



Soar Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2014



A DIVISION OF
NORTHWESTERN COUNSELING
& SUPPORT SERVICES

5th Annual Soar Showcase



The stage is set for the middle school Zumba performance of 'Thriller'. Complete with black lights, costumes, and make-up; it was thrilling!

After weeks of many practices and rehearsals, the stage lights were on and student nerves were high. Friday, April 18th, marked the fifth annual, Soar Showcase. Thanks to show creator and director, Tiffany Trombley, the showcase has become an annual event to which our school, families, and

A student sings to 'Every Storm Runs out of Rain', by Gary Allen.



community look forward.

There was a great variety of performances this year, but as every year, we had our share of rock stars. Singing songs from country, to classic rock, to

even popular, cartoon theme songs, we had it all.

Students even teamed up producing a high school duo, elementary duo, and a mix of a high school student and two staff member trio.

The musical talent was beyond impressive. Many students have gained instrumental exposure through our music program and our music teacher, Flora Whitmore. There were guitar accompaniments and even remarkable piano solos. Through voices and musical talents, our students truly showed their stuff.

Additionally, we had break dancers, a power point presentation highlighting quotes and information about bullying, a ribbon dance performance, and even a terrifying Zumba dance to Michael Jackson's 'Thriller'. The makeup alone in this act was scary!

Surrounding the stage, was a massive

An eighth grader shows his talent with a piano solo.



amount of student work and projects from this school year (see the Student Corner on page 6 for some of this work). There were hand-made quilts, Egyptian pyramids, student designed Ben & Jerry's

pints, writing pieces, challenging, algebra, poster problems, and book projects from several grade levels.

Special thanks to Tiffany Trombley for organizing this event and truly giving the students a chance to shine on stage. We also want to thank MC

extraordinaire, Deana Paquette, our music teacher, Flora Whitmore, our staff and student stage crew, and numerous staff mentors.

Finally, and often the 'sweetest' part of the showcase, is the presentation of snacks provided by the Culinary Connection. Several days are spent preparing and baking for this event, and their hard work is always greatly appreciated.



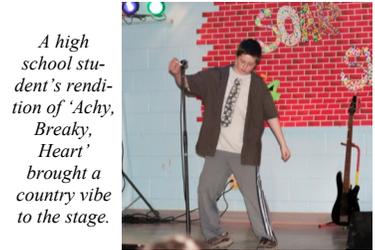
An elementary student sings the 'Fairly Odd Parents' theme song.



A student performs a unique, ribbon dance.



A student in the Back to School program sings 'Won't go Home Without You.', to a roaring crowd.



A high school student's rendition of 'Achy, Breaky, Heart' brought a country vibe to the stage.

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Pancakes and Rock, Papers, Scissors



Five-thirty in the morning is not the typical arrival time for students, but on April 17th, several were up, ready, and cooking.

Several students worked with staff to have a delicious pancake breakfast ready, to fuel us through out last couple of days before vacation.

There were scrambled eggs, bacon, home-fries, toast, fruit, and pancakes galore. To complete the meal, it was

served with our own maple syrup, straight from our sugar house.

Prior to this feast, Marc Brunelle led the school in a student and staff 'rock, paper, scissors' competition. Discovered during a ropes course training a couple of years ago, this activity is one in which any age or ability can participate.

First, everyone partners up. The first round is held, and all the winners from this first round find a new

partner, and move onto round two. As the winner's circle gets smaller, each person that gets defeated becomes a cheerleader for the person that conquered them.

In the end, there are two competitors left and two huge cheering sections for each. It was a great way to begin our morning; first rallying together, and then feasting together.



The coveted trophy from what's becoming our Annual Rock, Paper, Scissors Tournament.



Collecting Coins for a Valuable Cause



This winter, Erika LeClair's sixth grade class went to work raising money in a unique way. It began taking shape with class discussions and then a bulletin board that caught everyone's attention.

The discussions were geared towards charities in our area and around the world, and the ways donations can help these groups. When the Vermont Children's Hospital was chosen, the WOKO Big Change Round Up, immediately came to mind.



Pictured above are two of the students that helped raise and deliver money to WOKO's Big Change Round Up, for the Vermont Children's Hospital.

The class decided to have their own change drive to contribute to this effort, which happened to be going on at the same time.

