The Spartan Spirit

LEARNING • SERVING • LEADING

One Interaction at a Time

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DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

Empowering Classrooms: The SLEF Grants

The Southern Lehigh Education Foundation (SLEF) serves as a vital partner to our district, dedicating a generous **$9,586.87** to enrich our educational landscape this month. These grants fund creative initiatives that fall outside the traditional budget, bridging the gap between community generosity and classroom innovation.

Recent grant awards are designed to transform the student experience through environmental and instructional innovation. Highlights include revitalizing the middle school library into a collaborative sanctuary, introducing LEGO Science to provide rigorous STEM curriculum for our 3rd graders at JPLIS, funding a professional-grade Padcaster studio for 6th-grade media creators, and developing sensory-regulation initiatives to ensure inclusive classrooms. We deeply thank SLEF and its donors for turning modern learning into a tangible reality for every Spartan!

Support the SL Education Foundation

(https://www.sleducationfoundation.net/

Did You Know?

During recent physical education classes at Liberty Bell Elementary, students participated in the Healthy Heart Kids' Challenge. Through the incredible generosity of our families, they raised over **$9,000** for cardiovascular health—demonstrating the profound community spirit of our Spartans!

What's So Cool About Manufacturing?

Our middle school digital media students have partnered with the iconic **CF Martin & Co. (Martin Guitar)** for the regional "What's So Cool About Manufacturing" video contest! Our students got a behind- the-scenes look at local industry and produced an incredible video submission. Check out their video at **whatssocool.org**.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Math Curriculum Updates

Following extensive evaluation, a review committee is recommending the adoption of **Amplify Desmos Math** for grades K-5. This resource balances high-quality digital tools with essential hands-on instruction to build deep mathematical fluency. A small pre-implementation cohort of teachers will begin using it in the 2026-2027 school year before full district rollout. Additionally, the district plans to formally adopt

Big Ideas Math for all 6th-grade on-level and extended courses following a highly successful pilot program this year.

Special Education Expansion

To ensure we remain responsive to regional needs, the district is moving forward with a proposal to host a new MDS-B (Multiple Disabilities Support - Behavior) classroom at Hopewell Elementary. Staffed by the CLIU, this classroom will support K-2 students with Autism who have significant speech, language, and behavioral needs, allowing eligible Southern Lehigh students to receive vital services closer to home.

Artificial Intelligence Focus

Our internal AI Steering Committees continue to refine our strategic approach to Artificial Intelligence. Discussions are focused on balancing the proactive educational benefits of AI while defending against risks like deepfakes and misinformation. A Tech Pool Presentation at CLIU later this month will further address strategies to navigate these emerging technological challenges.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Kindergarten & Grade 3 Transition

We are thrilled to report that Full-Day Kindergarten applications have grown to **178 applications**! Our team is actively reviewing parent surveys to refine drop-off/pick-up processes at JPLIS, and administration recently completed an excellent new "Welcome to Kindergarten" video to help families transition smoothly.

https://www.slsd.org/teaching-learning/full-day-kindergarten

Staffing & Recruitment

To support the Kindergarten expansion and enrollment shifts, administration has launched an aggressive, proactive hiring cycle. We are actively recruiting for multiple K-6 positions, Special Education teachers, and a new Assistant Principal at JPLIS, with the goal of having all new staff secured and onboarded by May 2026.

Facilities & Grant Funding

The Board has officially approved a resolution to request a **$2.82 million Public School Facility Improvement Grant** from the Commonwealth. If awarded, this funding will support critical mechanical upgrades at the Middle and High Schools. Simultaneously, we are pursuing a strategic upgrade of our aging district scoreboards through a unique net-zero funding model that leverages guaranteed advertisement sales to cover the total equipment cost.

SPARTAN SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

SLMS STEAM & Sciences: Middle School students are soaring! 12 of our students from the PJAS Regional Competition are headed to States at Penn State. Additionally, our MathCounts teams had a spectacular showing, with the MS team taking 4th place and the IS team winning Rookie Team of the Year and taking 5th place overall!

