

Celebrating our Teachers!!!

This newsletter is all about our teachers. This year, we have a few retirees...while we are sad to see them go, we truly hope they enjoy this time with friends and family. The second portion of this newsletter is dedicated to our Teacher's of the Year. Please take a moment to read about our wonderful teaching staff. Sincerely, Melissa Varley



Camille Abdy, Ridgedale Middle School

Mrs. Abdy began her teaching career in third grade. She loved watching the students grow and listening to their stories. She moved to 8th grade and was able to teach those children again. The science fair became an area of excitement for her as her students began making more difficult projects. She was moved to sixth grade and found that to be an enjoyable experience as she had the opportunity to mold students and introduce them to middle school. Her classroom parents were very involved and helped her build amazing structures such as a rain forest, a space station and many more. Soon, it was discovered that she possessed a French degree and then, she was teaching French and Science. The highlight of her French connection was taking her students to see Les Miserables and taking students to Le Grande Café in Morristown for a real dining experience. She found her true love in 7th grade. She found 7th grade students to be passionate and engaging. During her career, she was chosen as Teacher of the Year. She truly enjoys visits and letters from former students. "While this career is hard work, I love it!" Says Mrs. Abdy, who lives in Florham Park and loves being part of the community she teaches in since she has gotten to know her students personally and academically. For the past 25 years, Mrs. Abdy gave her all to Florham Park. But, now she looks forward to spending time with her six grandchildren. Thank you, Mrs. Abdy for your service to the Florham Park School District!



Cheryl Wasserman, Ridgedale Middle School

Mrs. Wasserman describes herself as a "Renaissance Woman" as she is interested in all things of beauty. She spends each day living mindfully. Meditation is a part of her daily routine, and she is constantly learning something

new. The Yankees, whether winning or losing are a part of her life. Outside of work she can be found mastering Tai Chi. She shares some of these moves with her students at times. She has been with the Florham Park School District for 30 years, and she has taught in each building. Her covered subjects have included: math, computers, science, G&T, industrial arts, MAP, tech ed., and most recently STEM. She has been an advisor for Kaleidoscope (a literary magazine), Panther Press (our newspaper), and tech club. Tech Club received national recognition for innovation in the design of a mini solar car. She has been instrumental in our graduation program. She has also written many grants and is consistently encouraging her co-workers to do the same. Mrs. Wasserman often asks, "Who doesn't like free money?" Her time with the students, faculty, and staff is cherished. She enjoys teaching students of former students and working alongside colleagues whom she taught. It provides her with a sense of history and community, which Mrs. Wasserman describes as grand. She feels her greatest challenge has also been her greatest reward- reaching children that might otherwise fall through the cracks. "Nothing is more satisfying than seeing the look of understanding in a child's eyes." Thank you, Mrs. Wasserman, for your service to the Florham Park School District!



Mary McGovern, Briarwood Elementary School

Mrs. McGovern came to Florham Park in 1986 after a year as an itinerant speech therapist in Bergen County. She states, "I was looking for a place to work that had a community feel, I found it in Florham Park!" She started as a speech therapist for the special education population in Briarwood School before becoming a K-2 special education teacher in 1996. She has spent the last 8 years as part of the awesome kindergarten team at Briarwood. She says, "In my past 32 years I have considered myself fortunate and blessed to teach beside the finest group of colleagues." She notes that the students and families will always hold a special place in her heart. She will cherish the memories of the time spent together. My students and families will always hold a special place in my heart and I cherish the memories of our time together. Thank you, Mrs. McGovern, for your service to the Florham Park School District!



Frances Taylor, Briarwood Elementary School

Mrs. Taylor has taught preschool, kindergarten, and 1st grade in the Florham Park School District for the past 27 years! When asked why Mrs. Taylor wanted to be a teacher, she says, "She knew she wanted to be a teacher from a very young age and is very grateful to have been able to fulfill this life dream." In addition to teaching, she loves to read and is always in the midst of a book. As soon as she finishes one she immediately starts a new one! She has enjoyed sharing her love of reading with her young students who also love books! Finally, Mrs. Taylor has a huge love of animals. Mrs. Taylor states, "Most children love animals too so this has been another way to connect with my young students and share this common passion." Following retirement, she hopes to devote herself more fully to the cause of animal rescue. She currently volunteers with a cat and dog rescue but loves farm animals as well. Thank you, Mrs. Taylor, for your service to the Florham Park School District!