Then came the bulletin board: 'Pay It Forward', which became a school-wide event. By giving a change donation, for which students could use tickets they earn academically and behaviorally, students and staff could purchase a compliment for someone in our school. It may sound simple, but watching students write, read, deliver, and receive these kind words was more valuable than any amount of change.

Over the course of the week, many students participated multiple times in the compliment drive. Some even brought in extra

change they rounded up by explaining our efforts to those outside of our school. Not only were the compliments enduring, but so was the desire of our students to make others feel cared about.

In the end, \$281.70 was raised. Mrs. LeClair's class took a trip to Walmart in March to deliver the money to the Big Change Round Up. Months later, there are still compliment slips lingering around the school. Many are slips that are filled out and being held close by the recipient. Whether they are stashed in student cubbies, pinned to bulletin boards by staff office spaces, or just folded in a pencil box, it is clear that these kind words truly meant something.

The Sounds of Soar

It's 9:30 am and classes are in full swing. Walking down the hallway, the usual school noises are noticeable- the towel dispenser humming loudly as someone washes their hands, teachers giving their lectures, students talking and office phones ringing.

Suddenly, from it all, comes the wail of a single note on the electric guitar. It wavers for a second and then tapers off. It sounds again, followed by the familiar first strains of 'Iron Man'. It stops abruptly with a squeak of strings, followed by a quick burst of talk and laughter. The wail starts up again, louder this time.

That's MY class, and the chorus of voices and guitar wail are those of my students in 2nd period



A high school student and two staff members play guitar and sing to 'Simple Man'.

guitar. Before last year, many students had not gone beyond strumming a few chords.

Last year, students started grabbing guitars to puzzle out a chord or two in music club, or to learn a song for a school concert. For three months, everyone's favorite song became 'Smoke on the Water'. Kids were teaching it to each other and playing it every chance they got. They learned quickly and were

ready for more. It seemed that what Soar really needed was a place where students could polish their skills and play the music they enjoyed.

So, every Tuesday and Thursday, four high school students, grades 9-12, started to meet to toil over the six-stringed instrument in Guitar Class.

They learned chords, how to tune and change strings, a little bit of theory (lots of groans) and best of all, how to have fun making music with other people.

Through the course of the year, they have played the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Nirvana, Oasis, NIN, The Offspring, and Led Zeppelin, and are still going strong. Students have had the option to spend positive breaks with a guitar or bring an instrument to session.

Spontaneous class sing-alongs are happening. People are breaking into guitar solos midday. Music is everywhere, in the halls, in the cafeteria, in our concerts and classrooms, and on our minds.

This is the sound of Soar now, and in my opinion, I think it sounds pretty great!

Written by: Flora Whitmore
BMT, MT-BC, Music Teacher/ Clinician

The Sugar House and Greenhouse

The sugaring season was a short one this year for many sugar makers. We began with a cold start and then only had a brief warm up. For larger operations, and ones with vacuum systems, it turned out to be a fairly successful year. However, smaller sugar houses, such as the Soar Sugar House, didn't have many days with the sap flowing.

We lacked sunshine and warm weather, both critical components when it comes to full sap buckets. The sugar makers here at Soar were able to make three gallons of the liquid gold and are already looking forward to next year.

Located just behind the sugar house, is our green house. The green house will be completed and ready for action, prior to the summer program start. Over the summer, students will be planting, watering, and also taking care



A student and staff member carefully pour the collected sap into a larger storage bin.

of the garden beds located on both sides of the school. There will be vegetables of all kinds and even some flowers this year.

In addition to the sugar house and new greenhouse, is the creation of a class that will meet twice a week, beginning this fall. The class will be taught by Claire Thompson. The students in this class will be leaders when it comes to the greenhouse and sugar house. They will learn about the many ways to use harvested crops and the resources all around us. They will also work with the Vermont Food Bank and other food and maple producers in the area.

Through working with the Vermont Food Bank, the class will be participating in their 'Seeds for Growth' program. This program provides seeds, at no cost, to groups that will then return 30% of their harvested crops to the Vermont Food Bank. It is a great way to learn about farming and giving back.



Independent Schools Conference

Last August, teachers and special educators from independent schools across Vermont gathered at Soar Learning Center for a day of workshops and sharing. This was the 2nd Annual, Independent School's Conference. This year, Soar will again host this event, the week prior to the start of school.

