The Spartan Spirit

LEARNING • SERVING • LEADING

One Interaction at a Time

OCTOBER 2026 | VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

❄️ It's Starting To Get Chilly: Our Inclement Weather Decision-Making Protocol

As Southern Lehigh transitions into winter weather conditions, administration has outlined our comprehensive, safety-first protocol for weather-related delays, early dismissals, closures, and Virtual Instructional Days (VID). Grounded in transparency and family trust, every decision is guided by student safety. Because our school district spans three separate municipalities across nearly 50 square miles of diverse topography, regional road impacts can vary significantly between neighborhoods.

Beginning as early as 3:45 AM, our transportation and facilities leadership personally drive rural bus routes and key thoroughfares to evaluate active road conditions, steep grades, and ice accumulation. Concurrently, custodial and maintenance teams evaluate facility readiness—ensuring heating plants operate reliably and campus parking lots, loading zones, and walkways are plowed, salted, and secure for arrival. Wind chills and severe sub-zero temperatures are also evaluated to protect students at bus stops and teen drivers on morning commutes.

To provide families and staff with predictable scheduling, determinations regarding a delay, virtual instructional day, or school closure are finalized by **5:15 AM** (or the evening prior whenever reliable forecasts allow). Immediate notifications are broadcast via Infinite Campus School Messenger, posted directly to the district homepage at **www.slsd.org**, and relayed across local media including WFMZ-TV 69.

💻 Student YouTube Access & Digital Learning Safeguards

Following an extensive evaluation period and direct feedback from educators, the district has successfully implemented updated student digital access parameters. Restricting direct, unfiltered access to YouTube for grades K–8 has created more focused digital environments without hindering curriculum delivery. High-quality instructional videos embedded directly within Google Classroom, EdPuzzle, and learning platforms continue to function seamlessly across all grade levels.

> 📱 **Digital Wellness: K–2 Overnight Classroom Device Storage Transition**
> Reinforcing our districtwide commitment to student digital wellness and healthy screen habits, Southern Lehigh is transitioning all K–2 student iPads to remain safely at school overnight. Supported by the installation of dedicated classroom charging carts, devices will stay in homerooms each evening unless an explicit at-home instructional accommodation is designated by the teacher or principal.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE & STRATEGIC PLANNING

🎭 High School Performing Arts Center (PAC) Project Milestones

Planning, architectural development, and environmental engineering for the Southern Lehigh High School Performing Arts Center project remain firmly on schedule. The Schematic Design phase with Alloy5 Architects is on track for completion in November 2026, transitioning directly into comprehensive Design Development from December 2026 through May 2027. Alloy5 has completed its initial round of educational programming interviews with arts and technical faculty, with a secondary round of end-user feedback scheduled for December and January to refine instructional, rehearsal, and stage specifications.

On-site civil and geotechnical investigations are actively progressing. Specialized crews are completing test pits and soil borings through late October to evaluate subsurface stability, bedrock depth, and water infiltration. Civil engineering firm Terraform will utilize this data to construct the site's permanent stormwater management plan ahead of an informal sketch plan review with Upper Saucon Township in early November.

📊 Statewide Assessment Reporting Delays: Pennsylvania Online Testing Update

The Pennsylvania Department of Education’s inaugural mandatory administration of online PSSA and Keystone assessments last spring experienced severe statewide technical crashes through the state testing vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC). In response to widespread system failures, DRC posted an official advisory noting that all official statewide PSSA and Keystone results remain on hold pending formal administrative review.

🛡️ Lightspeed Parent Focus Group & Home Device Monitoring Pilot

District administrative and technology teams met this month with our K–12 Parent Focus Group to review the pilot rollout of the Lightspeed home monitoring tool. Participating families praised the platform's visibility into evening digital habits, student accountability, and bedtime screen management. Key highlights include:

- **Clear Operational Baseline:** Parent filtering rules and bedtime schedules govern district devices at home after 2:30 PM, while district academic filters govern during school hours.
- **Parent Resources & Technical Upgrades:** The district is publishing a concise Quick-Start Guide and FAQ addressing log queries while working directly with Lightspeed engineers to streamline multi-profile management.
- **Automated Reporting & Privacy:** Administration is exploring automated weekly email summaries while confirming that student activity logs are permanently purged after seven days.

SPARTAN SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

🏥 SLHS: FBLA Health Career Discovery & The Business of Healthcare

On Thursday, October 22, seventeen Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) students attended the specialized *Health Career Discovery: The Business Side of Healthcare* symposium. Spartans engaged in interactive breakout sessions with senior executive leadership from Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN), exploring professional pathways bridging commerce and medicine.

🎭 Fall Theatre: SLHS Presents "15 Reasons Not To Be In A Play"

The talented Southern Lehigh High School Theater Company takes the stage with its fall production, *15 Reasons Not To Be In A Play*! Opening on Wednesday, October 28, this witty, fast-paced comedy explores the hilarious perils of theatrical auditions and backstage chaos. Reserved tickets are available online through the Hometown Ticketing Box Office.

