



# Greetings from the Curriculum Department

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

One of the most frequently used buzzwords to enter the education lexicon over the past 10 years has been “21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills”. Most of us understand this to mean the skills a student will need to be successful in a competitive college environment and a globally connected, technology centered workforce. While this seems like an obvious need and goal for a school district, translating the big picture down to classroom instruction can be a daunting task.

New Jersey is a participant in the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills ([www.p21.org](http://www.p21.org)) and has helped shape an approach to bringing these ideas to fruition. Many of these ideas are incorporated directly into state and national standards and might be best reflected in the new Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). This gives us a solid starting point for designing curriculum and then activities that incorporate these skills.

The core thinking of the p21.org initiative is contained in a [Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning](#). This delineates the student outcomes and the support systems needed to achieve them. While a great deal of it is familiar to most of us, the 4Cs represent a fundamental shift in the approach to learning and is placed as the keystone of the Framework’s arch. This shift leads us away from simply focusing on the “What” and instead gives equal importance to the “How.”

The 4Cs are Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity. These are considered “soft skills,” but we should not let that moniker lead us to believe they are any less critical than the more quantifiable “hard skills.” Our students’ ability to thrive in higher education and compete globally relies on the successful merger of the 4Cs with the classical 3Rs that represent content knowledge.

As a district, we are committed to creating 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Communities where the 4Cs have a place front and center in our curriculum.

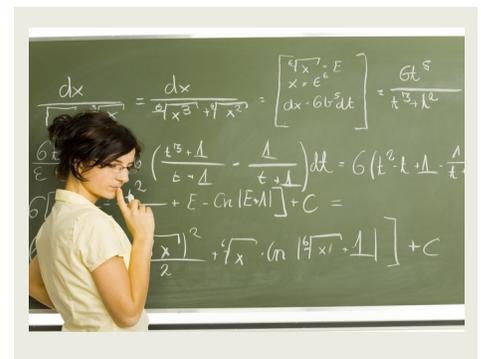
I hope you continue to find this newsletter informative and wish you and your family the best as we enter the winter holiday season.

Best Regards,

Dr. Brian Heineman, Director, Curriculum and Instruction

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# World Languages

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## How to Help Your Child with World Languages

The Bernards Township World Language Department offers instruction in French, Italian, Japanese, Latin and Spanish. These subjects, unlike English, may be those which parents have had little or no previous exposure to or it has been years since they formally studied it. This presents some difficulty when it comes to helping children with world language assignments. The US Department of Education, in its report, *Homework Tips for Parents*, states that “Research shows that if a child is having difficulty with homework, parents should become involved by paying close attention...If a child is doing well in school, parents should consider shifting their efforts to providing support for their child’s own choices about how to do homework.” In either situation, it is important that parents feel comfortable communicating with their children and their teachers regarding expectations for work done outside of the classroom. The following tips are intended to help you understand how you can support your child’s language learning experience:

- Know the current topic of study and talk about it– Our curriculum is developed to connect languages with everyday life. All vocabulary and topics studied compare the language and culture to that of the United States. If your child is studying the topic of families in their language class, ask them how to say the words for different family members in that language and discuss what they have learned about family structures in different countries. This method of discussion can be applied to beginner levels all the way through advanced levels on any topic.
- Monitor Homework – Although you may not understand your child’s homework, they should be able to. Our teachers go over assignments prior to the end of class and allow time for questions and clarification. Sit with your child and have them explain the tasks to you. They will also learn through teaching you the vocabulary and grammatical structures. As a follow up, make sure that your child is making corrections in class. Ask them to share them with you the next night and explain their new understandings.
- Provide Additional Exposure - Any extra exposure to the language and culture will aid in your child’s learning experience. For language practice, visit the World Language Department Website as well as the teacher’s website for suggestions of sites and apps that provide learning opportunities for students outside of the classroom. Other fun ideas are watching movies in the language, listening to music from around the world and reading simple books that can teach new vocabulary. (continued on next page)
- Be Wary of Translation Services – Online translators can help students understand text but are not optimal to learning languages. Often they provide incorrect translations which can cause significant misunderstandings. Our goal is for students to use what they know to explain themselves rather than simply translating their thoughts. However, when necessary, our department recommends [Wordreference.com](https://www.wordreference.com) as the preferred venue for looking up individual words. Or, you can purchase a bilingual dictionary as a reference tool at home.