The reviews from last year's conference were positive in regards to not only the space and facility, but also the organization and workshops offered. Teaching in an independent school has its differences from a public school and this conference offers staff a chance to connect, share ideas, problem solve, and swap successes.

Look for a full review of the conference in our September issue.





Winter and Spring Clubs and Classes

The high school Friday classes have been working hard in their different content areas. The Personal Fitness class has been focusing on the 5 components of health related fitness. They have been playing a variety of team and individual sports, focusing on cardiovascular endurance and enjoyment of physical activity. They also continue to go to Fitness Zone in St. Albans most Fridays. Students have been developing their own training routines based on their individual goals.



A high school student spends his Friday morning strength training at Fitness Zone.

The Literature and Drama class has composed several creative writing pieces: short stories, personal essays, and written works inspired by famous pieces of art. Students have been focused on dialogue, setting, characterization, and tone. Each piece of writing has been carried through the writing process: drafting, rough draft, self edit, and several revisions.

Band class provides an opportunity for students to further explore their own music skills on a more independent and advanced level. About half of the students have chosen to learn and practice DJ techniques on professional equipment. Many of our class members also prepared and performed pieces for the Soar Showcase and Holiday Concert. Over half of the class was involved in at least one school performance this year, some for the first time ever!

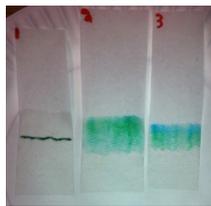
In the elementary school, students participated in 'Myths,

Mysteries, and Legends' clubs, throughout January and February. The lower elementary focused mostly on forensics. They set up faux crime scenes, provided clues to help solve the mystery, and also looked at finger and shoe printing.

The middle school had a group studying forensics as well. This group explored the schooling required for forensic studies, experimented with fingerprinting and teeth impressions, and also learned about chromatography.

In addition, the middle school had groups that discussed mysteries such as Bigfoot, the Bermuda Triangle, and the Ice Man. Students watched clips, did readings, participated in a Smart Board quizzes, and created projects related to their mystery topic. Concerning Bigfoot, the consensus was that he is not real, but there were a handful of people that are strong believers. While learning about the Ice Man, students worked through a variety of different scenarios the could have explained what happened to him. From this, students were encouraged to use 'expert' opinions, as well

Three chromatography strips show the difference in chemical make-up of three, similar, green pens.



as their own, to draw their own conclusions surrounding the Ice Man's death.

During March and April, the elementary classrooms invited some professionals in to speak about their careers, which fulfills a vocational curricular standard. The middle school spent one morning learning about the Army, both as a full

time job and the reserves. Both of the speakers were well connected to Soar Learning Center. Thomas Hamlin, the physical education teacher, brought lots of gear and supplies that are typical for daily use as a soldier in the Army Reserves. Students got to try on and attempt walking around with many pounds of gear.



A seventh grader tries on some Army gear to see that it's not quite like our every day clothes.

Home-school coordinator

Kylie Ashton's brother, SSG Mason Lord, also came and presented to the students. He works for the Army on a daily basis as a Team Chief for the 5th CST/WMD (weapons of mass destruction). SSG Lord brought some technical gear, such as a 'foreign substance recognition device'. The students were really engaged and enjoyed testing this device.

AmCare facilitates an educational visit with middle school students.



The middle school also spent a morning with AmCare, learning about emergency services in our area and what the job entails. Two paramedics visited and discussed the typical and non-typical day, and also the education and continued learning involved. Students were also able to check out the ambulance, some of their gear, and learn some safety information.

The lower elementary also participated in a vocational study and looked at a few specific careers and related activities. They took interest inventories to assess possible career areas in which they might one day be interested. Students conducted experiments, taking on the role of scientist, worked with stethoscopes and learned about some of the tools doctors use, and classes also acted as engineers. As engineers, they were given a list of materials and the task to design a bridge that would hold a certain amount of weight. The K-5 students had a great time experimenting with this assignment.

During the final two months of the year, students across the elementary participated in wellness clubs. Some students went swimming, others fished, one group conducted team building activities such as creating an egg transporter that can be dropped from a daring height, while a final group brought games and activities to Care Partners in St. Albans.

Step Up Day at Soar

This year, we had 4 students participate in Step Up Day. In past years, we have had as many as 9, but it is simply a smaller group this year.

