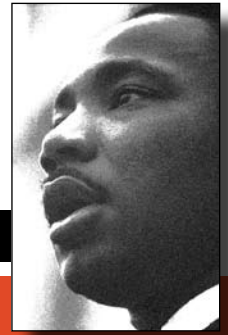




Jan. 17: Happy Birthday Dr. King

Ann Arbor Public Schools celebrates the life, the legacy and the dream of Martin Luther King Jr.



Online: Video of several school events and a list of celebrations

Exceptional Education

AAPSNews

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

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Issue No. 28, January 17, 2011

Advancing to excellence

Rising Scholars program has 120 students enrolled in 167 advanced classes

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

"... I am a Rising Scholar. I can do anything I put my mind to once I put my mind to it ..."

Freshmen in Brandon Jackson's Rising Scholars leadership class at Huron High School start their hour with this affirmation, something Jackson reinforces during the class and out into the hallways.

"Introduce yourself," he encourages students who put a hand out to a visitor. They smile, make eye contact, offer their name and note their "Rising Scholar" status. Some handshakes are firm, some not. But Jackson says that comes in time, as students build their self-confidence.

The introductions are embedded in the culture of a two-year-old program that encourages enrollment in advanced and accelerated classes and puts students on track for college.

The program has 167 advanced courses being taken by Rising Scholars at Pioneer, Huron and Skyline high schools.



Huron High Rising Scholars adviser Brandon Jackson and a scholar check their grades together.

Ann Arbor Public Schools staff approached the then-fledgling University of Michigan Center for Educational Outreach to suggest a pilot partnership for 2009-10. About 47 district families showed an interest.

In its second year, 120 Ann Arbor high school students proudly call themselves Rising Scholars.

Students are invited into the Rising Scholars program as they prepare to enter high school. It is offered to economically disadvantaged and underserved students who, through grade point averages and test scores, have shown academic promise.

Although many of the Rising Scholars are

See *Rising Scholars*, page 6

Jan. 22 marrow registry drive to honor 3, help 1

Bryant/Pattengill rallies to help employee's spouse who is awaiting help

The Bryant/Pattengill schools community will host a bone marrow registry drive on Saturday, Jan. 22 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Bryant Elementary School, 2150 Santa Rosa, Ann Arbor to honor or benefit three members of the Bryant/Pattengill school community. They include:

- **Deb Horn**, wife of Doug Horn, Pattengill's fifth-grade band instructor, who received a cord blood transplant last year.
- **Sofia Robinson**, a Tappan Middle School sixth-grader, and former Pattengill student, who received a bone marrow transplant from her brother, Tevis, a Pioneer High School student, earlier this month.
- **Frank Porta**, husband of Dori Porta, a teacher clerk at Bryant, who continues to wait for a bone marrow match.

The registry drive is open to the Ann Arbor community. The National Bone Mar-

See *Marrow registry*, page 4

Law a part of Tappan teacher's life since childhood

Her love of legal issues teaches students public speaking, confidence, how to connect to the world

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Wendy Raymond might have pursued a legal career, but chose teaching instead. As someone who loves each profession, she has been fortunate to enjoy aspects of both.

It all began years ago, when her dad took Raymond and as many friends as would fit into a car on summer outings. Her dad, long time Ann Arbor teacher Will Frey, left his mark with these special times.

"In the summer he would often take us out to a lake, or take us to the courthouse to watch trials," she said. "I still remember the bicycle thief who ran out (of court) during lunch."

"We would go home afterwards and play court, and I enjoyed that," she added. She also played "school," pretending to be the teacher.

Raymond ultimately followed her dad, a former Slauson and Pioneer math teacher, into teaching. She is in her 33rd year with the Ann Arbor Public Schools, first at Bryant Elementary and then at the Tappan building (first as a junior high and then as a middle school teacher.)

Her mother's civil rights activities in the 1960s also helped to shape Raymond's interest in law. Jeane Frey sometimes conducted meetings with civil rights activists in her home. This increased her children's awareness of human rights issues, and inspired a deep appreciation for the rule of law.