Elementary Engagement: Our community came together for a spectacular production of *Beauty and the Beast Jr.* performed by our 6th graders at JPLIS, aided by High School tech students. Meanwhile, Liberty Bell recently transformed its hallways into an innovation gallery, featuring 70 "Lion Scientists" presenting their Science Fair projects!

Hopewell Literacy & Community: Hopewell Elementary recently celebrated Read Across America Week with special visits from Middle School students sharing the joy of reading. Families also came together for a successful Hopewell Barnes & Noble Night. Even better, every student received a free book from the PTA to continue building a love of reading at home!

Innovative Instruction at JPLIS: Classrooms at JPLIS are utilizing brilliant engagement strategies like "Quiet Coincidence," a subtle hand signal that transforms a typical one-student-answers scenario into a collaborative moment where peers can agree without disrupting the flow. Furthermore, the new Homework Club is officially up and running with approximately 20 students, providing focused after-school support that is already positively impacting home life.

ATHLETICS & ARTS

When our students win, we win!

Celebrating a historic postseason and the start of Spring Sports.

Historic State Championships:

- **Wrestling:** A powerhouse performance at States! **Mai G.** claimed 3rd place (the highest girls' finish in program history!), **Brock F.** secured a 4th-place medal (tying the boys' school record!), and **Cambria L.** earned an impressive 7th-place medal.
- **Basketball:** The High School Boys captured the District XI 5A Championship for only the third time in school history! The Girls team also excelled as District XI 5A Runner-ups, with both teams competing hard in the PIAA First Round.
- **Swimming:** The Boys team secured the District XI 2A Championship, sending 9 swimmers to States at Bucknell! The Girls team earned a fantastic third-place finish in District XI 3A.
- **Robotics:** The SLHS Robotics team proudly competed in the FIRST Mid-Atlantic (FMA) District Seneca Event!

Spring Sports Kickoff: Spring sports have officially started! We are currently in practice and scrimmage mode across the district, staying hopeful that this great weather holds up for our Spartans as they prepare for the regular season.

Spotlight on the Arts: The MS String Orchestra took a cross-curricular trip to Miller Symphony Hall to hear the Allentown Symphony Orchestra perform a special concert honoring the 250th anniversary of the U.S.! We also celebrate seven students who represented SLSD at the PMEA Intermediate Songfest, with Rhea L. earning the distinct honor of being selected as a solo vocalist.

Thank You, Coach Sloan!

We celebrate the legacy of Coach Sloan, who is stepping down from the Southern Lehigh Girls Basketball program. We are deeply grateful for her years of dedication and the lasting impact she has made on our student-athletes. We wish her the best as she looks forward to spending more time with her family.

BOARD & COMMUNITY UPDATES

"Educators with Real Impact"

Lehigh University's College of Education recently recognized educators making a tangible difference in their communities. Congratulations to SLSD's **Mrs. Erica Rich** (School Psychologist), **Mrs. Allison Mullay** (Social Worker), and **Ms. Sue MacIntyre** (Science) for being nominated for this incredible honor! Their tireless dedication to our students and their ability to serve as a source of inspiration makes them a vital part of what helps our local schools thrive.

Leading the Way in Education

Director of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Tamara Solometo recently presented at the 74th Annual PA EDGE Conference. Her session, *"Sharing the Crown, Building Star Systems Through Distributed Leadership,"* not only shared innovative practices but established Southern Lehigh as a pacesetter in educational excellence at the state level!

Financial Responsibility & Growth

The Business Office continues to actively monitor market rates to maximize district funds. By leveraging competitive municipal investment rates, the district successfully negotiated a rate increase on our primary accounts to 3.5%, ensuring our resources are working as efficiently as possible for the community.

Important Upcoming Dates

March 30: Education and Technology Committee Meeting (4:30 pm)

March 30: SLMS Parent Engagement Night: Communicating with Teens

April 2 through April 6: Spring Break (Schools Closed)

April 13: SLSD School Board Meeting (6:30 pm)

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Southern Lehigh School District shall not discriminate in their educational programs, activities or employment practices.