For the first four periods of the day, eighth graders attended core classes and one special, so they get a taste of high school in its entirety. Also, students were assigned a home-room (not necessarily the one in which they will placed) so they can see the everyday goings on and get to meet the high school students and teachers on a more personal level.



On the elementary side, students moving from the lower elementary to the middle school also participated in a mini-step up day. Six students from Ms. Torrey's classroom joined Mrs. LeClair's class for a morning meeting at the end of May.

This opportunity within our school, truly offers students a chance to meet the new staff with which they will be working. It also provides students with a chance to make connections before starting a new school year.





SLC Summer Programming

Summer is fast approaching. Our summer programs will run from June 30th through July 25th. This year, the same fun will be had, but we have new faces leading the students and staff.

Taking care of the elementary and Back to School summer program, is Nikki Rees. Nikki has been a special educator at Soar for quite a few years and has worked with the majority of the students. She has four, themed-based weeks planned for the students. Each week will further develop and maintain both academic and behavioral skills. By the end of the month, students will have touched upon fitness, mathematics, nature and survival skills, personal safety, science, writing, community service, history, reading, and nutrition. All of these come embedded in the form of summer fun.

The weeks are entitled "Get Moving", "Explore Your Community", "Team Players", and "Bon Appétit". The four weeks will provide students will ample hands-on work, outdoor activities, team building tasks, and ventures into their community.

Students will be taking a trip to Northern Lights Rock and Ice challenge course, watching a Vermont Lake Monsters Game, cooking at the Ronald McDonald House, touring Hannaford's and Ben & Jerry's, en-

joying a day on the Spirit of Ethan Allen and at Jay Peak Water Park, and participating in bowling and Zumba.

A few students are already looking forward to the summer program. One student said of last year, "I liked being able to spend time with my friends and going to different places." When asked the best parts of the summer program, one student quickly answered, "my favorite parts of the summer were the trips to the water park and horseback riding."

On the other side of the building, our high school summer program has undergone a face-lift. Brad Messier, high school service coordinator, and Devin Quinlan, intake coordinator, have put many hours into what is now called the S.E.R.V.E. Program. The program will address academics, life skills, community involvement, and making healthy choices.

S.E.R.V.E. stands for Service, Education, Recreation, Vocation, and Exposure. The service portion of the program will provide students opportunities to work with one another, volunteer in the community, and feel a sense of connectedness. The ever-important education piece, is unique in the fact that it allows students to acquire academic credits. Students engaged in the program will be able to earn .5 credits in physical education, .5

credits in science or language arts, and .5 credits in an elective. These credits will be earned through standards-based activities that are tailored to our students needs. Going into the school year with an additional 1.5 credits is huge, for both students that may have fallen behind at one point or are looking to get ahead.

The recreation component will help students gain awareness of the many outdoor activities our state provides for us. All of the activities in which students will participate will foster cooperative learning, appreciation of our natural resources, and how to enjoy a healthy, yet fun, lifestyle.

The vocational component gives students a chance to build job skills, learn about obtaining employment, and some students will even be placed in the community at a job site. (For more on our vocational programming and grant from the Dept. of Labor, see page five.)

Finally, the last piece of the S.E.R.V.E. Program is exposure. This piece sews all facets of the program together by helping students realized the importance of experiencing new things, learning the benefits of being able to push themselves, and also seeing themselves in a more positive and confident light.

Look for the summer program review in our September newsletter, where the students can attest to the fun and success of both programs.

An elementary student climbs a rope ladder at Northern Lights Rock and Ice ropes course.



Quilting Comfort in the High School

Students at Soar Learning Center spent two weeks creating 12 baby quilts from scratch, only using a needle and thread. "It's one thing to teach students about events that happened in the past; it's another to have them relive that period for themselves," explained History teacher Jennifer Sicard.

"Students were asking for more hands-on projects, and what better way to explain child labor, than to recreate the textile industry



within a class."

Each person had to trace a template on the material, cut out the pieces, and hand-sew everything. Many had no experience with even threading a needle, so the project was slow going initially.

"Pin-pricks were numerous the first couple of days, but each student worked diligently to complete the project," says Sicard.

"Not one student refused the activity. I've never had that happen. Every student seemed thoroughly involved. Many put in extra hours during his/her free time."

History teacher, Jennifer Sicard, poses with one of the quilts in progress.