Other inspiration came from Cynthia Spring, her fourth-grade teacher at Eberwhite Elementary. "She really saw us. She read to us a lot from books like 'Little House on the Prairie' and 'Charlotte's Web,'" Raymond said. "She helped us create original skits and musical productions, and just made school really fun."

Raymond said she chose teaching because she could always be at the beginning of new things with each new class of students. "The kids are at the beginning of the next generation. There's something very exciting about being a part of that," she added.

Although her chosen path was education, Raymond was able to incorporate her love of law into the classroom. "I think it's relevant," she said.



Wendy Raymond, who teaches Language Arts at Tappan Middle School, has been bringing lessons about the law to her students.

Staff in the Spotlight: Wendy Frey Raymond

"When you find something relevant to the kids ... it becomes real. It's a way to connect to the real world."

Inspiration from "Tuck Everlasting" by Natalie Babbitt, set her on a course toward using the story for student mock trials. Students learn critical thinking skills as they prepare for trial and persuasive speaking skills as they testify and question. The process also gives students self-confidence and offers insight into human nature – something that Raymond said will serve students well into adulthood.

A related project that her students spearheaded in 2009 was the Tappan Law Club, an after-school club for all grades that meets after school each week during first semester. Guest speakers continue the learning of law; visitors have included lawyers, detectives, a police canine unit and a retired FBI agent.

Raymond has teamed up with a number of area attorneys over the years, first as part of a Washtenaw County Bar Association partnership with the Ann Arbor Public Schools. She took basic courthouse visits and expanded them to include a fall information talk by a local attorney, a spring mock trial for students and participation in a state bar essay contest.

One of those attorneys is Anthony Patti, with the law firm of Hooper Hathaway, who worked with Raymond in her early years of teaching and helped her to set up the structure for how she teaches about the law today. "The Washtenaw County Bar discontinued the partnership, but Anthony and I just kept on going," Raymond said.

Patti has fond memories of the years he worked with Raymond and her students. He recalled mock trials and the many courthouse visits where they would take over a courtroom as a teaching classroom, meet with judges and observe

Wendy Frey Raymond

Occupation: Language Arts teacher at Tappan Middle School.

Residence: Scio Township. She is an Ann Arbor native, having attended Eberwhite Elementary, Slauson Jr. High School and Pioneer High School.

Education: A degree in Elementary Education with an emphasis on Language Arts from Justin Morrill College at Michigan State University, and a master's degree in Reading from Eastern Michigan University.

Family: Married to Steve Raymond, an administrator with the University of Michigan Health System. They have twins, Lisa and Peter, who attend the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, respectively, and Julia who is a senior at Community High School. Raymond also has an older brother and a younger sister.

Hobbies: Reading, gardening, traveling, and fly fishing.

Community service: In addition to her activities surrounding Law Day and the state and national bar associations, she has also assisted in fundraising events for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Michigan.

Last books read: Cutting for Stone by Abraham Verghese ("The characters are unforgettable," she says.) and Cloud Atlas by David Mitchell. ("A story with fascinating use of language in an extraordinary plot structure.")

Life philosophy: "I've thought to myself 'why are we here?' I think there are two reasons: To love and to learn."

live courtroom sessions.

"She's just such a dynamic teacher," he said of Raymond. "She has repeatedly taken her students to the highest levels of the essay contests. She really engages her students. The way she approached it made it so much more worthwhile."

Patti continues to nominate Raymond for local bar association awards, which he said she richly deserves. In 2000, Raymond was awarded the Crystal Apple Award for Teacher of the Year from the State Bar of Michigan Lawyer's Auxiliary and has had 18 students win awards in the group's Law Day Essay Contest since 2002. Last year, she earned national recognition: the Law Related Education Middle School Teacher of the Year Award from the American Lawyers' Auxiliary of the American Bar Association and was honored at

See Raymond, page 8

Parenting classes and child care allow teen parents to continue education at Stone

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

The patter of little feet is an expected sound in a preschool setting, but at Ann Arbor's Stone High School, a cluster of little ones can often be found in the media center, the gym or out on the playground.