📻 SLMS: Jenna LeanchNamed Cat Country 96 Teacher of the Week!

Southern Lehigh Middle School is bursting with pride for educator Jenna Leanch officially named Cat Country 96's Teacher of the Week! This regional recognition honors Mrs. Leanch's infectious positivity, dedication, and the transformative impact she brings to her classroom each day.

🤝 Spartan Mentorship: Teen Counselors & NHS Tutoring at SLMS

Vertical student connection is thriving between our secondary campuses. High School Teen Counselors returned to SLMS this month to lead team-building and wellness workshops with seventh graders, while NHS scholars host after-school academic tutoring every Tuesday and Thursday.

🏃 JPLIS: Annual Field Day & 4th-Grade Tie-Dye Tradition

Upper elementary students celebrated their annual JPLIS Field Day with cooperative games and relays! A dedicated team of parent volunteers partnered with teachers to help every single fourth-grade student tie-dye their own custom class t-shirt.

🌟 Elementary Spirit: Hopewell Unity Day & Liberty Bell Walkathon

At Hopewell Elementary, students and staff marked national Unity Day by dressing in orange, championing kindness and inclusion. Liberty Bell Lions roared during their annual Walkathon on October 16, logging miles to raise critical funds for classroom enrichments.

ATHLETICS & FINE ARTS

📣 IT'S A GREAT DAY TO BE A SPARTAN!

Championship Titles, Hall of Fame Inductions & Postseason Runs

🏃 Spartan Cross Country Sweeps Colonial League Championships!

In a stunning showcase of endurance and depth, both the Southern Lehigh Boys and Girls Cross Country teams captured the **2026 Colonial League Championships** on October 21! Both programs reaffirmed their status as regional distance powerhouses heading into District XI championships.

🏐 Volleyball, Soccer & Competitive Cheer Postseason Action

Spartan fall student-athletes are delivering commanding postseason performances across the league:

- **Girls Volleyball:** Crushed their competition in the Colonial League Championship match on October 22, hoisting the championship trophy and maintaining their undefeated run!
- **Boys Soccer:** Clinched an exhilarating Colonial League Semifinal victory on October 21 at Salisbury High School, earning their spot in the league title match!
- **Girls Soccer:** Advanced to the District XI Quarterfinals with disciplined defensive play and execution.
- **Competitive Cheer:** Launched their competitive season on October 25 at the Wilson High School Invitational, showcasing high-energy routines.

🥎 Coach Brian Neefe Inducted into District XI Hall of Fame

Legendary Southern Lehigh Softball Head Coach Brian Neefe was officially inducted into the District XI Hall of Fame on October 18, 2026. Coach Neefe's historic coaching career has touched generations of Spartan student-athletes.

🎼 Fine Arts: Winter Concert at Lehigh University's Zoellner Arts Center

Southern Lehigh High School will host its annual Winter Concert at the world-class Zoellner Arts Center on **Wednesday, December 16, 2026** (snow date: December 17).

> 🏃 **2nd Annual Jack's Team 5K Walk & Run Success!**
> On Saturday, October 17, our community gathered for the 2nd Annual Jack's Team 5K in honor of former MS Assistant Principal Jack Hankee, raising funds for Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

BOARD & COMMUNITY UPDATES

🎓 Class of 2027 Commencement: Stabler Arena

The Southern Lehigh School District will partner with Lehigh University to host the Southern Lehigh High School Class of 2027 Commencement Ceremony at **Stabler Arena on Friday, May 28, 2027**. Securing Stabler Arena guarantees an accessible, high-capacity venue ensuring every family member and guest can participate comfortably rain or shine.

🛍️ Gear Up with Official SLSD Spartan Merch!

Show your Spartan pride in the stands and in the community! Authentic Southern Lehigh apparel, outerwear, hats, and spirit accessories from top athletic brands are available 24/7 through our official online Sideline store: **SLSD Spartan Merch Store**.

❄️ Stay Connected: District Inclement Weather Resources

Ahead of winter conditions, families are encouraged to log into the Infinite Campus Parent Portal to verify emergency contact phone numbers and email preferences. Additional information is available at **slsd.org/parents**.

📌 KEY UPCOMING DATES & CALENDAR EVENTS

October 28, 2026	Opening Night: SLHS Fall Play "15 Reasons Not To Be In A Play"
November 9, 2026	SLSD School Board Meeting (6:30 PM, SLHS Media Center)
November 23, 2026	SLSD School Board Meeting (6:30 PM, SLHS Media Center)
November 23–25, 2026	Parent/Teacher Conferences (No School for Students)
November 26–29, 2026	Thanksgiving Recess (Schools & District Offices Closed)
December 16, 2026	HS Winter Concert at Zoellner Arts Center (Snow Date: Dec 17)
May 28, 2027	SLHS Class of 2027 Commencement Ceremony (Stabler Arena)

SOUTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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