What was the reason for the dedication? When the students were given the specifics of the project, they were told that no

one would be keeping the quilts.

Each quilt was to be donated to the Birthing Center at Northwestern Medical Center, in St. Albans. "Each quilt was made with altruistic motives." Eleventh grader Ian said of the project, "It was fun and I would do it again in a heartbeat."

Jennifer Sicard, M.Ed
History Teacher

An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.
-Benjamin Franklin





Culinary Connection & Recipe Corner

For the Culinary Connection, there have been six, dedicated students throughout the majority of the school year. The group will be losing one member, as she graduates after two years of hard work.



Three high school students and Claire Thompson take a break from all their baking and cooking.

This spring, culinary students prepared a festive St. Patrick's Day lunch, complete with beef stew, Irish soda bread, and frosted shamrock cookies. Students catered an NCSS training for 80 people at the American Legion. The lunch options were three different types of wraps and sandwiches, with homemade desserts.

The Culinary Connection also put time into the refreshments for the Soar Showcase in April, made preparations for the school-wide BBQ that was held in June, feeding about 150 people, and will be spend several solid days getting the sweets and snacks ready for graduation.

The Friday lunches have continued to be delicious. One meal recently offered was buffalo chicken wraps, served with over roasted sweet potatoes and rainbow cupcakes. Another popular meal was lemon chicken pasta, a weight watchers recipe, which was offered with Texas toast and peppermint patty bars.

As the end of the year approached, the cooking class held its' second Junior Iron Chef Contest. Students participated in a practice run earlier in the spring, but held the finals at the end of May.

This contest was between classmates and used members of the administration as judges. The students had to create and execute a meal that was judged on presentation, flavor, and nutrition. During this final round, students were hoping to perfect their meals and be voted the overall winner. All of the contestants put time and effort into their dishes and should all be considered winners.

Carrot Cake

Ingredients:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 4 eggs | 3 cups grated carrots |
| 1 1/4 cups veg. oil | 1 cup chopped pecans |
| 2 cups white sugar | 1/2 cup butter, softened |
| 2 teaspoons vanilla extract | 8 ounces cream cheese (softened) |
| 2 cups flour | 4 cups confectioner's sugar |
| 2 teaspoons baking soda | 1 teaspoon vanilla |
| 2 teaspoons baking powder | 1 cup chopped pecans |
| 1/2 teaspoon salt | |
| 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon | |

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a 9x13 inch pan.
2. In a large bowl, beat together eggs, oil, white sugar and 2 teaspoons vanilla. Mix in flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt and cinnamon. Stir in carrots. Fold in pecans. Pour into prepared pan.
3. Bake in a preheated oven for 40-50 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes clean.
4. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack and cool completely.



To make Frosting:

1. In a medium bowl, combine butter, cream cheese, confectioner's sugar and 1 teaspoon vanilla.
2. Beat until the mixture is smooth and creamy.
3. Stir in chopped pecans and frost the cooled cake.

-From allrecipes.com

Vocational Programming: Get Working!

Thanks to a grant, written by Vocational Coordinator, Claire Thompson, Soar Learning Center has been chosen to receive a grant from the Department of Labor. This is the third year we have received this grant.

The grant funds training programs for students throughout the summer and even places students at job sites within their community. This summer, 10-12 students will be participating in the vocational training. There is even a possibility of two, past high school students, returning and joining the program.

Through the grant, younger students work with a few peers at a job site, while older students are placed independently to learn the skills from current employees and the employers themselves. Students are evaluated weekly and this process

helps them experience and understand the importance of not only maintaining job skills, but also learning new ones.

A few of the placements for this summer are Vermont Organics, St. Albans Bay Park, and Highgate Recreation. To these businesses and the others offering their support, we thank you.

As we head into the summer, we currently have one 10th and two 11th graders that have already applied, interview, and received summer placements. They will be working at local hardware and convenience stores. Congratulations to these three, hardworking students. We wish them well this summer and hope they gain valuable, vocational experience.

Finally, thank you to Claire, for helping provide this opportunity to our students.

J. Carr Competes in States for Track and Field

Every year, several students transition back to their sending schools from Soar. However, it is not every year that we have a student participate in a sport at their sending school AND qualify for states.