Up to 16 infants and toddlers are cared for on site as part of the school's licensed child care center – a program that allows teen parents to have onsite care for their children so that they can attend high school.

Lynne Richards is in her ninth year as the program's supervisor. With the help of staff and some community volunteers, these youngsters have all the advantages of a licensed center. "We're not only here for the babies, we're here for the teens," explained Richards.

Child care assistants include Dolores Houston, Tammy Irvine and Angela Blake, who have been involved with the program for six years and "are an integral part of the program," Richards said. "The care, attention and support they give makes the program a success."

Both moms and dads can use the center, but most of the students are moms, Richards said.

"The moms usually end of being our top students at the end of the year," she explained. "The No. 1 priority is to continue their education. We want them to stay in school and know their children are taken care of and, hopefully, break the cycle" of teen parents dropping out."

Like any other child care center, parents sign their children in and out daily and bring bottles



Above right: Child care center supervisor Lynne Richards gets down on the floor with some of the children at Stone High School's child care center one recent morning.

Above left: Stone High School High School junior Jessica Alvarez drops off her child at the center before going to class.

Right: Staff and volunteers work with the children during some play and learning time at the center, which can handle up to 16 children.



and other needed items for their children. Children get developmental evaluations and staff works with gross and fine motor skills every day. They get reading time, gym time and visits to the school's library and, new this year, is a tech component, where children are introduced to the idea of computers and technology.

Jessica Alvarez, a junior, brought her child in one recent morning before heading to class. "It's really good – I like it," she said. "Anything

See Child care, page 4



Richards visits with Lauren Douglas as she drops off her child at the center. Douglas attends WAY Washtenaw and uses the center when she comes to school for lab or to meet with her mentor.

Marrow registry, from page 1

row Donor Program is in need of donors from all ethnic backgrounds. Potential donors coming to the drive will be asked to complete a basic health questionnaire and swab the inside of their cheek to provide a sample for tissue typing.

There will be written materials from “Be the Match” and volunteers on hand to answer questions should you be identified as a potential match. More information is also at the website www.marrow.org.

Tax-deductible gifts are also being accepted to “Be The Match” and envelopes will be available at the drive.

Any donations will help to cover the cost of testing the samples collected at the drive.

Huron Symphony will makes history at music conference

Orchestra 1st to perform at opening concert for state group

Huron High School’s Symphony Orchestra has been invited to perform at the opening concert of the Michigan Music Conference, the first high school orchestra to perform at the opening concert of this annual event.

Huron will perform alongside orchestras from Michigan State University and Eastern Michigan University at this annual conference of music educators and school music programs in the state.

The conference will be Jan. 20-22 at DeVos Place and

Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids. It will feature an impressive roster of music educators, a special music technology session, a series of workshops and a series of musical performances. The Huron Symphony, under the direction of Mj Quigley-Young, will perform at the special evening concert at thet DeVos Performance Hall on Thursday, Jan. 20 at 8 p.m.

Huron’s music program is no stranger to special awards and commendations, having been named a Grammy Signature School five times in the last decade. The invitation to perform at the Michigan Music Conference, however, is a singular honor. “This is a great honor for

the students, our district and our community,” said Interim Superintendent Robert Allen.

Dr. Arthur Williams, Huron’s Principal, echoed this sentiment: “This is certainly an honor to have been selected to perform at such a prestigious conference.”

Fine Arts Coordinator Robin Bailey said the honor reflects on the broader community. “The Music Department of the Ann Arbor Public Schools has a long and distinguished reputation for excellence,” she said.

“We are pleased and proud that the Huron Symphony Orchestra will be a representative of that excellence through their performance (at the conference.)”

Child care, from page 3

that happens, I’m right down the hall.” Alvarez attended Ypsilanti and Huron high schools before finding about the child care program at Stone and enrolling there.

Richards said the teen parents pay a fee for the service, which teaches them responsibility and allows them to continue on with schooling and graduate. “They have to be in school, they have to be here. We keep a strict look at their attendance,” she stressed.

