypothesis by teaching me the if/then model," said fifth-grader Mia Klein.

"All of them worked hard and it was a pleasure to see them be so passionate about their projects," said sophomore Anya Khurana. "I hope that all of them continue their passion in science, as they all did amazing and should be so proud!"



SOMERS SOARS WHEN EVERYONE BELONGS

April 30, 2024
6:00 to 8:30 PM

Somers Middle School cafeteria
250 Route 202



RSVP with QR code or email
belonging@somersschools.org

An event to enhance a sense of belonging for all members
of the Somers community, co-hosted by the Town of Somers and
Somers Central School District.

TUESDAY, APRIL 30

Don't miss the first annual Somers Belonging Event

Somers Soars When Everyone Belongs

Food, fellowship, and connection!

Co-hosted by the town of Somers, small group discussions will focus on what it means to belong to a community and how we can foster a sense of belonging in each other.



Somers PTA units are planning exciting events. At the high school, the PTSA is busy preparing to celebrate the senior class. The SHS PTSA scholarship essay winners have been selected and will be announced at Senior Awards night. The SHS PTSA also earned the NYS PTA Student Rock Award. Primrose co-sponsored the 2nd grade field trip to Westmoreland Sanctuary. Our youngest Tuskers have also been enjoying new classroom literature to celebrate Earth week! The Primrose PTA also purchased inclusive games for indoor recess. SIS continues to support literacy with celebrity authors and the Accelerated Reader challenge. SEPTA has been busy planning their annual SEPTA Awards ceremony on June 10th.

The PTA Council is hosting the Bus Driver Breakfast. Help us celebrate our drivers and monitors by donating on MySchoolBucks ~
PTA Council Donation.



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