Learning a new language can be a fun experience for families when everyone practices together. It’s never too late to learn. Consider making this year’s New Year’s resolution to learn a new language yourself by using apps, taking a course, or purchasing a program. Then, reward yourself by traveling together and using the language in real situations. Happy New Year!

For more information on how you can assist your child with their homework please visit: <https://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/homework/homeworktips.pdf>

Katherine Stotler  
Supervisor, World Languages

## Science and Technology

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### **New Science Standards for New Jersey**

On July 9<sup>th</sup> the New Jersey State Board of Education formally adopted the *Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)* to replace the *2009 New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Science*. This move mirrors the 2010 adoption of the *Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts (CCSS)*. At the time of the writing of this article New Jersey is among thirteen states to have adopted the NGSS which include: Rhode Island, Kentucky, Kansas, Maryland, Vermont, California, Delaware, Washington, the District of Columbia, Nevada, Oregon, and Illinois.

The NGSS are based upon the National Research Council's *Framework for K-12 Science Education* and were created through a collaborative partnership between twenty-

six lead states (including New Jersey) and a variety of stakeholders including science educators, the National Science Teacher Association, Achieve, Inc., the National Research Council and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. These new standards are intended to better prepare students in understanding the process of science and how scientists and engineers do their work, being better able to test scientific ideas, and being better able to analyze scientific evidence. Curricula designed around these standards will likely focus on fewer topics but in greater depth. Additionally, students will likely experience more lessons designed to promote critical thinking and problem solving skills.

The NGSS are designed around three 'dimensions.' The first dimension, *Practices*, focuses on the way in which scientists and engi-

neers solve problems and investigate phenomena. Dimension 2: *Cross-cutting Concepts* focuses on ideas that span all fields of science. Examples include *cause and effect, scale, energy and matter, stability and change, and patterns*. The third dimension, *Disciplinary Core Ideas*, focuses on the core ideas of the physical sciences, the life sciences, the Earth and space sciences, and engineering, technology and applications of science. The changes to science education heralded by the NGSS are exciting. In the coming months we will begin to align our programs to these new standards and to expand opportunities for students to exercise their critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Matthew Hall, Supervisor, Science and Technology

## Counseling Department

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Did you know that the Ridge High School Counseling Department has a formal curriculum? Each of our modules are linked to the [American School Counselor Association \(ASCA\)'s National Standards for Students](#), as well as the [New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards](#) for [Career Education and Consumer, Family and Life Skills](#).

- [Guidance 9](#)
- [Guidance 10](#)
- [Guidance 11](#)
- [Guidance 12](#)

We hope to publish a formal Counseling Curriculum for grades K-8 during the summer of 2015.

Jillian Shadis, Supervisor of School Counseling

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

**“All great change in America begins at the dinner table.” - Ronald Reagan**

Dear Parents,

‘Tis the season where families gather around the dinner table to break bread in thanksgiving, observance and celebration. This provides an excellent opportunity to involve our children in worthwhile conversations that have the potential to develop their thinking and expression. We hear stories of first families who have made the art of conversation a part of their practice when gathering at meal time. The Kennedy family was known to engage in lively discussions over dinner. Similarly, Jenna Bush recalls nightly dinners with her family while growing up, where she would not “hesitate to challenge her dad” (Hollandsworth).

Engaging our children in meaningful conversations is crucially important not only to instill family values but also to develop their critical thinking, vocabulary and communication skills. Participation in purposeful discussion, both inside and outside the classroom, impacts children’s reading and writing. Two noted literacy experts published an article last month highlighting the importance of speaking to students’ reading and writing development (Fisher & Frey).