Teens enrolled at Stone have first priority at the center, then other students, such as those enrolled in the WAY Washtenaw county on-line high school program, can participate.

Student Lauren Douglas of Whitmore Lake is a WAY Washtenaw student. She uses the child care services part-time: when she comes to Stone to meet with her program mentor or do work in the computer lab. “It’s very nice. I like it a lot,” she said.

Two volunteer “grandmas” visit the class each day, where they help by holding, rocking and feeding babies. Volunteer Pauline Hardy, who lives in downtown Ann Arbor, has been coming for years and said she enjoys her time at Stone.

“If it wasn’t for the enjoyment, I wouldn’t get out of bed for it,” she said. “They’re really great and the kids are great. It’s fun to watch them develop into a toddler – they’re all different. I enjoy it to the utmost.”

Carol Moon is in her fourth year volunteering at Stone. She is also raising a teenage grandson who attends Huron High School, so this is just



Lynne Richards spends time in the media center teaching a child about computers. Below, Stone senior Tamico Taliaferro spends some time with her daughter.



part of her busy life. “I think it’s wonderful. You see them grow up. We usually get to interact with the little ones who call us ‘grandma,’” she said.

Stone Principal Sheila Brown said the program is a unique one. “We have the good fortune at Stone High School to be able to help both the teen mothers and their children,” she said.

The program offers teens an opportunity to finish their high school education and also learn how to care for their children, Brown said. The moms get guidance and parenting skills through staff and community programs and the children

are taught a variety of developmental, social and academic skills to prepare them for pre-school, she added.

Starting second semester, teen parents at Stone will be required to take a comprehensive parenting class. Brown said the class will have a structured curriculum that will build parenting skills. The class will be taught by Stone teacher Joanna Johnson with the help of child care supervisor Richards.

“This will be a win-win for both our teen parents and their little ones,” Brown added.

Stone Senior Tamico Taliaferro is finishing high school this month. She has a two-year-old son and an infant daughter at the child care center. She said having her children at the center allowed her to finish her education and she plans to continue on at Washtenaw Community College to study nursing and psychology.

“They do a really good job – your kids get special care,” she said.

She said Stone offers her a smaller, controlled environment and that she’s doing better academically. “Here it’s all business,” she said. “At a bigger high school (she also attended Huron) there are a lot of distractions.”

Taliaferro said the toughest part for her was “having to grow up sooner than planned. Now it’s an 18-year thing,” she said.

What advice would she give other teens? “Babies are worth the wait,” she said. “I’d rather have been much more prepared for them.”

Casey Hans writes and edits this newsletter for the Ann Arbor Public Schools. Reach her at hansc@aaps.k12.mi.us or call 734-994-2090.

BPSSG supports families, eyes achievement

Long-standing group helps African-American students and parents

Editor's note: Third in a series of stories about school board-approved community groups in The Ann Arbor Public Schools.

From AAPSNews Service

One of the most established parent groups in the Ann Arbor Public Schools is the Black Parents' Student Support Group, which offers parents and students in Ann Arbor's African-American community a network of support in a safe place to share concerns.

"Our focus is on achievement – it is one of the main reasons for our existing," said Sylvia Nesmith, current BPSSG chairwoman, Ann Arbor parent and longtime group member. "We look at the rate of discipline disparities, the comfort level of parents and students in various activities, the encouragement and nurturing of children and equity and racism issues. All of these things we try to address."

The group started in the mid-1960s with parents, teachers and members of the community who had an interest in the group's mission which says, in part: "... to encourage academic excellence, leadership skills, cultural awareness, pride and respect and problem solving."

The BPSSG was an outgrowth of the Ann Arbor branch of the NAACP, Nesmith said. She recalled a history of community involvement, including a one-day networking event and rally that brought parents together for this common interest and involved now-retired University of Michigan nursing professor Dr. Elizabeth Allen as a speaker; she served on the front lines in Vietnam.

