

# Cornell TODAY

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## P.R.I.D.E. Program Makes Lasting Impact

**N**early four years ago, Cornell administrators and teachers had an idea for an innovative after-school program that could help students with schoolwork and give them a safe, structured outlet for social activities. Their vision included tutoring and homework support, enrichment classes, field trips and clubs. It would be a far-reaching program, open to students beginning in Grade 2 and continuing all the way through Grade 9. And it would be free for any student who wanted to participate.

Undaunted by its scope, Cornell administrators pursued state funding for the program and in 2005 the District was awarded a grant to turn this vision to reality. The P.R.I.D.E. Program was born.

The grant expired on April 30 ending a successful run that included partnerships with Sewickley Valley YMCA, Robert Morris University and Tickets for Kids. Administrators are exploring additional funding opportunities for the 2009 – 2010 school year but are not yet able to confirm whether the program will continue.

Through the years, the P.R.I.D.E. Program and its tutoring component have boosted student performance.

“PSSA scores for participating students increased 14% in 2007 and the average number of hours of reading instruction climbed between 39 and 72 percent.”

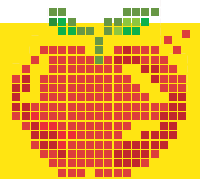
As an added benefit, discipline referrals, detentions and suspensions dropped among children who attended the program on a regular basis.

In addition to academic support, the program gave students an unprecedented opportunity to explore a wide range of activities, including:



Elementary students Zachary Messersmith, Desmond Ross, Summer Barwell and Tazaya Short (l – r) participate in the acids and bases competition, presented by the Carnegie Science Center as part of the P.R.I.D.E. Program. The Science Center was one of several organizations to offer enrichment opportunities to students in the after-school program.

## Technology and the Classroom



**A**ll across Pennsylvania, *Classrooms for the Future* (CFF) is transforming the high school educational experience and strengthening the technical literacy skills that today's children need to succeed. Look for this special symbol to learn how the Pennsylvania Department of Education program has impacted Cornell School District and given students – and teachers – access to resources that weren't available even just two years ago. If you have any questions about the program or need more information, please contact **Kris Hupp**, CFF Technology Coach, at [khupp@cornell.k12.pa.us](mailto:khupp@cornell.k12.pa.us) or at ext. 221.

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# New Courses Set for Next Year

To meet the changing demands of today's global economy, Cornell School District is updating and adding several courses to its high school curriculum. Curriculum changes for the 2009 – 2010 school year include:

- **Office Concepts**, a new year-long course that provides hands-on training in MS Office 2007 tools, including Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Access. This course is mandatory for all Grade 9 students.
- **Personal Finance**, a new course that will help students learn how to plan and manage personal finances, including income sources, financial decision-making and planning, banking, buying decisions, credit and savings. The class is required for graduation and is available beginning in Grade 10.
- **Honors Biology** for Grade 9 students, an in-depth and complex course that requires students to critically apply classroom knowledge to biological concepts.
- **Integrated Math** has been expanded to a full-year course

and placement in this class will be determined by a math placement test administered to students in Grade 10. It will review concepts of Algebra and Geometry and is available to Juniors and Seniors.

- **College Math Prep** is a new half-year class for Juniors which will explore math topics necessary for success in an entry-level college math class. Students will be placed in the course based on their Grade 10 math placement exam.

For the first time, students can also enroll in a new **Anatomy** course that will be taught online. The half-year elective is available to students in Grades 10 – 12.

In addition, Dual Enrollment opportunities will expand to include **Financial Accounting, American History** and advanced **Spanish** courses offered through LaRoche College. Students enrolled in the program can earn college credit while taking the course in high school.

For more information on these and other curriculum matters, please contact **Gina Walter**, Guidance Counselor, at [gwalter@cornell.k12.pa.us](mailto:gwalter@cornell.k12.pa.us) or ext. 106.



Mrs. Ruth Mihalyi instructs students in the Dual Enrollment Basic Applied Statistics course, part of the University of Pittsburgh College in the High School Program. The Dual Enrollment program is expanding and will offer additional courses next year.

## An Elementary Showcase

All Elementary parents are cordially invited to a year-end *Science: It's Elementary Showcase of Learning*. Join us on **May 6 from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm** in your child's classroom.

See you there!

