



TRANSITIONS

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Anna Devine and Robert Graves Pen Pal Program Inspires Collaboration

Principals Brian Martin and Errin Parese know that students in each grade level have distinct academic strengths and needs. When these administrators teamed up to create a unique pen pal program to bridge the two schools, they knew it would be best to enable the in-house experts – classroom teachers – to devise a shared plan. After sharing the idea with their respective staffs and hearing feedback, Mr. Parese and Mr. Martin were gratified to see each grade level come up with a slightly different program.



Delisiana Naccarato, a third grade student in Lisa Armstrong's class, composes a letter to her pen pal.

Each grade level plan for the Pen Pal program is unique, incorporating developmental abilities and curriculum links to literacy and writing for the specific grade," commented Mr. Martin. "Mr. Parese and I also envisioned this as an opportunity for teachers from both schools to communicate and co-plan together, further reinforcing the transition to one school."



Jaydin Canino and Matthew Curley, both third grade students in Vicki Seller's class, showcase their first letter from Robert Graves Elementary School.

BATTLE OF THE BOOKS PROMOTES TEAM BUILDING AT ZENA AND CROSBY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Students cheer enthusiastically for their teammates, cheeks flushed with excitement and adrenaline, as they urge their fellow classmates to victory. Sound like the sidelines of a sporting event? Not quite. This scene of thrilling competition takes place each year at Zena Elementary School during "Battle of the Books," a reading incentive program for students in all grade levels. Students read books and come together to demonstrate their abilities and test their knowledge of the books they have read. The purpose is to encourage students to read good books and have fun while competing with peers. This beloved annual tradition made for a natural fit as the next transition activity for Zena Elementary School. Teachers

Robert Hansen and Sarah Pennachio devised a plan that would enable Zena students to share this fun tradition with their future classmates at Edward R. Crosby Elementary School, giving all the students the opportunity for both learning and community building.



Cheyenne Dugan, a student in Robert Hansen's fourth grade class at Zena Elementary School, showcases the book Stone Fox by John Reynolds Gardiner. Trivia about the book will form the basis of the competition for fourth grade students.

"By building 26 heterogeneous Crosby-Zena teams that meet, discuss quality literature and eventually compete in an exciting Jeopardy-style finale, this motivating learning experience will promote literacy and act as an integral part of the overall transition," explained Mr. Hansen, a fourth-grade teacher at Zena. Of course, students from each school will not be competing against each other.

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Battle of the Books Also Meets Key Common Core Learning Standards:

Reading Standards for Literature

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text and demonstrate understanding.

RANGE OF READING AND LEVEL OF TEXT COMPLEXITY

With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade level.

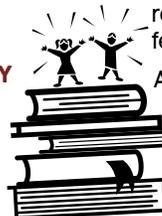
Speaking and Listening Standards

COMPREHENSION AND COLLABORATION

Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade level topics and texts.

PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.



Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation.

Harry L. Edson Elementary School Open House 2/23

A traditional passport can transport you across the globe, but for parents and students attending the Harry L. Edson Elementary School Open House on Saturday, February 23 from 10AM – 12 PM, (snow date Saturday, March 2) a “passport” will guide them through their future school.

“Change can be a challenge, but it can also be very exciting,” comments Harry L. Edson Elementary School principal William Krupp. “Here at Edson Elementary School, we are keeping a positive focus on the new adventures that await students. In a sense, this school will become their new home. We plan to preserve the culture and traditions that they carry with them from Sophie Finn, as we welcome them to Edson and also share what makes our school special.”

Sophie Finn parents and students will be welcomed by current Edson parents and students during the Saturday Open House. Kingston High School students will also be on hand to serve as tour guides, assisting visitors as they explore the building. Students will have the opportunity to see their future classrooms and meet their future classmates.

The District is providing free bussing for parents and students interested in attending this event. To RSVP and reserve your seats on the bus, please email Dr. Paula Perez, principal of Sophie Finn Elementary School at pperez@kingston-cityschools.org or call the Sophie Finn Main Office at 845-338-6370.

BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

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Teachers devised teams composed of students from each school, so future classmates will have to work together to win the competition. Students are currently studying assigned reading material to prepare for this fun and friendly competition. On February 25, all students from Zena Elementary School will visit Crosby Elementary School for a tour, team meeting, and other community-building activities. The actual Battle of the Books will culminate in elimination rounds on March 19 and final competitions at three levels—K-1, 2-3, and 4-5—on March 20 at Crosby.

Zena ES Welcomes Ms. Anna Brett as New Principal



New principal Anna Brett stands with students Christian Kuster, Rossella Nardi, Steven Kolbeck, Carole Martinez and Alexis Felliciano. Standing on the right is retiring principal Therese Higgins.

Anna Brett, a 35-year veteran Kingston educator who will take over as interim principal at Zena Elementary School on March 1, 2013, is no stranger to grade level transitions. In fact, during her 24 years as an administrator at Kingston High School, Ms. Brett helped to oversee the transition of the school from a Grade 10 – 12 building into a Grade 9 – 12 school.

“We definitely learned from our mistakes in that process,” reflects Ms. Brett. While the Elementary School transition presents a different set of needs and expectations, Ms. Brett sees more than one commonality. “Preparing well in advance is critical,” she said. “Students’ expectations are not always what we think they are, so it is always important to be a good listener.”

Ms. Brett, who spent the last 11 years of her education career as Chambers Elementary School principal before retiring in 2008, says she is excited to embrace the challenge of the short-term principalship at Zena.

“This is a critical time for the Kingston City School District, and it is a great opportunity to give back to a District that treated me so well,” said Ms. Brett with a smile. At Chambers Elementary School, Ms. Brett was frequently seen in classrooms, the hallways, and the cafeteria, where she formed many strong bonds with both students and staff. In a close-knit community like Zena, her hands-on style of leadership is sure to be an asset in the continuing transition process.

At Chambers, ensuring students were well-prepared to enter Middle School was an

important facet of leading the school, says Ms. Brett. “Usually, students’ biggest concern was the lockers,” recalled Ms. Brett. “Children tend to focus on details, like whether they will be able to open their locker or if they will be late to class, while parents might be concerned with academic or social challenges. It is part of my job to see all these concerns are addressed.”

While serving as principal at Chambers, Ms. Brett became known for her fun and inventive ways of engaging students – including dressing in a bee costume to reinforce the school’s character education motto. However, she is not planning on bringing any traditions from her previous career to Zena – she knows the school has a legacy of its own to uphold.

During a recent visit to Zena Elementary School, Ms. Brett sat and chatted with student representatives from different grade levels, who told her about their school and what makes Zena special. Fifth grade student Steven Kolbeck told Ms. Brett that the school’s character education program is “very important,” while classmate Carole Martinez named Zena’s “Bus Heroes” program as essential. The students also were able to interview Ms. Brett about her experience as a principal.

Ms. Brett will become a familiar face to students at Zena during the coming weeks as she orients herself to her new role and prepares to take over for departing principal Therese Higgins. Parents and community members who would like to meet Zena’s new principal are cordially invited to a “Meet & Greet” with Ms. Brett on Wednesday, February 20, 2013 at 5:30PM at Zena Elementary School.