"We had a student panel that discussed issues, speakers, talent and lunch," recalled Nesmith. "It was to generate enthusiasm for the schools



Sylvia Nesmith, center, meets with parents attending a recent Black Parents' Student Support Group at the Ann Arbor Preschool and Family Center. The group meets monthly and invites the public to attend.

Black Parents' Student Support Group

What: BPSSG is a group that supports students and parents in the Ann Arbor African-American community. Visitors to monthly meetings can talk about issues and concerns they have individually or at their schools. Guest speakers and special topics are often part of the program and recent meetings have included: a forum for the district's superintendent search, a visit from Assistant Superintendent for SISS Elaine Brown and also a talk by Mark Fancher, attorney for the Racial Justice Project of the ACLU of Michigan.

When: Meetings start at 6:30 p.m. Meetings for 2011 are scheduled on: Jan. 25, Feb. 15, March 22, April 26 and May 24.

Where: The Hearth Room of the AAPS Preschool and Family Center, 2775 Boardwalk, Ann Arbor.

Details: E-mail Chairwoman Sylvia Nesmith at nesyc@comcast.net

and some of the things we face."

The BPSSG is one of several Board of Education-approved groups. They have a seat at regular board meetings where they keep trustees apprised of activities and issues. During a recent meeting, Nesmith noted that the group is looking for more participation and told the board that the BPSSG appreciates having a voice with district activities. "We have appreciated these opportunities and believe the district has benefited from our being involved," she said.

The BPSSG is active in the district on a number of levels. It was one of the key groups contacted when consultant Ray & Associates was setting up community meetings to receive input about the search

for a new school superintendent. The group's meeting topics include everything from individual parent and student situations to districtwide issues such as high school graduation requirements and school assessments.

Bryan Johnson, a Bryant Elementary School parent, has a history with BPSSG; his mom was one of the group's original members. He became active this fall when his son entered the first grade.

"I always had an interest and a passion around student achievement, especially for black students," he said. "I felt there were some things I can share and energy I can bring."

He said he encourages parents to attend the group's monthly meetings and, if they are so inclined, to

become more involved at a deeper level with regular attendance at meetings and involvement in districtwide issues.

Johnson said the group is designed to be an open forum and a "risk-free environment to ask these questions. From parent to child to administrator – we all need to be partners," he said.

The BPSSG acts as a resource for parents around the Ann Arbor Public Schools in general, and also for groups of parents at individual schools that want to form a BPSSG chapter.

Although many of the parents attending BPSSG meetings are from the African-American community, everyone is welcome to attend, and sometimes school administrators and teachers also visit, Nesmith said. The group's mission statement notes that BPSSG is interested in "the education of all students with special emphasis on the education of African-American students so that they will attain their full educational potential."

Nesmith said a main focus is to ensure that students are encouraged to achieve at the highest level. "Sometimes teachers don't expect students to perform," she said. "I don't know if they realize the impact and influence they have. I think

See BPSSG, page 8

Scholars are motivated for grades, college

Freshmen in Pioneer High School's Rising Scholars program meet daily in a leadership class. They are the second class of scholars for the two-year-old program that serves all three comprehensive high schools in Ann Arbor.



Rising Scholars, from page 1

students of ethnic minorities, there is a mix of cultures and genders in the program. One aim of the program is to decrease the achievement gap – which shows lower achievement among African American and Hispanic students – as students improve their grades, said Victor Kennerly, a Pioneer counselor and district coordinator for Rising Scholars.

He said U-M provides student mentors who meet one-on-one with the scholars, encouraging them to keep their grades up, take challenging courses and prepare for a college career.

Kennerly said keeping the students in a group, or cohort, of their peers will carry them through high school with support. “They feel like they belong,” he said.

Counselor Claudia Siewert, coordinator for the Skyline Rising Scholars, said the program is making a difference. “They are academically above grade level,” she explained. “They are students who are bright, but some are choosing non-challenging courses. We work with them to maintain good grades . . . and take those more challenging courses.”

The Rising Scholars program “is going to change lives,” added Huron math teacher Amy Furey. “It was amazing, the maturity level of the sophomores coming into

class this year. They were there and they wanted to learn. It means the program is working.”