In the classroom, your child’s teacher(s) prompt students to elaborate upon their views and support those views with reasons and evidence. Parents can help extend this vital practice beyond the classroom by asking similar questions, including:

- Can you tell me more?
  - Why do you think that?
  - What if the opposite were true?
  - Can you give me another example?
- (Adapted from “[Speaking Volumes](#)”)

The above questions are wonderful for prompting thinking and elaboration, but often the difficulty lies in beginning the conversation. On the car ride home or at the dinner table, I will often ask my five-year old what his favorite part of the day

was or what he learned in school. The response is often less than satisfactory: “I don’t know,” “Nothing,” or “I don’t remember.” Now, I’m not trying to turn my car or dinner table into the Iran-contra hearings, but it is important that our children have practice engaging in meaningful conversation with the people that matter the most to them (whether they are willing to admit it or not) - their parents. It is also important for me, as a parent, to listen closely to hear what is happening in my child’s mind - What is he thinking? How is he thinking?

Let us resolve this holiday season to engage our children in meaningful dialogue. Doing so will help them clarify their thinking, improve their speaking and (hopefully) their listening.

Below are links to articles that may be helpful to you in getting the conversation started:

[20 Questions to Ask Your Child About School](#)

[25 ways to ask your kids about their school day and actually get an answer](#)

[9 Cool Questions to Ask Your Kid from Scholastic](#)

Warmly,

David Hunscher  
Supervisor, English Language Arts

## Postscript:

In the [last issue](#), I wrote about the need for children to hear parents read to them and to read books related to their interests. Here is a link to an [infographic](#) from the National PTA about the importance of parental involvement in a child’s reading life. Two of the more interesting findings to note are that parental modeling of good reading habits has a greater impact on a child’s reading ability than household income and “when parents read with their children and provide access to books, children read more and classroom scores rise significantly.”

During this gift-giving season, please consider giving your children books that coincide with their interests. With the long winter break approaching and snow soon to fall, what better time to cozy-up at home with a book?

Here are some websites to help:

[Book Selection Tips from Scholastic](#)

[Book Suggestions from Amazon and the National PTA](#)

[Barnes & Noble Books for Kids](#)

## Works Cited

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# Fine and Practical Arts

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## THE ROLE OF ARTS EDUCATION: Skills Children Learn

Educating the child of the 21st Century has taken on new meaning in recent years. Schools have renewed the intensive focus on the study of mathematics and English language arts, as well as science and technology education. STEM education takes many of these areas and combines them in a collective unit of study -- Science, Technology Engineering and Math. While it is important to study the Arts for their intrinsic value, it should also be noted that Arts Education promotes skills that are just as important in academic and life success. In fact, there is much discussion about changing the current national emphasis on STEM to STE(+a)M.

In the book, *“The Artistic Edge: 7 Skills Children Need to Succeed in an Increasingly Right Brain World,”* author Lisa Phillips speaks about all the Arts do to assist our children in succeeding. The following are skills children learn from the Arts that are discussed in her book:

1. **CREATIVITY** - Being able to think on your feet, approach tasks from different perspectives and think ‘outside the box’ will distinguish your child from others. In an arts program, your child will be asked to recite a monologue in 6 different ways, create a painting that represents a memory or compose a new rhythm to enhance a piece of music. If children have practice thinking creatively, it will come naturally to them now and in their future career.
2. **CONFIDENCE** - The skills developed through theatre, not only train you how to convincingly deliver a message, but also build the confidence you need to take command of the stage. Theatre training gives children practice stepping out of their comfort zone and allows them to make mistakes and learn from them in rehearsal. This process gives children the confidence to perform in front of large audiences.
3. **PROBLEM SOLVING** - Artistic creations are born through the solving of problems. How do I turn this clay in a sculpture? How do I portray a particular emotion through dance? How will my character react in this situation? Without even realizing it kids that participate in the arts are consistently being challenged to solve problems. All this practice problem solving develops children’s skills in reasoning and understanding. This will help develop important problem-solving skills necessary for success in any career.
4. **PERSEVERANCE** - When a child picks up a violin for the first time, she/he knows that playing Bach right away is not an option; however, when that child practices, learns the skills and techniques and doesn’t give up, that Bach concerto is that much closer. In an increasingly competitive world, where people are being asked to continually develop new skills, perseverance is essential to achieving success.
5. **FOCUS** - The ability to focus is a key skill developed through ensemble work. Keeping a balance between listening and contributing involves a great deal of concentration and focus. It requires each participant to not only think about their role, but how their role contributes to the big picture of what is being created. Recent research has shown that participation in the arts improves children’s abilities to concentrate and focus in other aspects of their lives.
6. **NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION** - Through experiences in theatre and dance education, children learn to breakdown the mechanics of body language. They experience different ways of moving and how those movements communicate different emotions. They are then coached in performance skills to ensure they are portraying their character effectively to the audience.
7. **RECEIVING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK** - Receiving constructive feedback about a performance or visual art piece is a regular part of any arts instruction. Children learn that feedback is part of learning and it is not something to be offended by or to be taken personally. It is something helpful. The goal is the improvement of skills and evaluation is incorporated at every step of the process. Each arts discipline has built in parameters to ensure that critique is a valuable experience and greatly contributes to the success of the final pieces.
8. **COLLABORATION** - Most arts disciplines are collaborative in nature. Through the arts, children practice working together, sharing responsibility, and compromising with others (continued on next page)