Josh Carr participated in track and field for Milton High School this spring. He decided to join the team this year "to prove that he could start a sport and stick with it". He was even proactive during the pre-season, meeting with the Milton Athletic Director and head coach for the track team.



Attending practice every day of the week and even some weekends, Josh proved to be a devoted member of the team. He made significant contributions to the team's success by competing in the Shot Put, Discus, and Javelin.

During a home meet on April 29th, Josh qualified for the State Meet in the Javelin. Throwing 124 feet, Josh reached a goal that is not often met by many athletes in the state, and by far, fewer Sophomores. He then qualified in in the Discus, for both the State Meet and the Essex Invitational. Additionally, he was the top shot put thrower for the Milton team.

When asked about his experience, Josh says that sports can help teens "build confidence, teamwork, leadership, and friendship. You

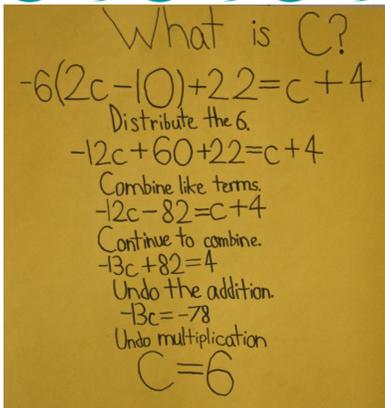
make a bond with your teammates; like a family".

Our physical education teacher, Thomas Hamlin, has been a mentor throughout this entire season for Josh. In addition to Mr. Hamlin, Soar and Milton are both very proud of Josh's hard work. Both of his schools were thinking of him on June 7th, as he competed in Fair Haven, at the state level. He finished 8th, 10th, and 11th in his three events.

Throughout this track and field season, Josh not only showed his strength and skill at each event, but he also demonstrated his sense of commitment and dedication. Congratulations Josh, and thank you for being such an incredible role model.



Always with us...
 In honor and memory of Jessi Taylor, our staff (some students also took part) wore purple, one Friday in April. There were also a few Jessi 'Queen of Everything' crowns floating around. She WAS the queen of everything, as she could make any situation better by her laugh, her words, and her ability to remind you of the important things in life. We all hold onto her words and do our best to live like Jessi.



Above: A middle school algebra poster, walks readers through the multiple steps required to solve for the variable 'c'.

Below: Students in the 6th grade are working on a unit studying Greek Mythology. Here is one student's drawing of Pandora's Jar.



Above: Displayed is an elementary student's diagram of a flower, the different parts, and the root system.

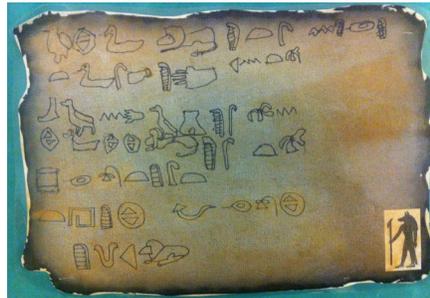
Below: K-4 has been doing an alphabet count down. Each day there was a themed activity based on a letter. "B" was for bubbles. The kids made art by blowing bubbles in dyed water and also had fun with a homemade bubble solution.



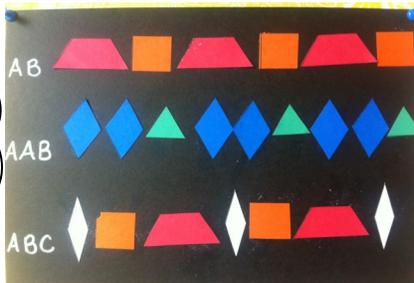
The woodworking class, which meets twice each week, has completed several projects this spring. They have designed and built the table (right) and also doubled our garden space with additional garden boxes (above).



Right: The 7th grade has been studying Ancient Egypt. After learning about hieroglyphics, students used cinnamon-rubbed paper to create their own message. Students composed their messages from notes taken during class.



Below: Student's in an elementary math class have been studying patterns. They completed posters, demonstrating their understanding of the concept, using pattern blocks.



Right: A student's book project on the book, The Courage of Sarah Noble, created in a middle school reading class.



Right: A fifth and eighth grader read together during language arts class. A middle school and elementary classroom teamed up every other week to complete reading based activities and lessons together.



Thank you to everyone that contributed to Price Chopper's 'Tools for Schools' and Hannaford Helps Schools. From everyone here, we deeply appreciate your generosity!