## Pride Program

*continued*

- Swimming, cooking and art classes provided onsite by the YMCA
- Field trips to area landmarks, including PNC Park, Pro Football Hall of Fame, WQED Studios and the Pittsburgh Zoo
- Hands-on programs sponsored by the National Aviary, Carnegie Science Center, Sweet Water Center for the Arts and the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
- Teacher-guided activities such as Battle of the Books, a national reading incentive program
- More than 42 clubs that included everything from Hip Hop to Gymnastics to SAT prep

Through the years, hundreds of Cornell students have been a part of the P.R.I.D.E. experience. The District is grateful to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for its support and thanks its partners, teachers and families for creating a program that will have a lifelong impact on the hundreds of students who participated in it.

## Elective Develops Leadership Skills

A new girls-only elective that will help girls strengthen their leadership and problem-solving skills is now available to all incoming high school freshmen.

*Campus Connections* is an in-school program developed by Girl Scouts of Western Pennsylvania. Students at Robert Morris University who are pursuing degrees in education will teach the course, with oversight from Cornell faculty members. The nine-week course will help the girls develop leadership and problem-solving skills that can be used in school, at home or in the community.

For more information, please contact **Gina Walter**, Guidance Counselor, at [gwalter@cornell.k12.pa.us](mailto:gwalter@cornell.k12.pa.us) or ext. 106.



**Girl Scouts®**



Lauren Davis, Garrett Puckett and Myka Smith (l – r) show off some of the geodes they examined during their hands-on geode project.

## “Rock” Stars Take Center Stage

**D**on't know what a geode is? Just ask any Cornell 3<sup>rd</sup> grader. The students had the opportunity to see and touch the sparkling rock formations when geologist **Jeffrey Smith** visited the students and shared his geode collection with them. The rocks, dug out of caves in Mexico, captivated the budding geologists and helped them visualize science concepts they had learned earlier in the year.

Mr. Smith has been sharing his expertise with the Elementary School students for several years.

*Lauren Davis explores the hollowed out center of a geode with help from geologist Jeffrey Smith.*



# Sports Shorts

- Information on sports physicals for fall athletic programs will be mailed in late May. Be sure to visit [www.cornell.k12.pa.us](http://www.cornell.k12.pa.us) for updates or log on to [www.piaa.org](http://www.piaa.org). PIAA sports physicals are required before students can participate in practices, games, scrimmages and related events.
- Cornell welcomes **Jeffrey Stuart** (Softball), **Amy Kerr** (Asst. Varsity and Jr. High Swimming) and **Michael Ressler** (Head Varsity Volleyball) to our coaching staff.
- Kudos to the Boys Varsity Basketball team, which qualified for the WPIAL tournament for the second year in a row. The team finished out its season with a solid 11-11 record and 6-4 record in section play.
- This year marked the first time Cornell has fielded a 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Boys Basketball team. The players learned and improved their skills, and are already looking forward to next year!
- Congratulations to **Jody Gazda**, who took impressive honors at the Pennsylvania Classic Gymnastics Championship in the Gold Division. She earned 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Floor, 4<sup>th</sup> in the Vault and 5<sup>th</sup> All Around.

## Swimmers Set School Records

Teamwork paid off for **Royce Tipper**, **Gary Sturm**, **Mark Dietrich** and **Cory Gazda**, who brought home a Bronze Medal for the Boys 200-meter Freestyle Relay at the recent Middle Atlantic Conference (MAC) Swimming and Diving Championship - and set a new school record for the event. Royce also earned Silver Medals for his record-breaking performances in the 200 IM and the 100-meter Butterfly events. In addition, Cory set a new school record for his time in the 500-meter Freestyle event. The Girls' team also had a strong showing, with **Paige Hayman** and **Mary Nolte** achieving “personal bests” in their events.

Shortly after the MAC event, **Mark Dietrich**, **Cory Gazda**, **Bryan Gray**, **Paige Hayman**, **Brittany Hutsler**, **Justin Jeffress**, **Doug Lowden**, **Mary Nolte**, **Zack O'Connell**, **Gary Sturm**, **Royce Tipper** and **Mark Whitling** represented Cornell at the WPIAL Swimming Championship at the University of Pittsburgh. Congratulations!



A few members of the Cornell swim team take a break between events at the recent MAC Championship.