## Fine and Practical Arts (continued)

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to accomplish a common goal. When a child has a part to play in a music ensemble, or a theatre or dance production, they begin to understand that their contribution is necessary for the success of the group. Through these experiences children gain confidence and start to learn that their contributions have value even if they don't have the biggest role.

9. **DEDICATION** - When kids get to practice following through with artistic endeavors that result in a finished product or performance, they learn to associate dedication with a feeling of accomplishment. They practice developing healthy work habits of being on time for rehearsals or performances, respecting the contributions of others, and putting effort into the success of the final piece. In the performing arts, the reward for dedication is the warm feeling of an audience's applause that comes rushing over you, making all your efforts worthwhile.

10. **ACCOUNTABILITY** - When children practice creating something collaboratively they get used to the idea that their actions affect other people. They learn that when they are not prepared or on-time, that other people suffer. Through the arts, children also learn that it is important to admit that you made a mistake and take responsibility for it. Because mistakes are a regular part of the process of learning in the arts, children begin to see that mistakes happen. We acknowledge them, learn from them and move on.

Adapted from:

Washington Post, January 2013

<http://www.arteducators.org/>

<http://theartisticedge.ca/>

## 21st Century Learning Skills

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### **BUSINESS DEPARTMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION SURVEY**

An on-going process in the curriculum department is to review program offerings through a process known as "Program Evaluations," our educational version of research and development. In short, a team of teachers, in collaboration with the department supervisor, prepares a report to be presented to the Board of Education Curriculum Committee. This report contains a reflection on the current offerings, comparative studies of other school districts, and surveys of parents and students. A link is provided below for you to take part in the 'Parent Survey.' Regardless if you have had a child in the program who has graduated, currently have a child taking courses, or do not even have students at the high school yet, your contribution is valuable to us. Please consider taking a few moments to complete this survey.

Thank you for participating in this process!

[PARENT SURVEY - CLICK HERE](#)

Michael Fackelman, Supervisor of Fine & Performing Arts, 21st Century Learning Skills

# Special Education

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The National Reading Panel (NICHD 2000) identified vocabulary as one of five major components of reading. “Teaching vocabulary will not guarantee success in reading, just as learning to read words (decoding) will not guarantee success in reading. However, lacking either adequate word identification skills or adequate vocabulary will ensure failure” (Biemiller, 2005).

The elements of scientifically researched based vocabulary instruction are:

- Direct instruction of vocabulary words for a specific text
- Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary
- Vocabulary words that are useful in a variety of contexts
- Structured vocabulary activities (modeling-guided practice-independent application)
- Active engagement that goes beyond definitional knowledge

During this past summer, the special education teachers worked on developing vocabulary instruction that aligns with the above-mentioned research. The developed vocabulary instruction is linked to teacher read alouds, mentor texts, guided reading instructional texts, and independent level texts. The focus activities are:

Word sorts

Identifying Antonyms/Synonyms/Similes

Semantic Mapping

Context Clues

Analogies

Meaningful Sentences

These activities utilize a Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson & Gallagher 1983). This model moves instruction from teacher centered, whole class delivery to students centered collaboration and independent practice. It is referred to as “I do it, we do it, you do it.” The model proposes a plan of instruction that includes demonstration/modeling, guided practice, independent practice, and then application.