U-M’s Center for Educational Opportunities Assistant Director Amy Prevo has worked with the Ann Arbor program since its inception.

“Rising Scholars is one of the first projects we’ve worked with and we’re very pleased to be a partner in it,” she said. “It’s nice that it’s right in our back yard.”

Rising Scholars is one of several programs U-M CEO works with throughout the state to focus on academic excellence in K-12 schools and encourage enrollment in college. The initiatives have a social justice flavor and focus on students who are underrepresented and have potential, Prevo said.

“There is a population of students that really doesn’t have that support system,” Prevo explained. “The more educational opportunities students have . . . the more rigorous coursework they have, will better prepare them to attend college.”

Michael Turner, outreach coordinator for U-M CEO, invites students to events on campus and in the community that will encourage them to consider careers and furthering their education. Overnight stays on the U-M campus are one way that the CEO offers a taste of college to Ann Arbor’s Rising Scholars, who

visit the campus during the school year and summer.

“It makes it very real for them. They can touch, taste and see it,” he said. “It creates a cultural awareness for them so that they can see themselves here (on campus) as well.”

Turner said not only are Ann Arbor students impacted, but also those at U-M. “Every mentor and tutor, as they do this work, give me feedback about it and ask how can they do this as a career,” he said. “When this type of work gets them excited about education, that’s a good thing.”



Skyline scholars blend into culture

Siewert said staff wanted it to blend Rising Scholars into the overall program at Skyline when it was introduced.

Skyline students are in Small Learning Communities already, sort of a learning neighborhood, so Rising Scholars there do not have a specific class. They meet individually with Siewert weekly to set goals for improvement.

Like Rising Scholars at other schools, Skyline’s scholars work together, helping each other with homework and lending peer support. There are 50 Rising Scholars at Skyline this year.

Waleed Al-Doais, a sophomore, said being a Rising Scholar has



Freshmen in Huron High School's Rising Scholars program also are enrolled in a leadership class. Here, students help each other by studying together: At left two students study Spanish lessons; below, students study for an upcoming test.



See Rising Scholars, next page

Exceptional Education

Rising Scholars, from page 6

impressed upon him the importance of good study habits. “I think it helps you to be aware of what studying and homework are,” he said “You’re more aware of what you need.”

Students said mentors reinforce why students need to study and how to stay on track. “The benefit of having a mentor is they’re more down on your level,” noted sophomore Alex Wilks. “We really bond with them.”

Not all Skyline freshmen have had the mentor experience yet – the hope is that more U-M mentors will join the program second semester. But they are still benefiting from being a Rising Scholar. Students said they have developed better one-on-one relationships with their teachers.

Freshman Danielle Thesinger said she appreciates the program. “For me, it’s been pretty great,” she said. “It’s great for keeping me on line with my grades. And colleges will look at what you do right now.”

Classmate Katherine Hepburn said the program has given her the confidence to challenge herself. “I used to think only really smart people could take AP classes,” she said. “After this, I decided I could step it up a level. You get more of an ‘I can do it’ feeling. You get the encouragement.”

Sophomore Javier Contreras agrees. He said the program has encouraged him and given him the confidence to take tough classes, “to get a challenge, to go beyond. It gave me a hint to go beyond to challenge myself.”

Huron students learn to be leaders

At Huron High, the focus is on the college and career center, where students learn what the center offers, understand a college’s expectations and how to get through the admissions process. Jackson said students have homework surrounding the process and also do a research project.

“We know these kids are smart – that’s not the point,” he said. “It’s to get them acclimated to high school and interested in college.”

At Huron, 40 students are Rising



Several members of the Skyline High School Rising Scholars – both freshmen and sophomores – in the commons area of the school. Scholars check in weekly with adviser Claudia Siewert to ensure their grades are on track.

Scholars and all monitor their grades with Jackson’s assistance, but many say they check their grades on Power School daily.

“I like it. My favorite part is the studying. It’s good to study together – we know each other well,” said freshman James Blake. “I’m learning more about college now and getting experience on how to do that.”

