

# AAPSNews

News, features, profiles and activities in The Ann Arbor Public Schools

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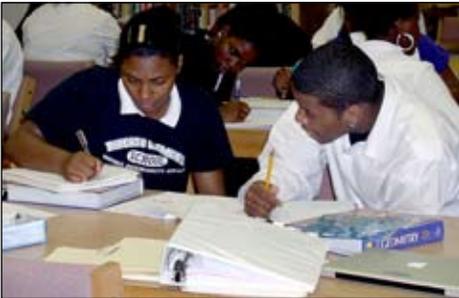
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More news and features online at <http://news.a2schools.org>

## Teacher to play 'Phantom'

Eberwhite Elementary teacher Jeffrey Willets, an accomplished singer and 18-year Ann Arbor Public Schools teaching veteran, will play the lead role of the Phantom in August in the 8th Wonder Theatre production of "Phantom" at Canton Township's Village Theater. The show runs from Aug. 6-15. Details: Call 734-394-5460 or visit [www.canton-mi.org/villagetheater](http://www.canton-mi.org/villagetheater) for tickets and show times. The Village Theater at Cherry Hill is at the corner of Cherry Hill and Ridge roads.

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Students at Roberto Clemente study geometry. Math and reading classes are highlighted during the summer program. About 10 Ypsilanti students have joined the Ann Arbor school this summer in a partnership between the districts.

## Partnership brings Ypsilanti students to Clemente, Stone

From AAPSNews Service

Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti school districts are collaborating on a tuition-based program allowing Ypsilanti students to attend alternative programs at Roberto Clemente and Stone High School in Ann Arbor.

Ten students are already enrolled at Roberto Clemente, starting in the summer school program so they can effectively transition into the 2010 fall semester.

Students are also expected to enroll at Stone as school begins this fall, said Joyce Hunter, administrator for secondary education for the Ann Arbor Public Schools and a member of the committee that formed the partnership. There will not be a rolling enrollment, she said, but students will be able to sign up at the

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## Schools stretching young minds over the summer months



"The Professor," above, is one of the characters in the ThinkStretch summer study program. At left, a Carpenter Elementary student works on his book during a ThinkStretch playground event.

7 elementaries participate in ThinkStretch; Carpenter takes the fun to the playground

By Casey Hans  
AAPSNews Service

The Carpenter Elementary School community is excited about its second year in the eight-week ThinkStretch summer learning program. In addition to using books provided, parents have added fun events such as math games and scavenger hunts on the playground for students in kindergarten through grade 4.

Parent Tim Wilkins has a son going into first grade in the fall. "My little guy's really excited about learning. We have other books we use, but this book gives us a

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VIDEO online at [news.a2schools.org](http://news.a2schools.org)



Carpenter parents work with students of all ages during the Carpenter playground event for ThinkStretch.

## Church youth group lends a hand at Scarlett

VIDEO online at [news.a2schools.org](http://news.a2schools.org)

From AAPSNews Service

When Gerald Vazquez took the helm at Scarlett Middle School earlier this year, his plan was to watch, observe and get to know the school community as he considered what changes to make.

He's started to make his move, and a group of student leaders from the New Life Church on the University of Michigan campus pitched in over a recent weekend with a community service project to help the effort.

About 25 members of the church's Youth Leadership Training Program were on hand to move desks and file cabinets as Vazquez restructures some classroom locations. They also pulled weeds along the building's front entrance.

"I wanted to change things up to benefit the kids," said the new principal, as he gave the college students some background about himself and told them about the tasks at hand. Vazquez grew up in Southwest Detroit and also worked in that neighborhood as a truant officer and middle school and high school principal for the Detroit Public Schools before coming to Ann Arbor in January. He is a U-M graduate who has stayed living in this area since college and also belongs to New Life Church.

"We always receive more than we give, when you have the opportunity to serve in our community," he told the students about their afternoon of volunteer work.

In past years, students from New Life have had intensive community partnerships with Vazquez at his schools in Detroit.



Members of the Youth Leadership Training team from New Life Church clean up gardens during a recent community service day at Scarlett Middle School. Teams also helped to move furniture around the building at the direction of Principal Geraql Vazquez.