The goal of the activities and instructional method is to foster independence and increase vocabulary development to enhance comprehension. During the school year, your child will be experiencing this method and activities during reading and writing workshop with fiction and non-fiction text.

At home you can use the following guidelines from [READING ROCKETS](#) to assist in increasing your child’s vocabulary.

Sharing a new word with your child doesn’t have to take a long time: just a few minutes to talk about the word and

## Special Education (continued)

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then focus back on the book or conversation. Choose which words to talk about carefully – choosing every new word might make reading seem like a chore. The best words to explore with your child are ones that are common among adult speakers but are less common to see in the books your child might read.

When introducing new words to your child, keep the following four helpful hints in mind:

1. First, provide a simple, kid-friendly definition for the new word: **Enormous** means that something is really, really big.
2. Second, provide a simple, kid-friendly example that makes sense within their daily life: *Remember that really big watermelon we got at the grocery store? That was an **enormous** watermelon!*
3. Third, encourage your child to develop their own example: *What **enormous** thing can you think of? Can you think of something really big that you saw today? That's right! The bulldozer near the park was **enormous!** Those tires were huge.*
4. Last, keep your new words active within your house. Over the next few days and weeks, take advantage of opportunities to use each new vocabulary word in conversation.

Take the time to share new words and build your child's vocabulary. You'll be **enormously** glad you did!

Lisa Vitale-Stanzione

Supervisor of Special Education K-8

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## UPCOMING CURRICULUM EVENTS

**January 14, 2015** - 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. - WAMS PTO Presentation - "Transition from 8th Grade to Ridge High School"

Dr. Heineman, Director, Curriculum and Instruction

Frank Howlett, Principal, Ridge High School

Jillian Shadis, Supervisor of School Counseling

**January 28, 2015** - 7:00 p.m. - "Academic Planning Night" - Ridge High Performing Arts Center

## Mathematics Curriculum Overview

In 2010, New Jersey adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for mathematics. The phase-in process occurred over a period of several years. In 2012-2013, these standards were implemented in mathematics at the high school level. In 2013-2014, these standards were implemented in mathematics at the middle school level. These standards represent some significant changes in the content and expectations for mathematics.

The CCSS specifies standards for grades Kindergarten through eighth grade, as well as high school mathematics. The standards that are pertinent to high school mathematics are then divided into Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II. This division is largely dictated by the course pathways that are laid out from PARCC.

The main purpose of the standards in Kindergarten through eighth grade is to allow students to develop number sense. The focus is on building conceptual understanding alongside procedural fluency for key topics in mathematics. In grades K-2, the big ideas are addition and subtraction of whole numbers, as well as place value. In grades 3-5, the big ideas are multiplication and division of whole numbers, as well as understanding and beginning operations with fractions. In grades 6-8, the big ideas involve ratios and proportional relationships, understanding of and operations with rational numbers, and beginning expressions and equations.

From Kindergarten through grade six, the curriculum in Bernards Township closely follows the grade level standards. Starting in grade seven, it gets a bit more complicated. According to the CCSS, Algebra I is a ninth grade course. Therefore, if students take Algebra I prior to ninth grade, the standards must be compacted. This is done over a two year period of seventh and eighth grade. It is important for both students and parents to understand that by making the choice to take Algebra I in eighth grade, they are starting an **accelerated** track in mathematics. This track allows students to potentially take one year of Calculus in high school. The grade level course for mathematics in eighth grade is the Math 8 course. This course is designed to give students one more year to solidify their foundation in number sense and other important skills before beginning Algebra I. The seventh grade teachers make recommendations about which course is appropriate for each student. It is advisable for students and parents to speak with the student's teacher if there are concerns about this recommendation, as perhaps any questions can be answered prior to making a final decision. It is important to note that a solid foundation both prior to entering Algebra I, as well as in Algebra I, has certainly been shown to predict success in future courses. Students who struggle through Algebra I will often have difficulties in Algebra II in high school.