Natalie Thompson said the school contacted her mom and told her being a Rising Scholar could be good for college opportunities. “We’ve been working on college things,” she said, of her first year. “Now I have more of a plan. And I have friends I met here.”

Kameron Glenn said Rising Scholars “helps us get ready for the future. It suggests the courses we

need to take to get there.”

Huron students dress in business attire on Mondays. Jackson said it’s one way to give the Rising Scholars structure and pride. Huron also hosts after-school homework sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays and offers Saturday sessions before finals to encourage good study habits.

Denise Eaddy-Richardson, a counselor who co-coordinates the Huron program with Jackson, said she has seen higher student enthusiasm among Rising Scholars, reception to instruction and students going above and beyond. “Based on these assessment, it is a successful program,” she said.

Sophomore Rising Scholars say they appreciate the opportunity to be in the program. “It gives you

a feeling someone’s backing you up and supporting you,” said Pablo Moncada.

Classmate Eahab Abu-Shtaya-gah said the program has allowed them to “get to know each other – it’s made us feel like a family” and Danielle Marshall said Rising Scholars “is like a club. You have a whole bunch of friends and they’re all in the same boat as you.”

Others said the program has stressed the importance of grades and keeping them up so that they can enroll in advanced classes and earn better opportunities. Sophomore John Harrison recently placed third at the Business Professionals of American regionals and will head for state competition in March. He said that before Rising Scholars, he wouldn’t have had the confidence to participate.

“When I came in, my grades with sub-par,” he explained. “Math was always an obstacle and once I got it down, it started to click. The tutors guided me toward what I needed to know. My first year was dismal – I didn’t take it as seriously as I should have. I’m coming back from a lost year.”

Harrison said he plans not only to finish high school and attend college, but wants to come back and tutor younger students.

Pioneers working together

At Pioneer, Rising Scholars have classes scheduled together to enhance their experience. Freshmen are together daily during sixth hour for a leadership class and sophomores meet weekly with adviser Tyrone Weeks to stay on track.

One of the main goals at Pioneer is to have students bond as a group. “In the lunchroom, between bells, you see them together,” Weeks said. “They’re touching base. Checking in with each other.”

Many of the teens said they check their grades daily and enjoy the camaraderie. Students said they also appreciate going off campus to events, such as today’s Martin Luther King Day celebration on the U-M campus and when they visited Cass Technical High School in



Sophomores in Pioneer’s Rising Scholars program. These students stay in close touch with adviser Tyrone Weeks and aim for enrolling in advanced and AP classes.

See *Rising Scholars*, page 8

Raymond, from page 2

a ceremony in San Francisco.

Patti said exposing students to the law at a young age can really have an impact on career choices. He was drawn to law after participating in two mock trials in the eighth grade – one playing a juror who persuaded others to change their verdict, and the other playing the role of lawyer. “I know there are a number of Wendy’s students who have chosen to go into law, too,” he added.

David Baum, assistant dean for student affairs at the University of Michigan Law School, met Raymond in 2004 when his son was a sixth-grader at Tappan. He offered to help and found himself totally involved, which he said he continues to enjoy even though his sons are now older.

Baum said Raymond’s students are well-prepared and ask insightful and sophisticated questions when he visits the class each fall. He noted that the spring mock trials are well done, with middle school students completing a project that would be challenging for even new law students.

“Generally, I think she represents all that is great about the education of middle school kids,” he said. “She’s got great energy. She gets them excited and motivates them.”

Even if they don’t have an interest in law as a career, the unit instills a value about law and the Constitution, he said. Baum also shared a nominating letter he wrote about Raymond. In it, he pays her the ultimate compliment: “Wendy Raymond is one of those gems of the public school system who finds ways not only to teach children, but to get them downright excited about learning.”

Case closed.

BPSSG, from page 5

we all have to look at children and parent and everyone with a certain degree of respect and integrity. We’re all capable and all of the kids are capable.”

Nesmith, who has a grown son and a daughter who is a senior at Huron High School, notes that the group is not only for parents. She plans to stay active even after her daughter graduates.