# Tech Coach is There for Teachers, Students



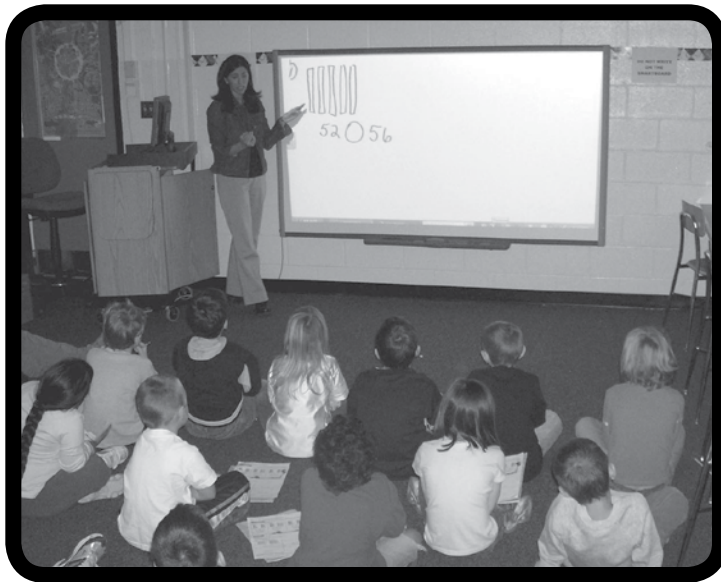
Since 2007, Cornell School District has been awarded more than \$438,000 in *Classrooms for the Future (CFF)* funding to transform its high school Math, Science, English and Social Studies classrooms into “smart classrooms.” The program has enabled the District to equip more of its classrooms with laptops, interactive white boards, high-speed Internet access, digital cameras, scanners, projectors and software.

In addition, it has provided extensive training opportunities for teachers, giving them the information and resources they need to integrate 21<sup>st</sup> century tools into everyday instruction.

Social Studies teacher **Kris Hupp** knows all about teacher training. As the District’s CFF coach, he works closely with his colleagues at every grade level to train them on the latest technologies and shares “best practices” to make sure they are updated on the latest research and trends. At the same time, he is available to students to give them the guidance they need as they explore podcasting, social networking and other emerging technologies.



*Kris Hupp (l) works with Jay Celante during a recent Lunch-and-Learn workshop. This voluntary training session is open to any teacher who wants to learn how today’s technological advances can help improve the classroom experience and student achievement.*



*Mrs. Fearing uses a Smart Board to help her 1<sup>st</sup> Grade students grasp early math concepts.*

“The response from our teachers has been unbelievable,” Mr. Hupp said. “Everybody wants to learn more. From Kindergarten to high school, teachers are embracing technology. They see how the kids respond to it and they want to take it to the next level.”

To help them get there, Mr. Hupp coordinates regular Lunch-and-Learn workshops and other seminars. The teacher-driven sessions have included presentations on topics such as the use of smart boards in elementary classrooms, social bookmarking, and “wiki” development. A wiki is a web page that allows multiple people to add or revise content. It is often used for lesson review, giving students the opportunity to post questions any time. The questions can be answered by teachers or peers and accessed by students while they study.

“CFF may have been designed for high schools, but it has had a positive, lasting impact at every grade level,” he said. “It has opened so many doors for our students. It’s been a privilege to be a part of it.”

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## Online Electives Offer Options

More and more high schools are offering online courses to students – with surprisingly positive results. While conventional wisdom might assume that students tend to get distracted during online courses, a recent online pilot project at Cornell High School is proving just the opposite.

Earlier this year, CHS offered an

online course in African American History. It was so successful that the District will offer an online Anatomy elective for students in Grades 10 - 12 this fall.

“As a small district, we can’t always offer all the classes we’d like to offer,” explained **Donna Belas**, Acting Superintendent. “Online courses give our students

more options and expands our classrooms beyond four walls.” The computer-based courses provide several benefits. For example, courses tend to be more hands-on since students must take the initiative to access and learn the material. In addition, Cornell students who participate in e-courses will be familiar with the process when they encounter

it at the college level.

**Kris Hupp** developed the curriculum for the African American History class and monitored student progress.

“Online courses aren’t for everyone,” he said. “But if you’re highly motivated and a self-starter, they can be a great supplement to your regular curriculum,” he said.