Earlier in this newsletter, Dr. Heineman stressed the importance of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The goal for mathematics learning in all grades is to focus on many of these skills, primarily critical thinking and communication. The main shift in mathematics education is that students are more focused on understanding the "why" of problem-solving, not just being able to memorize a procedure or formula. This focus on explanation, reasoning, and critical thinking is challenging for students, but in the end provides them with the valuable 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that are transferable to other areas.

Kristen Wolff,  
Supervisor, Mathematics

# Social Studies

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## Veterans Day

We celebrate the importance of our country's veterans throughout the year at William Annin Middle School, but especially on Veteran's Day! Social Studies teacher Mrs. Aileen Barry facilitates a community outreach project with her students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Current Issues elective by sending Thank You cards to local veterans each year as part of their recognition of the importance of this day in our history. This year, the students in the class made public announcements for several weeks before Veterans Day that included facts about veterans and encouraged their peers to write a thank you note to a veteran, expressing their appreciation for the sacrifices they made for our freedom. They then set up collection boxes in the auditorium, cafeteria, and main office. A week before Veterans Day, the students helped Ms. Barry preview over 700 cards, which Ms. Barry then delivered to the local VFW on Friday, November 7, so that the veterans received the cards on Veterans Day.

For the past few years, social studies teacher Mr. Bill Michaelis shares United States military uniforms with students from the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Cold War period. He discusses and demonstrates aspects of the life of soldiers using the equipment. The students wear and model many uniforms while viewing supporting video clips and pictures. The intention is to expand the students' knowledge and appreciation of the sacrifices that service members have made in the past and present. Mr. Michaelis also makes great efforts to make Veterans Day a day of veteran awareness and appreciation for the students. They discuss the origins of Veterans Day and exactly what defines a veteran. Students read primary source documents from soldiers through time, including letters from family members at home and soldiers in combat.

## Ethics Club

The Ridge Ethics Club was founded four years ago by Ms. Jennifer Raphaels and Ms. Janine Quimby. Their mission is to "promote ethical conduct among RHS students by providing the opportunity to enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for ethical behavior." (<http://tinyurl.com/pdqem9p>) The club was founded in recognition of the increasingly competitive nature of education, especially due to the increasing competition to be accepted into a prestigious college. The club advisors aim to create a dialogue with students to expand their understanding of ethical behavior and to provide them with incentives to behave with academic integrity. The club meets weekly before school, and regularly has between 50-100 students in attendance! Some of the activities the students engage in include:

- Discussion and analysis of readings related to ethics. For example they recently discussed the practice of recruiting athletes from other countries using expedited citizenship processes in order to join national sports teams.
- Discussion, analysis, and role-playing of case studies that present common ethical dilemmas faced by high school students
- Design and implementation of outreach activities to encourage ethical thinking and decision making among middle and elementary school students in the district

Through their participation in the Ethics Club, students are incentivized to behave in an ethical manner by their ability to earn an annual Ethics Award. At the end of each school year, teachers will complete an evaluation of their ethical behavior. Students who demonstrate ethical behavior in the form of academic integrity, class conduct, and work effort will earn a certificate recognizing their achievement.

Finally, students in the Ethics Club participate in Ethics Bowls, which are academic competitions on the subject of ethics. Students in the Ridge Ethics Club participated in the New Jersey regional qualifying high school ethics bowl on Saturday, December 6th, 2014, hosted by Stevens Institute of Technology. Students engage in up to 3 rounds of discussion of the ethical implications of various real and hypothetical case studies. One of this year's cases is "Hashtag Activism: Do social media campaigns to promote activism – such as the ALS ice bucket challenge and the "Bring back our girls campaign" do more harm than good?" Students who demonstrate the strongest understanding of ethical reasoning and the ability to evaluate ethical dilemmas will win the Ethics Bowl. The team who wins the regional qualifying event at Stevens will be invited to participate at the National High School competition in April, 2015. The National High School event is hosted by the Parr Center for Ethics and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Kristin Fox  
Supervisor, Social Studies