He said he hopes he can build a similar partnership at Scarlett, possibly having the college students serve as mentors for middle school students in the fall.

Kevin Armstrong is on staff at the church and helps direct the summer Leadership Training Program.

There are more than 100 students in the program, with most from U-M and some from Eastern Michigan University. "These 25 decided on

their day off they wanted to come clean up at the school," he said. "A lot of it is our relationship with Gerald. We just really believe in him and want to get behind him with whatever he does and help make it successful."

Sam Rodriguez is a fifth-year senior studying movement science in the U-M School of Kinesiology.

"It's been something I've been wanting to do for a long time," she said of the leadership program.

Becky Thiel, who is attending U-M to become a teacher, said students volunteered for the workday at Scarlett. She said such community projects and the leadership program bring out the best in students.

"You work and live and grow in character," she said.

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start of each semester.

"These schools have a smaller, individualized setting and can really make a difference for students," Hunter said. "This is about people coming together to combine resources to create the best situation for kids."

Kwame Stephens, assistant principal at Ypsilanti High School, said he referred students for the summer session at Clemente who he thought would benefit. Ypsilanti does not have an alternative high school program. "It's an excellent opportunity for the most obvious reason: It's another chance to help students be successful," he said.

The partnership came into being when officials from Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor and Lincoln Consolidated Schools met during the 2009-10 school year to discuss the option of sharing resources, Hunter said. Lincoln also considered the program but is not sending any students this year, she added.

Ypsilanti families must work through their own school staff to apply to attend one of the Ann Arbor programs. Although the Ypsilanti students will retain their home district status, Ypsilanti will pay tuition to Ann Arbor for each student.

Clemente is a non-diploma program that prepares students to earn a diploma at either their home school in Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti; Stone is an accredited high school that serves students in grades 11 and 12 and allows students to earn a diploma. Hunter said she has met with staffs at both schools to discuss transitioning the new students.

At Clemente, Principal Ben Edmondson said he wanted the Ypsilanti pupils to start in his program this summer to get them acclimated and ready to go in the fall. About 80 students are attending summer school at Clemente, taking mostly math and English and credit recovery classes. Edmondson said what Clemente offers is critical for non-traditional students.

"This school is needed," he explained. "Every student is at risk here." The program is designed to help students and then transition them back into high school setting for graduation. The staff works to build student confidence, control behavior and encourage good choices, improve grades and prepare them for a successful future.

Heading into the fall, Clemente has a waiting list of about 40 students for the first time in the program's history. The school will enroll about 110 for the fall semester, including the new Ypsilanti students.

Co-lead teacher Barbara Malcolm said she is proud of the program she has worked for during the past 7 years. "I love to come to school," she said, noting that each school day brings a new challenge and a new way to reach students. She said parent involvement with the program is key. "We treat these kids exactly like our own," she added.

The other co-lead teacher is Derrick Bird said his 6 years at Clemente "has been a positive experience." They use a tough, but caring, approach with students, he added. "For many of our kids, their home life is really tough. That's why we can really help them here."

The partnership committee will next look at visiting other alternative programs to determine how they can best strengthen the Ann Arbor programs, Hunter added. Students or parents interested in these alternative programs should contact their home high school.

# Students tackle world and local issues

## Enough! Club members raise money, spread giving message

By Casey Hans  
AAPSNews Service

Volunteering has shaped Nick Shannon. Soon to be a junior at Pioneer High School, Shannon said his experience with the Enough! Club at Tappan Middle School began a personal journey and colored his approach to life.

In 3 years, the club has raised more than \$46,000 in donations and grants to help others around the world and at home.

"I was right on board from the beginning," Shannon said. "I said 'where do I sign up?' Honestly, 90 percent of what I've done has been influenced by what I did at Tappan."

Shannon walks the talk. He serves on the Ann Arbor Community Foundation Youth Council and has launched Ann Arbor Teens for Kids which pairs volunteer teens with local businesses and groups.

"With volunteering, there's no regrets," he said. "You're doing it just to help people. After you've volunteered you just feel so great. After my time at Tappan, I decided I'd like to do it (help people) for a living."