“You don’t have to be a parent. You can be a person in the community,” she said. “I do plan to stay involved. When your children finish school, it’s the perfect time to give back, to be active in the meetings and to share.”

To reach Sylvia Nesmith and to get more information about the Black Parents’ Student Support Group, e-mail her at nesy@comcast.net or call her at 734-747-8543.

Burns Park Players presents ‘How to Succeed ...!’

The Burns Park Players gets ahead again this season with Frank Loesser, Jack Weinstock, Willie Gilbert, and Abe Burrows’s classic musical masterpiece *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

Performances will be at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 4; Saturday, Feb. 5; Thursday, Feb. 10; and Friday, Feb. 11, and at 4 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 12. All shows are at the Tappan Middle School Auditorium, 2251 E. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor. The final dress rehearsal is also open to the public on Thursday, Feb. 3; rehearsal performance begins at 7:30.

Ticket sales begin at 10 a.m. on Jan. 19. Reserved seating tickets are available for \$15 at Morgan and York Market, 1928 Packard, Ann Arbor, or at the door one hour before the show. Premium seating tickets (which include reserved parking) are available for \$30. To purchase premium tickets, call Ken Kollman at 734-478-0449.



Tickets for the dress rehearsal are \$5 and available at the door only, beginning at 7 p.m.

Community members from the Burns Park area are involved with the production; they range in age from 6 to 91. Featured performers include Caroline Huntoon, Jeffrey Post, Ben Cohen, Lisa Harris, Fred Hall, Aviva Simonte, Talia Glass and Joel Swanson. Longtime Detroit-area air personality Dick Purtan, who was inducted into the National Association of Broadcasting Hall of Fame in 2006, will make a special voice appearance. In keeping with Burns Park Players tradition, more than 100 students from Burns Park Elementary are featured in the cast.

As in years past, proceeds from this show will benefit

performing arts in the Ann Arbor Public Schools. Since its inception, the Burns Park Players has contributed more than \$245,000 to the district. Past contributions have included Ann Arbor Rec & Ed scholarship support for performing arts and camps, financial support for Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation Teacher Grants fund, and \$5,000 per year to support private instrumental music lessons provided by Ann Arbor School for the Performing Arts for talented middle school students who could not otherwise afford them.

Directing this year’s production is Mike Mosallam, the music director is Eric Lofstrom and choreographers are Mike Mosallam and Christie Schauder. The musical is produced by Debi Haller, Kathy Koehler and Sara Meingast.

The Burns Park Players was formed in 1984 by a small group of parents looking for a way to raise money to send their Burns Park Elementary School children to camp. Since that time, the group has grown into an active and unique community theater company Visit www.burnsparkplayers.org.

Rising Scholars, from page 7

Detroit.

Students help each other while keeping confidentiality about fellow scholars. Some say they have overcome shyness about approaching their teachers and fellow students for help.

Gibaire Hudson said the program boosts students’ expectations. “It helps me with the weaknesses I have, like English, to build those up and keeps me on top of what I’m good at, like math,” he said.

Sheimah Hussein, a freshman, said expectations are higher for students in the program. “The teachers expect more of you because you’re a Rising Scholar,” she said. “They

know you should be doing better.”

Most of the Rising Scholars said they had college aspirations, but some did not know how to get there. “I always felt it was important for me to go to college,” said sophomore Jibreel Hussein, “But Rising Scholars made my need more urgent. It made me want to work harder ... so I could get into any college.”

Kennerly said as the first group of Rising Scholars enters their junior year in 2011-12, it will be critical to the program’s progress. That’s a year that the number of accelerated and AP classes should rise significantly

and students begin considering their college choices he said.

“It will be a pivotal year,” he said. “Ultimately, our goal is to get the kids into college, into a university like U-M, and get them scholarships.”

U-M’s Turner said the Rising Scholars program is unique compared with other partnerships around the state.

“These students ... are getting the attention they need,” he said. “They’re the quiet students that are doing well and just need a little extra encouragement. Rising Scholars prepares them for excellence. It’s the kind of program that should be duplicated in other schools.”