# E-Pals Are the New Pen Pals

**T**echnology is opening up entire worlds for Cornell High School students – literally.

Beginning in February, students in **Steven Vayanos'** Spanish II, III and IV classes have become "e-pals" with their teenage counterparts in communities in Spain and Columbia. The project has a dual focus: it allows Cornell students to learn how teens live in other parts of the world and it strengthens their foreign language skills at the same time. For example, Cornell students write all of their correspondence in Spanish. Students in Spain and Columbia write their e-notes in English.

"The kids just love it," said Mr. Vayanos. "There's simply no other way to put it."

All correspondence takes place over a safe and secure network, and all of it comes through Mr. Vayanos. The students cannot communicate with each other without his knowledge and approval.

"The students are using conversational Spanish much more frequently, and getting a much stronger sense of the language and culture," Mr. Vayanos explained. "When they graduate from Cornell, they will definitely know how to communicate with the world's Spanish-speaking population. It's been a great experience."

# Hilltop Goes Paperless

**F**or many years, The Hilltop has been a must-read for Cornell students, teachers, families and community members. It still is. Except these days, readers are checking it out online.

According to **Patricia Dahmen**, English teacher and Hilltop faculty advisor, going paperless was a decision that was right for the times.

"Our students really encouraged us to look at our options," she said. "And they were right."

According to Mrs. Dahmen, moving the publication online has strengthened the students' technology skills and enabled the staff to increase publication from four issues a year to six issues a year. It has also saved reams and reams of paper.

"We're saving time that used to be spent at the print shop. That gives us more opportunity to write additional editions and keep the stories timely."

Approximately 20 high school students staff the Hilltop. They are responsible for reporting, writing, editing, layout and design, and online publication. To view the latest edition, please visit <http://cornell.hilltop.com>.



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# Teachers Helping Teachers



As state-approved Keystone Technology Integrators, Les Dean, Doug Haskins, Tavis Bogue, Patricia Dahmen, Kris Hupp, Jason Moore, Aaron Thomas and Andrew Erwin (l – r) share ideas and best practices with their colleagues. This technology information exchange is helping to improve instruction and student performance.

**A**s part of the state's *Classrooms for the Future* initiative, eight members of the Cornell School District educational team have been recognized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for the innovative ways in which they use technology to motivate students and improve student learning. As Keystone Technology Integrators (KTIs), the team networks with more than 3,000 teachers across the state to bring proven educational ideas, methods and strategies to Cornell High School classrooms.

KTIs are nominated by their school district each year. To be eligible, teachers must actively use technology to improve education and effectively integrate it into their classroom to strengthen the learning experience.

Once they have been selected as a KTI, teachers share their experience with colleagues on a regular basis. At Cornell, this gives as many teachers as possible the opportunity to learn more about and take advantage of the District's technology resources.

"These teachers are setting the standard for us and every year more teachers join their ranks," explained **Donna Belas**, Acting Superintendent. "Their techniques are fostering curiosity and creativity in our students, and helping the children improve their problem-solving skills. As a result, many of our students are doing better in the classroom and on state tests."

For more information about KTIs, please visit [www.pde.state.pa.us/keystones](http://www.pde.state.pa.us/keystones).

# A Sneak Peak at Kindergarten

## “Boot Camp” Returns in August

**K**indergarten Boot Camp is back. This three-week program familiarizes incoming kindergarteners with the routines of a full school day, including the bus ride and interaction with other children. The children also become acquainted with their teacher, their classroom and the school building.

“We hosted the program for the first time last year and it really exceeded our expectations,” explained **Dr. Michael Lucas**, Building Principal. “Teachers and parents reported tremendous gains, students felt comfortable, and most importantly, they were ready for a full day of school when camp concluded.” According to Dr. Lucas, the program helps students gain confidence that will stay with them as they move up through the grades.

Boot Camp will take place August 3rd through the 21st, from 8:30 am to 11:30 am. Transportation will be provided. Each child will also receive a special Boot Camp t-shirt. The program is funded through the 21st Century Community Learning Center program. Please contact the Elementary School at ext. 141 to register.

# Calendar Highlights

<b>May 13</b>	Wall of Fame Induction and Academic Awards Ceremony
<b>May 15</b>	Senior High Breakfast of Champions
<b>May 22</b>	Early dismissal for students
<b>May 25</b>	No school – Memorial Day
<b>June 2</b>	Baccalaureate
<b>June 4</b>	Last day of school
<b>June 5</b>	Graduation, 6:30pm
<b>June 6</b>	Relay for Life, SAT
<b>June 8</b>	Kennywood School Picnic

# Career Planning Starts Early

**“W**hat do you want to be when you grow up?” New programs in Grades 8 and 9 are encouraging students to think about this question, setting the stage for in-depth career exploration that can guide them through high school and beyond.