The "Enough! Club" name came from students having enough of what they need ... and having had enough of social injustice and poverty in the world, explained club adviser and Tappan teacher Laura Roth. The student-run club started with just a dozen members. It has grown into 50 members that have motivated the Tappan community to build schools in Kenya and Sierra Leone, bring fresh drinking water to overseas countries, raise money to fight genocide in Darfur, help an independent coffee farming operation in Mexico and help to feed children overseas.

Locally, the club raised about \$2,200 this year for Ann Arbor Active Against ALS – known as A2A3 – to support research to find a cure for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

"We raise money and we also try to raise awareness for appreciating all we have," said Roth, who was encouraged to start the club by Gary Court, then principal at Tappan. "The seed has been planted. That's what they're going to



Top: Tappan students prepare a healthy snack. This student-run program is part of Project Healthy Schools.  
Center: A group during 2008 trip to Arizona, sponsored by Free the Children.

Bottom: Students participate in the Vow of Silence Day, raising money and awareness about children around the world who do not have a voice in many issues.

Photos courtesy, Laura Roth, Tappan Middle School

find the most meaningful."

The club is affiliated with Project Healthy Schools and Free the Children, a nonprofit that has provided paid-in-full trips to Mexico and Arizona for Tappan students to learn about leadership, cultural differences and immigration issues. Two students will go to Arizona next month.

Elaine Rosenberg of Free the Children said Tappan has been great to work with. "All of

the students seem to be so dedicated to the cause," she said. "The really wonderful thing about the group, I think, is that the group comes together because they want to. There is no other incentive outside of the goodness of helping others around the world and in their community."

Kathleen Kollman, another Pioneer High student, was an Enough! Club member during the 2008-09 school year as an eighth grader. She has yet to find a similar club at the high school level and still donates some of her babysitting money to the Tappan cause.

"I had such a good experience," said Kollman, who will be a high school sophomore this year. "It was kind of life-changing. It made me stop and appreciate what I have. It opened my eyes."

Roth's friend and teacher, Joey Parins, started a club at Clague Middle School in the past year. In its first year, Clague students raised \$5,000 to put in a water well in Sierra Leone; the second year, members began raising money to build a school which was interrupted when students intervened with a fundraiser following the Haiti earthquake, for which they raised \$700.

Parins said the Enough! Club at Clague involves students across multiple grades and raises awareness throughout the school. "They need to see there's a bigger world," she said. "And that when you give, you get. I looked at what Laura was doing and it really inspired me."

In June, Clague sponsored an overnight "lock-in" where students conducted vigils and walked miles around the school corridors to get an understanding of how long it takes people to walk to wells for fresh water in underdeveloped countries. Parins said nearly 70 students participated and raised \$1,800.

Roth said she would like the Enough! Club principles adopted districtwide at middle schools. At that age, students "have such passion that if you give them direction, they can just branch out," she added.

A more detailed version of this story can be found online with a slide show and link to a student-produced Enough! Club video.

structure that's helpful."

Parents Ann Judge and Alan Tanabe coordinate the twice-weekly playground study that includes bookwork plus games and prizes. All Carpenter students get the ThinkStretch books and anyone is welcome to come out for the extra playground time.

"It's a great program," said Judge, who met the program's founder, Donna Lasinski, at a PTO Council event. "Everything is spot on about their books; it ties in with what they learned all year long."

Stanley L. Young is a PTO member and was recently appointed to serve on the Carpenter School Improvement Team. He said programs like ThinkStretch are important to student performance and self esteem. "This is a good summer transition program," he said. "It's a big push to keep them learning and motivated."

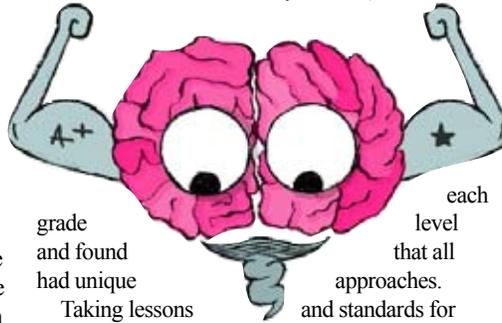
Ché Pomo is the PTO co-treasurer and a Carpenter parent. She said the PTO chose to fund the program again this year because of its success. "I love it. It's great," she said. "It's so beneficial for the kids. It gives them a sense of pride."

