



The Spartan Spirit

LEARNING • SERVING • LEADING

One Interaction at a Time

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DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

A Smooth and Inspiring Launch to the School Year

Campuses across Southern Lehigh buzzed with positive energy during a remarkably smooth opening month! Welcoming classrooms, pristine building facilities, and seamless transportation routes allowed students to settle comfortably into daily academic routines. A historic milestone was achieved with the successful launch of our inaugural Full-Day Kindergarten program at Hopewell and Liberty Bell Elementary schools, while 3rd graders made a seamless transition to the Joseph P. Liberati Intermediate School (JPLIS), immediately embracing arrival procedures and brand-new outdoor playground facilities.

Patriot Day & 25th Anniversary of September 11 Observance

Across all Southern Lehigh schools, students, faculty, and administrative staff paused in solemn remembrance of the 25th anniversary of September 11. Campuses honored Patriot Day through unified reflection on the enduring values of service, sacrifice, and civic responsibility. At JPLIS, students and staff proudly wore red, white, and blue, while classrooms engaged in age-appropriate discussions honoring the first responders and everyday heroes whose courage continues to inspire our nation.

Community Health & Proactive Preparedness:

In close collaboration with Lehigh County superintendents and the SLSD nursing team, the district issued proactive informational updates regarding regional health monitoring, including measles awareness. Southern Lehigh currently reports no cases, and administrative teams remain dedicated to transparent community communication and preventive health practices.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE & OPERATIONS

Thoughtful AI Integration & Penn State Partnership

Southern Lehigh is leading regional dialogue on deliberate, ethical technology adoption. A comprehensive presentation was delivered at the September 14th Board meeting, where committee representatives co-presented *AI in SLSD: A Thoughtful Approach*. Key highlights from the update include:

- **Vision & Guiding Philosophy:** Establishing a human-centered approach that prioritizes student-teacher relationships, using AI as a tool to enhance instruction, streamline administrative tasks, and cultivate critical thinking.
- **Strategic Roadmap:** Setting 2026–2027 goals focused on building staff proficiency, establishing clear ethics and academic integrity standards, and introducing K–12 AI literacy guidelines.
- **Implementation Framework:** Utilizing an AI Acceptable Usage Matrix to guide classroom application and launching structured professional development initiatives in partnership with Penn State CSATS.

On September 21, approximately 200 educators in grades 4–12 participated in a tailored three-hour professional symposium delivered by the Penn State Center for Science and the Schools (CSATS). The training engaged teachers in hands-on *Teachable Machine* simulations, ethical frameworks, and an AI Acceptable Usage Matrix to guide classroom instruction.

Innovative Course Design & Rigorous Curriculum Reviews

Curriculum development advanced across all grade spans during September. Faculty convened to structure new instructional pathways, including a foundational K–2 STEM curriculum crafted by librarians and STEM specialists, as well as course prerequisites and unit scopes for Honors 8th Grade Science in collaboration with High School Biology teachers. Simultaneously, interdisciplinary committees launched deep-dive reviews of K–5 Social Studies resources, K–12 World Languages (Chinese, French, and Spanish Levels 1–5), High School Civics, and the implementation of ALEKS360 for high school mathematics.

Title I Schoolwide Expansions & Stakeholder Engagement

In alignment with recommendations from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), revised Title I Schoolwide Plans for SLMS and JPLIS were successfully resubmitted. This vital transition extends targeted academic interventions and specialized learning supports to a broader cohort of students in grades 3–8. On September 23, the district held its annual District Title I Stakeholder Meeting, inviting families to review engagement policies and collaborative progress-monitoring protocols.

Food Services & Project Green Spartan Launch

At the recent Finance and Facilities Committee Meeting, Director of Food Services Greg Martin presented an update on the district's nutrition initiatives, featuring **Project Green Spartan**. This 2026–2027 initiative increases awareness of and access to fresh, locally sourced fruits and vegetables through optimized cafeteria placement, high-impact signage, and new Test Kitchen taste-testing stations funded in part by a \$7,521 GIANT Food Stores Grant.

SPARTAN SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

Hopewell Elementary: Collaboration, Community & Tie-Dye Fun

Hopewell educators held targeted data meetings to analyze beginning-of-year assessments and establish personalized student intervention groups. Community spirit shone bright during the beloved Barnes & Noble Family Night featuring guest teacher readers, while the Hopewell PTA hosted its annual tie-dye celebration where every single child created a custom 2026–2027 school t-shirt! Families also gathered for laughter and fundraising at the Coopersburg Community Days dunk tank.

Liberty Bell Elementary: Play-Based Inquiry & Foundational Skills

Kindergarten Spartans are actively exploring sensory materials and creative centers, mastering routines within their full-day schedule. First graders leaped into their *Foundations* literacy units and visited the school library to discover the magic of research and storytelling. Second graders connected reading and natural science through hands-on outdoor nature walks and flower planting, all while modeling positive ROAR expectations across the building.

