

Building Futures

Spring 2007

Issue No.115

RSD Middle School: Centering on Success

In pre-school and elementary school, education focuses on discovery. Near the end of high school mature young adults are celebrating their accomplishments and looking forward to higher education or employment.

In the center of that learning continuum are middle school students, like those attending sixth through eighth grades at Rochester School for the Deaf (RSD). As they receive instruction in English, math, science, and social studies, RSD Middle School

students learn to become responsible for their own success. To increase learning opportunities, RSD Middle School teachers apply innovative and engaging lessons and activities that help their students to develop the skills and confidence to make empowered choices about their futures.

Technology and Teamwork

One powerful way to teach technology while encouraging students to work together is through RSD's Tech Lab, which includes Lab-Volt, a module-based, hands-on multimedia curriculum that meets NYS Technology, Math and Science Content Standards.

"RSD purchased seven Lab-Volt modules last year," explains Computer Technology Teacher Elissa Maltzan. "Lab-Volt lessons focus on math, science, literacy and history with school-to-career connections."

The modules include: Artificial Intelligence, Controls and Sensors, Automotive Exploration, Ecology, Fluid Power, Computer-Aided Design, and Conceptual & Applied Physics.

In Lab-Volt students are assigned lab partners for the duration of one module. After a few weeks they are assigned new partners and a new module. Much of the work is hands-on and experience-based. Students learn by doing, especially when

they work as partners and learn from each other.

"The nature of Lab-Volt encourages students to learn how to work together," says Ms. Maltzan. "Students are in control of their own learning. They also learn independence and gain an appreciation for education and knowledge while learning responsibility."

Ms. Maltzan says that Lab-Volt can guide student learning allowing her to become more of a resource rather than their step-by-step guide. "As a result, I am able to ensure they are using higher levels of thinking, and truly comprehend what they are learning," she adds.

Reading and Writing Literacy

Two ways in which RSD teachers are encouraging middle school students to "own their learning" is through engaging them in Literature Circles for reading and in hands-on activities for writing, following author Ruth Culham's *6 + 1 Traits of Writing*.



RSD teacher Elissa Maltzan (standing) works with students, Samuel Kemp (left) and Christal Mitchell (seated), on the Fluid Power Trainer, a component of the Lab-Volt Fluid Power module. By controlling how much air pressure is being created, students learn how to capture and utilize this energy.

"Students take responsibility and teach each other," says English Language Arts teacher Catherine Kipp. "They actively discuss what they are learning with their peers."

A Literature Circle consists of three to five students who are given a group reading

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RSD Middle School

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assignment. Each student is also assigned a role: discussion director, vocabulary sleuth, summary master, and illustration expert. At the next class they discuss the reading in their assigned roles.

"When the kids come together," Mrs. Kipp says, "the discussion director takes over and leads the circle, making sure that everyone takes turns sharing her or his prepared work."

The activity, according to Mrs. Kipp, develops summarizing skills, vocabulary building, and creative thinking.

Similarly, students approach activities related to Culham's *6 + 1 Traits of Writing* with a hands-on attitude. For one lesson, students in Mrs. Kipp's and other classrooms moved around from station to station, experiencing each trait related to writing, such as organization, word choice, sentence fluency, and presentation.

"It's a great model for instruction," says Mrs. Kipp. "As teachers, it helps us to exactly target where students are strong or weak in areas of writing. Students who struggle with writing improve because we can break it down, showing them the traits they use well and those they need to work on."



RSD MATHCOUNTS Team (left to right) Blaine and Bo Kaplan, Austin Morse, Mack Thomas, Ken Gentzke, and Coach Anne Eccher.

Mathematics

Five RSD Middle School students—Ken Gentzke, Austin Morse, Bo and Blaine Kaplan, and Mack Thomas—participated

in the first-ever MATHCOUNTS® math competition for middle school students with hearing loss. Former RSD Math Specialist Ms. Anne Eccher prepared the team and coached the students through the competition, held March 24, 2007, at Rochester Institute of Technology. As many as 35 students from schools and programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in California, Florida, Maryland, and New York competed this year, as both teams and individually, to correctly solve math problems within a designated time limit. MATHCOUNTS provides students with a foundation for success in science, technology, engineering and mathematic careers.