ThinkStretch started as a PTO project at Haisley Elementary School three years ago to help students maintain learning throughout the summer.

Lasinski, who is also active on the district's PTO Council board, said she became concerned as a Haisley mom when she read research showing that children lose learning momentum in the summer. Working at her kitchen table, she methodically began looking at what teachers were doing at

## Haisley mom explores summer programs, then creates her own

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each grade and found that all had unique approaches.

Taking lessons and standards for each grade, and with input from teachers, she created workbooks that could be used schoolwide during the summer months. Via word of mouth, other Ann Arbor schools requested the program, so Lasinski standardized it, named it ThinkStretch and worked with local graphic designers at Quack! Media to come up with unique characters (The Professor and The Brain) and print professional workbooks.

Although Lasinski is reserved about promoting the program, she is not shy about sharing what happens when students continue learning over the summer months – and what happens when they don't. "Many parents don't understand that kids really do lose over the summer," she said.

Citing a study from the National Center for

Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University, she said most of that learning loss takes place at the elementary school level, so that student losses "equate to 18 months in verbal skills by the end of fifth grade," she said. Children lose between 1-2 months of math skills over the summer and between 1-3 months of reading skills, Lasinski said.

The ThinkStretch program is taking place this summer for students from Carpenter, Burns Park, Allen, Bryant, Pattengill, Haisley and Lawton.

For some students, such as those who attend Haisley, the program is being conducted for the area at the Peace Neighborhood Center so more area children have access to it, Lasinski said.

The program includes a parent orientation, summer study booklets as well as a fall honors program where students receive medals for their effort – bronze, silver and gold, depending on how much of the book they complete.

For Ann Arbor, Lasinski charges \$8 per pupil, which covers her costs. The program must be used by an entire grade level, or throughout a school; she does not sell books to individuals. Districts outside of Ann Arbor are charged \$10, she said. In Ann Arbor, the program is funded mainly through PTOs, with some funding coming through the AAPS Educational Foundation.

"It's linking one school year to the next," Lasinski explained. "They're getting rewards for their efforts; it's the idea that they're exploring."

For details about the program, visit [www.thinkstretch.com](http://www.thinkstretch.com) online or call 734-997-7265.

## Students, future teachers both helped at SLI

An intensive, summer school program is under way in Ann Arbor, packing lots of learning into just four short weeks.

The Elementary Summer Learning Institute serves children entering first and third grades and includes some 30 University of Michigan education students who assist classroom professionals as they learn about teaching.

This year, nearly 300 students are enrolled in the SLI as recommended by their teachers, said SLI Principal Matt Hilton. The program serves students from around the district and is located at Ann Arbor Open @ Mack.

"They quickly build community and really quickly get into high quality learning," Hilton said of the teaching staff and U-M interns. "It's fun to watch them make things happen."

Hilton said the summer program keeps students abreast of math and Language Arts skills so there is no loss of learning over the summer. "We prevent a lot of that so they can hit the ground running in the fall," said Hilton, who during the

regular school year is a reading specialist at Mitchell Elementary. "There's an intensity of trying to maximize every minute we have with the kids, so we make for the most growth possible."

The SLI class sizes are small, typically averaging about 15 students, which allows teachers to offer more one-on-one assistance. "They experience success," Hilton said of the students. "That sense of self really comes out. They go back to their home school with the sense of 'I can do it.'"

In addition to traditional classroom settings, the program also uses System 44 and Read 180, computer-based accelerated learning programs that have been used successfully in the district. Younger students also participate in a Music and Motion program tied into summer curriculum.

Parents are brought into the SLI process each Friday during July with workshops teaching them ways to improve reading, writing and math at home.

The Elementary Summer Learning Institute is one of several summer learning programs that are



taking place in Ann Arbor this summer.

Other programs under way, or already completed, include: Middle and high school summer schools at Skyline; pro-grams for special education students and English language learners; and federally funded programs at Northside and Thurston elementaries and Scarlett Middle School as well as a cluster program for Allen, Carpenter, Pittsfield and Mitchell students hosted at Scarlett.

There also are online and blended course opportunities for high school enrichment. A 10-week program for adults wishing to earn a GED takes place at Stone High School during the summer.