

## **Music Department Highlights Fall, 2009**

- **Early childhood music education**

In our district students receive regularly scheduled instruction in music through their general music classes from kindergarten through seventh grade. The district should be applauded for its efforts to provide young students with a musical education. Instruction in music at the primary grade levels is supported in the research literature as being one of the critical or optimal periods for music instruction. Many of the neural pathways responsible for musical functions are most efficiently developed prior to the age of seven. If we were to miss this window of opportunity we would be compromising the musical potential of our students.

- **Mini Measures**

We can see some of the benefits of this training in groups such as “Mini-Measures”—a select vocal group conducted by Mrs. Duncan that promotes character education through singing and movement. This group consists of students from Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, which gives the students a unique opportunity to share the joy of music together regardless of age. I understand, you were able to get a small taste of this group, singing "Together", at the BOE meeting at Dryden Elementary last month.

- **Folk Dancing/music clubs**

Mrs. Davis recently hosted a Family Folk Dancing Fling at DES. This gave parents the opportunity to experience some of the musical activities the students had been learning in class. All learning is colored by emotions and we all learn more effectively when we experience learning through positive emotions. I find that quality music instruction lends itself naturally to this philosophy. It was wonderful to see Mrs. Davis’s students embody the music in such a positive way. Additionally Mrs. Davis offers students the opportunity to explore new music through groups like guitar club and bell choir.

- **Band through the ages!**

Coming up this March the Lion Band will be performing in conjunction with the HS Wind Ensemble. This is a real treat for our musicians as the younger students get to experience the thrill of “playing with the big kids” and the HS students begin to learn how to fulfill the role of mentor. This will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> year that we have made the connection between beginning band students and their older counterparts—which helps to showcase the musical successes of those who make a long-term commitment.

- **MS Honor Bands**

Most recently in the middle school we have had three students: Anne McConnell, Carrie Thomas and Bryan Wakeman perform in the All-County Band festival. This select group of students was chosen to play with other students from Tompkins County after performing for adjudicators last May at the NYSSMA solo festival. Honors groups such as this allow students to experience the joy of music making with students from other communities and fulfill the role of ambassadors for the Dryden School District.

- **HS Honor Band**

At the HS level, for the second year in a row Matt Lowe was selected to be a member of an All-State ensemble. Last year he represented the district in Rochester as a member of the Symphonic Band and this year he will be playing principle trombone in the jazz ensemble. To help put this achievement into perspective, it would be similar to having a Dryden athlete chosen as quarterback or pitcher for a select All-State team—truly a fantastic achievement in all cases.

- **HS Choral Honors**

In our HS choral program, 18 vocal students prepared and performed solos for NYSSMA Adjudicators. All students received ratings from excellent to outstanding. As a result Kevin Drew will be representing Dryden for the third year in a row along with Austin Brecht as members of the Area All-State Mixed Chorus hosted by Ithaca College. Additionally, 20 of our students will represent Dryden in the All County Mixed Chorus hosted by Newfield. Participation in these groups offers our select students additional opportunities for enrichment.

- **Music Pursuits Post HS**

Another indicator of a successful music education is the pursuit of music at the collegiate level. From our choral program We currently have three Dryden alumni: Rebecca Rozzoni Tim Fuchs and Annali Fuchs pursuing their love of music in Musical Theater at SUNY Cortland.

I know that these few items I've mentioned only brush the surface of the musical activities that take place everyday in our buildings. The best way to appreciate the musicianship of our students and the quality of our educators is to visit a class or concert. I believe that a quality music education is the birthright of all students. We are currently meeting many of the musical needs of our students as exemplified by the many classroom and extra-curricular musical activities that we offer our students. Having said that, there are many areas in the curriculum that require attention. As the district enters into the process of curriculum review and alignment the music department looks forward to continuing successful practices as well as identifying areas needing improvement. I applaud Dryden in its consistent efforts to maintain access to a quality arts education and I look forward to the future as we continue to work towards meeting the musical needs of all students.