JPLIS: Hands-On Science, "We Are A Garden" & MathCounts

Upper elementary scholars engaged in rich experiential learning throughout September. Fourth-grade Spanish Immersion students built working electrical circuits with batteries and wires to illuminate light bulbs, while fourth-grade ELA classes analyzed poetry to create collaborative Spartan R posters. In fifth grade, students kicked off the *Arts & Letters* "Handed Down" module by reading *We Are A Garden* and crafting die-cut cultural heritage flowers displayed proudly above hallway lockers. Additionally, nearly 40 students in grades 3–6 launched the MathCounts season alongside high school mentors, and over 420 students celebrated completing their summer reading goals with Rita's Italian Ice!

Middle School: Belonging, Mentorship & Spartan Experience

SLMS embraced its building theme, "*Every Spartan Belongs: Be Seen, Be Heard, Be You.*" Students completed beginning-of-the-year benchmarks and took part in the first Spartan Experience Survey to help staff measure and nurture belonging, motivation, and school culture. The Student Council held its spirited Duck Assembly fundraiser offering a grand-prize tour of Citizens Bank Park, the National Junior Honor Society hosted a heartwarming Grandparents Breakfast, and High School Teen Counselors returned to mentor seventh graders.

High School: Senior Sunrise, Club Rush & Postsecondary Prep

The Class of 2027 greeted dawn together at the annual Senior Sunrise, celebrating their impending graduation year with friendship and Spartan pride. SLHS also hosted its two-day Club Rush, connecting students with co-curricular organizations, academic teams, and service societies. Seniors and families are now gearing up for the October 6 FAFSA Workshop to navigate state financial aid mandates.

ATHLETICS & FINE ARTS



UNSTOPPABLE SPARTAN MOMENTUM!

Historic Coaching Milestones, Undefeated Streaks & Academic Excellence



Monumental Coaching Milestones

Southern Lehigh Athletics celebrated legendary coaching achievements this September! Cross Country Coach Justin Kocis earned his **400th career victory** within middle school and district programs, alongside securing his **200th career victory** at the helm of the High School Girls' Cross Country team. Both the Boys' and Girls' Cross Country squads remain undefeated! Additionally, Head Coach Pete Valimont secured his **first career win** leading the Spartan Boys Soccer program, while Coach Sarah Young captured her **first career victory** with Spartan Girls Tennis.



Fall Varsity Standings & Team Spotlights

Our Spartan student-athletes continue to showcase grit and skill across the Colonial League:

- **Golf (12–1):** Dominating the links with exceptional individual tournament scoring.
- **Girls Volleyball (6–0):** An unblemished record characterized by powerful offense and defense.
- **Football (3–0):** Undefeated heading into key league matchups with dominant line play.
- **Cross Country:** Boys and Girls squads remain perfectly undefeated across all league meets.
- **Girls Tennis (5–5) & Girls Soccer (3–3–1):** Battling fiercely against top regional contenders.
- **Boys Soccer (1–2–4) & Field Hockey (2–2):** Demonstrating rapid development and tenacity.



AVCA Team Academic Award Winners

Demonstrating that excellence extends far beyond athletics, both the Boys and Girls Varsity Volleyball programs were honored with the prestigious **2026 AVCA Team Academic Award!** This national accolade celebrates varsity squads that maintain an extraordinary cumulative team GPA of 3.30 or higher across the entire academic year.



Fine Arts Collaboration & Marching Band Field Shows

The Spartan Marching Band and Color Guard took the field with precision and artistry during home football halftime performances and community parades. During September professional learning sessions, K–12 Fine and Practical Arts educators engaged in vertical alignment workshops to harmonize performance and visual arts curricula from elementary to graduation.



Go Gold Night & Class of 1976 Reunion:

Spartan Stadium united in gold this month in support of pediatric cancer awareness during our annual Go Gold Night game, accompanied by a special halftime tribute recognizing the Class of 1976 on their milestone 50th Reunion!

BOARD & COMMUNITY UPDATES

Spartan Tradition: SLHS Football "Shirt off Our Back Class of 2027"

We are proud to highlight one of our most inspiring district traditions: the Southern Lehigh High School Football team’s "Shirt off Our Back Class of 2027" initiative. During this special event, our student-athletes recognize and honor K–12 educators across the entire district who have made a lasting impact on their lives by presenting them with a game jersey. It serves as a powerful reminder of the strong connections built within our schools and highlights the deep, long-term impact our educators have on students both on and off the field.

SLSD Spartan Merch!

Show your Spartan pride! Gear up with official Southern Lehigh apparel, spirit wear, and accessories for students, families, and community supporters. Visit our official online Sideline store: [SLSD Spartan Merch Store](#).

KEY UPCOMING DATES & CALENDAR EVENTS

September 28, 2026	SLSD School Board Meeting (6:30 PM, SLHS Media Center)
October 1, 2026	In-School PSAT (Grade 11) & School Day SAT Administration
October 6, 2026	Senior Parent FAFSA Workshop (SLHS Media Center)
October 9, 2026	SLSD Homecoming
October 12, 2026	Professional Development Day (No School for Students)
October 12, 2026	SLSD School Board Meeting (6:30 PM, SLHS Media Center)
October 26, 2026	SLSD School Board Meeting (6:30 PM, SLHS Media Center)

SOUTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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