Governor's Teacher of the Year

This is the first time in many years that Florham Park has awarded teacher of the year. This year, we had many teachers nominated by faculty, parents, and members of the community. Below are those who received the award.

Mrs. Jane Chonowski, Briarwood School 2nd Grade Teacher



Mrs. Chonowski has worked in education for 24 years. She has been in her current position as a special education in-class support teacher for 15 years. Mrs. Chonowski strives to meet all of the needs of her students within her 2nd grade inclusive classroom. She connects with all of her children, their families, and promotes a multi sensory learning experience.

You can see Mrs. Chonowski getting excited as she executes her lessons, whether word study, math, or workshop lessons. Mrs. Chonowski continues to be innovative in her ability to bring lessons to life.

The students within the class are a community of learners. Mutual respect is an integral component of the classroom, as children feel safe to take academic risks.

As you enter Mrs. Chonowski's co-teaching classroom, you are greeted by children eager to learn in a classroom filled with student work and accessible posters hung around the room.

Mrs. Christine Calafati, Briarwood School BSI Teacher Professional Services Provider



Mrs. Calafati has worked in education for 17 years. She has been in her current position as a Basic Skills Instruction teacher for the past 3 years. She has developed a connection with all students from kindergarten through grade 2. This monumental task was completed with care, purposeful discussions, and creation of a safe learning environment, where children can take academic risks.

A willingness to learn and an open mind afforded Mrs. Calafati the opportunity to bring our Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program to life. She read and organized the materials making them her own. Mrs. Calafati's diligence and attention to detail has proven overwhelming success for our students in this new program. While in Mrs. Calafati's care, our children learn confidence, specific skills and concepts, and how to receive feedback to assist them with reading abilities.

Additionally, Mrs. Calafati became a teacher leader assisting colleagues with a new approach to teaching reading through detailed and differentiated interventions. As a result, this provides additional resources to our staff by enhancing their ability to identify challenges and provide instant feedback.

Mrs. Lori Pompei, Brooklake School 4th Grade Math



We are happy to celebrate Mrs. Lori Pompei from the Brooklake Elementary School, as the Brooklake School Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Pompei not only serves as the Gr.4 lead math teacher, but serves as a grade level, school, and district level leader due to her work ethic, attitude, professionalism, and student performance. Mrs. Pompei's professionalism is shown on a daily basis; in her role as a teacher, mentor to new staff members, former curriculum council member, and in her dealings with the administration and the community. Her suggestions to administration, staff and parents have and continue to be sound and based on best practice. Mrs. Pompei serves as one of the lead math teachers in Gr.4 and has served as a professional role model for new staff members entering the Brooklake School. In addition, Mrs. Pompei has initiated and conducted math trainings for grade level parents and she truly excels at providing these trainings/classes to the community and providing follow-up. Mrs. Pompei is regularly seen providing extra help to students during her lunch break, as well as before/after school and is regularly checking in on the student and family concerns that may impact the student's overall well being. Mrs. Pompei's dedication is not just seen within school hours, as she is regularly visible in the community and is often present at activities taking place after school, at nights, and over the weekend.

Ms. Michaela Harris, Ridgedale Middle School Language Arts



Michaela Harris exemplifies what it means to be a teacher in her dedication to the children she teaches as she shares her passion for reading and writing. She quietly leads by the example she sets in being an expert of her curricular area and continuously looks to grow in her understanding of how children learn and develop. Her classroom is a place where all children feel valued and cared about as she helps them see the gifts that lie within each one of them. Her diligent and tireless efforts are seen in the time she dedicates to her craft, but also in the way students and colleagues describe what she means to them. She is so much more than a language arts teacher at Ridgedale Middle School. She makes a positive difference in the lives of her students and the people she works with everyday.