The programs are part of new Career Standards established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The standards are designed to help students identify careers that may interest them, learn what it takes to be successful in that field, and pursue coursework throughout high school that can prepare them for jobs in their desired industry.

“At this stage, the focus is really on career exploration,” explained **Lori Murtha**, Special Education Supervisor. “Our 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders are just starting to look at their options. They’re getting a better sense of the types of careers that might be a good fit for them.”

Students have already completed interest inventories and assessments. These web-based surveys identify student strengths and career opportunities that complement student interests. Later on, they will learn more about specific industries, including necessary coursework, schools and colleges that offer degrees in a chosen field of study, and salary ranges for workers in the industry.



*Rich Kane, a meteorologist from the National Weather Service, talks with students during Cornell’s annual Career Fair. More than 20 companies, including those in the health care, manufacturing and technology sectors, participated in the February event.*

As they progress, students will be reassessed on their interests and will be required to complete research papers on their career options. They will maintain career journals and develop other related projects. These documents will be included in individual portfolios that students can take with them when they graduate.

“They can share it with colleges or employers, demonstrating their knowledge of a certain career or industry,” Mrs. Murtha continued. “This is a great opportunity for the students. We’re really looking forward to seeing where it can take them.”

# Way to Go!

- Winners. W-I-N-N-E-R-S. Winners. That wasn't their final word, but that's what **Russell O'Leary**, **Keara Smith** and **Dominique D'Alessandro** are for their performances in the recent Cornell Spelling Bee. As First Place winner, Russell advanced to the Penn State/Allegheny Times and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Bees. ▶
- **Madlyn Ponticel** and **Karissa Liberatore** have joined the ranks of published authors. Their creative writing essays were published by the Pennsylvania Modern Language Association. The essays, submitted by Spanish teacher **Steven Vayonas** as part of a monthly Spanish IV classroom assignment, were written entirely in Spanish and appeared in the April edition of PMLA's *Forum* magazine.
- Congratulations to **Brittany Hutmser**, who was recognized in February by the Daughters of the American Revolution and its Good Citizen Program. ▼



- In recent months, five Cornell musicians have been chosen to represent their schools and perform in prestigious PMEA District Band concerts. **Elizabeth Mazzocco** participated in the PMEA Junior High District Band held in March; **Madlyn Ponticel** and **Andrew Weryha** performed with the PMEA Senior High District Band in January. **Miranda Dorste** and **Lily Formosa** will participate in Elementary District Band in May. Bravo!
- Seniors **Shawn Miles** and **Karissa Liberatore** were recognized by the Tribune-Review as Outstanding Young Citizens 2009 at a special banquet held in April. Karissa was also selected as a Top Ten Gold Medal Winner among all the honorees. ▼

- Channel 86 has expanded its reach and is a new member of the WPXI High School Scene. The web-based program gives students at Cornell and other area high schools the opportunity to promote school happenings and achievements. To check out recent postings by the Channel 86 crew, visit <http://www.wpxi.com/highschoolscene/index>.
- Congratulations to our own **Marian Day**, who was featured in the Spring 2009 issue of Carnegie Magazine. The art teacher was highlighted in an article celebrating 80 years of the Carnegie Museum of Art's Saturday art program.



Visit [www.cornell.k12.pa.us](http://www.cornell.k12.pa.us) to learn more about other student and faculty achievements, including Students of the Month, Go Award Winners and scholar-athletes.

# Cornell at a Glance . . .

Mrs. Casadei's kindergarten students celebrated "Read Across America" Day with a tribute to Dr. Seuss. ▼



State Senator John Pippy captivated his Pre-K audience during a recent visit to Cornell to learn how Pre-K state funding is improving education for the district's youngest students. ▶



The Cornell Middle School Reading Team captured 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in the recent Battle of the Books. The team read dozens of books and was quizzed on characters and story lines. Nine teams from several area schools competed in the event. ▲

After learning about cell membranes, students in Mr. Warner's Science 7 class experimented with different substances to see, firsthand, what can pass through a membrane and what gets left behind. ▶



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