Beyond the Classroom

RSD Middle School students are active athletes, ambassadors and communicators outside of the classroom also.

With an active interest in scholastic athletics, the RSD Middle School girls have revived its basketball team, competing against Rochester-area middle schools in games both home and away. RSD Teacher Assistant and alumna Mrs. Patti Canne helped coach the team.

"I am so proud of the girls," says Mrs. Canne. "They played their hearts out. RSD won and lost games. Either way we are winners because at each game we displayed responsible behavior and good sportsmanship also."

On occasion middle school students are called upon to be RSD ambassadors, hosting children from Rochester area middle schools who are studying sign language and deaf culture.

This past winter RSD Middle School students welcomed a group of students from Rochester Christian School (RCS) in Penfield. RCS students practiced their signing with RSD students, toured the campus, and participated in RSD middle school classes.

"This was a special opportunity for our students to give their hearing peers a glimpse of what the world is like through the eyes of students who are deaf," says Mrs. Denise Stappenbeck, Director of



RSD Middle School Wildcats Girls Basketball Team as they play against East Palmyra Christian School at RSD.

RSD Elementary and Middle School Programs. "I'm proud of our students. They are very gracious hosts."

Lately, RSD Middle School students have become worldwide celebrities. Several times a week they provide daily announcements from the RSD TV studio. The video announcements are uploaded to RSD's website where they can be seen by virtually any one around the world who has access to a computer and the Internet.

"What you see on the web is the end product," Mrs. Stappenbeck explains. "Behind the scenes our students are collaboratively researching, writing the script, and practicing before the videotape rolls."

"This process, like most learning activities in middle school at RSD, is evolving. Clearly, our students are gaining new skills and confidence," adds Mrs. Stappenbeck.



RSD Students Complete Emergency Response Training

Four RSD high school students: Daniel Baker of Rochester; Chad Evringham of Bergen; Gavin Gutierrez of Henrietta; and, Joseph McCarthy of Cohocton, successfully completed the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training course.

The course was held February 27 through March 22, 2007, at the Monroe Community College (MCC) Public Safety Training Facility, located at 1190 Scottsville Road, in Rochester. Collaborative support was provided by MCC, RSD Outreach Center, FEMA, and the Monroe County Office of Emergency Preparedness.

CERT training requires a high level of commitment from participants, with a series of 8 three-hour classes or "modules." Each module focuses on

an aspect of emergency and disaster preparedness. Topics include fire suppression and safety, medical and search and rescue operations, disaster psychology, and CPR & AED.

CERT responders are routinely utilized by the American Red Cross. They also participate in Citizen Corps., a network of volunteer organizations that use the abilities of citizens to prepare communities for the threats of terrorism, crime and natural disasters.

Students were required to successfully complete all eight modules, the disaster simulation exercise and final exam to graduate. At graduation, students were issued a backpack containing personal protective equipment for their use as a certified emergency responder.



RSD's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training course graduates (left to right) Daniel Baker, Joseph McCarthy, Chad Evringham, and Gavin Gutierrez

Support RSD Rising Stars!

Donor gifts to RSD ensure that the school and its important programs provide exceptional educational opportunities for deaf children, their families, and individuals across Western and Central New York. We hope that you will continue with your loyal support. Please use this form with your own envelope when sending your gifts to RSD.

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RSD High School Student Wins Art Award in National Contest

Monica Keller, a high school student at RSD, earned second-place in the Art category of the 2007 Gallaudet University National Essay, Art, and Sign Contest.

The theme of the contest this year was personal achievement, "Going for the gold...in your life." Over 300 entries were received.

Miss Keller's award-winning entry in the Art category was a collage poster titled "Could You Wait?"

Her artwork was featured in *Celebrate!*, a magazine published annually by the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center at Gallaudet University. It was posted on Gallaudet's contest website and was prominently displayed in the high school at RSD.



"Could You Wait?"
by Monica Keller, 2007

Baby Simulators Teach Parenting Skills at RSD

In what appeared to be a small baby boom on campus, RSD high school students welcomed a number of robotic bundles of joy for lessons on proper infant care and parenting.

Students in Ms. Susan Klein's 10th grade Health class received RealCare® baby infant simulators. Just like human infants, each simulator follows an actual infant care schedule. Students were required to carry, feed, burp, rock and diaper their simulated infant around the clock.

Each robotic baby is controlled by software. As students care for their infant, the baby records all activities it is involved with. When attached to a personal computer each baby provides a detailed report showing exactly how well it was cared for. The babies and the RealCare curriculum have been proven to curb teenage parenthood, while fostering responsibility and empathy. The main goal of the program is to explore the physical and emotional, as well as the social and financial consequences of parenthood.

"Having the baby to care for is a good experience, but it is not a responsibility that I want right now and through college. It made me realize that having a baby is not as easy as it looks."

Richard Spiecker

"I knew as a teenager that it's not a good idea for me to have a baby. Now I know how hard it is to be a mother at my age. I definitely don't want to be a parent right now or anytime soon. I'm glad that I had a chance to experience this."

Janna DiBiase

"This lesson was a powerful one because it impacted our students and taught them about the responsibilities of caring for a baby. Having a RealCare baby helped our students to understand how to apply what they have learned to a real life situation."

Ms. Susan Klein

Danica Metlay (below, left) and Janna DiBiase are heading to class with their RealCare babies.



Mark Sperr keeps one watchful eye on his RealCare baby and one on his assignment for class.

Northeast Teams Gather at RSD for Academic Bowl

Eighty high school students from 16 schools and programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing students met at Rochester School for the Deaf for the 11th Annual Northeast Regional Gallaudet University Academic Bowl, March 22-25, 2007. Competitors from New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont attended the event, which was co-hosted by RSD and Monroe #1 BOCES.

The RSD team, defending Northeast Regional champions, included students Cory and Derrick Behm, Matthew Poe, Barbara Spiecker and Abigail Worek. RSD faculty Mr. Scott Gentzke and Mrs. Patti Wink coached the RSD team.

Going into the semi-final round, RSD swept all opponents to earn seven wins with no losses. "Unfortunately, we lost a hard-fought close match to Austine School for the Deaf in the semi-final match," said Coach Gentzke. "But they regrouped to defeat American School for the Deaf for third place. Third out of 16 is a pretty impressive feat in itself." Monroe #1 BOCES earned first place. Austine took second place.

One of the highest praises for the RSD team came from Ms. Darian Burwell, Coordinator of Recruitment in the Admissions Office at Gallaudet University. After the semi-final match, she stated, "(RSD is) a shining example and role model for every other school here because of how you've handled yourselves throughout the competition."

In summing up RSD's efforts in the Academic Bowl this year, Mr. Gentzke concluded, "Mrs. Wink and I have always been very proud of our players for how they've represented our school and this year is no exception."



RSD 2007 Academic Bowl Team (seated, left to right) Abigail Worek; Cory Behm; Barbara Spiecker; (standing) Dr. Michael Moore, Provost of Gallaudet University; Mrs. Patti Wink, Assistant Coach; Derrick Behm; Matthew Poe; Mr. Scott Gentzke, Coach; and, Ms. Kathy Vesey, Director, Gallaudet University Regional Center.



Monroe County and the City of Rochester issued a joint proclamation declaring Academic Bowl Competition Days. Patricia Stevens, Monroe County Director of Government and Community Relation (center) presents the proclamation to Mrs. Marty Nelson-Nasca of BOCES and Dr. Harold Mowl.



Gallaudet's Dr. Michael Moore (far left) and Ms. Kathy Vesey (far right) recognize Northeast Regional Academic Bowl co-host representatives (center, left to right) Mrs. Marty Nelson-Nasca of Monroe #1 BOCES, Mr. Steven Morse, President of RSD Board of Directors, and Dr. Harold Mowl.

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Harold M. Mowl, Jr., Ph.D., Superintendent/CEO



Save the Date!

Saturday, June 2, 2007

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\$2 per person • \$3 for an entire family

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