

## Using Music to Put the “A” in

# STEAM

**P**aulsboro Public Schools are doing everything possible to ensure students – from pre-K through grade 12 – gain a strong background in STEAM, or Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math. Often, however, the “A” in STEAM receives less attention. Not so at Paulsboro High School! Strong, award winning art and music programs are just two of those reasons.

Two of the best representations of the music program at PHS are found in junior Christian Sparks and senior Jacen Abbott. Both young men have attained positions with “All South Jersey” and “All State” organizations in band and choir, respectively.

Abbott, who started in choir at the urging of his mother in seventh-grade, not only made the “All South Jersey Chorus” for the second consecutive year, but “All State Chorus” in 2019, as well. Sparks, in band classes since fourth-grade, was named to “All South Jersey High School Wind Ensemble” as a freshman. Sparks also was accepted into the All South Jersey Wind Ensemble and the All State

Symphonic Band this year, as a junior. Next up for Sparks? He is auditioning for “Nationals”.

Sparks found the experience of performing with All South Jersey and All State bands and ensembles to be an amazing experience. He describes it as “life changing.”

Originally, Sparks joined the marching band in seventh-grade, playing the bass drum. In eighth-grade, he switched to clarinet, which teacher Jenna Ouellette said he “learned over the summer, and made Junior High All South Jersey Band” In ninth-grade, needing a new challenge, Sparks began playing tenor saxophone, then baritone saxophone, and then contrabass clarinet, and made All State Symphonic Band. In all, Sparks can play more than 10 instruments. He also

has done some music composing as well.

Despite a controversial move by “All State” organizers, Sparks was not deterred, especially when Ms. Ouellette suggested Sparks was “ready” to take on “Nationals”.

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Sparks is looking forward

to the video audition – all submissions must be in by May 1st. Ms. Ouellette said there must be a timer or a

clock in the video to prove there has been no editing of the pieces Sparks will play. The officials give him a solo that he must learn, and he gets to select a piece to play himself.

“I get excited by music,” said Sparks. “It is challenging, but fun. I get excited when I know the class in the next period is band. I never have a bad time in band!”

Choir Director Aaron Krasting who, incidentally, taught Abbott’s mother in his first year at PHS some 24 years ago, said he introduces the concept of auditioning for the All State and All South Jersey choruses to students who “are ready for a new challenge.” Abbott clearly was up for that challenge!

Abbott said the “All State” experience was the best experience of his life. “I am always looked at as an athlete,” explained Abbott, who plays Red Raider football and baseball.

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“I wanted something that would separate me out.” It certainly did, as he was vying with 100 basses

for just 20 spots in the All State Mixed Chorus. Abbott credits Mr. Krasting, his family, choir members and PHS with supporting him. “Everyone pushed me,” said Abbott.

The All State Mixed Chorus performed in November 2019, in Atlantic City, at the New Jersey Education Association’s annual convention. Abbott and the group had three, three-hour rehearsals each day over three days. “It was a one-of-a-kind feeling, a great feeling,” exclaimed Abbott, in describing singing with the choir. He said it was a unique experience and that the other students “were all so loving and caring to each other. Everyone was a friend. It was a great environment.”

Both Abbott and Sparks believe they “found” themselves in music. Both young men would like to attend college and study music.



## Dancing to Benefit

*the Pegasus Education Foundation*



The students of Paulsboro Public Schools will benefit when Paulsboro Refining Company’s Kristi Moore dons her dancing shoes for “Dancing with the Gloucester County Stars!” Moore has selected the Pegasus Education Foundation (PEF) as the beneficiary of her “Dancing” fundraising efforts.

Paulsboro Refining Company, where Moore is a Community Relations Specialist, partnered with PEF when it first was established. Moore explained that the concept of incorporating STEAM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) into the existing curriculum in the

Paulsboro Public Schools (Pre-K-12) will benefit students as they prepare for future employment.

Moore said she hopes that through Dancing with the Gloucester County Stars, “I am able to share the mission and vision of the PEF with a broader audience.” But Moore also has set a lofty fundraising goal for herself - \$100,000!

If you would like to help Moore reach her fundraising goal, contact a member of the PEF or call Moore at 856-224-4354. “I encourage anyone who is interested in learning more about PEF to visit the website at [www.paulsboroeducationfoundation.org](http://www.paulsboroeducationfoundation.org) and to click the video link,” said Moore.

**Two Million and Beyond!**



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# STUDENT FINDS WAY TO Bring **SAT PREP** to **PHS**

When PHS junior Jynise Williams took the SAT last October, she was nervous. Williams didn't know what to expect, although she did know it was good to take the SAT multiple times. In

talking to others, she realized many of the students were nervous and felt unprepared. She also realized that some were seniors taking it for the first time.

"A lot of the seniors there did not understand the importance of taking the SAT more than once," said Williams.

Encouraged by her mother and aunts, Williams looked for practice tests on the College Board [website](#). The College Board owns, develops, and publishes the SAT each year, which is then administered by the Educational Testing Service.

The practice tests on the site gave Williams more confidence for retaking the SAT. She said taking the practice tests provided more awareness of time limits, for

example, and the various sections included. It also gave her an idea, and she began asking how the school could help better prepare students for the SAT.

Williams is the student representative to the Paulsboro Board of Education. In that role, she learned about the mini-grants funded by the Pegasus Education Foundation (PEF). With encouragement from Interim Superintendent Dr. Quint, Williams became the first student to write a grant for the PEF and have it approved.

Williams said several of her peers don't have computers or internet access at home, so having a class together at school with online access and practice tests could significantly improve SAT scores. "Having an actual class with a teacher and being surrounded by other students is important," said Williams. "It is good to know you are not the only one who feels unprepared. Having that collaboration with a teacher and other students is so important."

At its February meeting, the BOE approved the SAT prep class. Soon, students taking the SAT will be better prepared and more confident in the process.

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## "Granting" Access to **AP Calculus**

**A**lthough more than 20 students enroll in Pre-Calculus at PHS, typically just two or three continue on to AP Calculus. Interim Superintendent Dr. Walter Quint speculates seniors – usually the ones taking the AP course – are concerned about negatively impacting their class rank. A recent grant from the Pegasus Education Foundation is alleviating some of those concerns.



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# GAPCAP

**News from the Gibbstown and Paulsboro Community Advisory Panel (GAPCAP)**

## **Safety and Security Measures for Paulsboro Public Schools**



Ensuring the safety and security of children is critical to every school, school district, and community.

Loudenslager Elementary School Principal Matthew Browne recently provided an overview of such measures at the Paulsboro Public Schools (PPS) for the February GAPCAP meeting. In addition to his role as principal, Browne also serves as the school district's certified School Safety Specialist, a relatively new position mandated by the state. He has been working with Interim Superintendent Dr. Walter Quint for several years to update and maintain PPS' emergency procedures.

In addition to sharing an overview of the school safety and security measures with community members, the presentation to the GAPCAP also provided Browne the opportunity to familiarize attendees with the new procedures for entering the district's school buildings. He revealed that the district put these changes in as part of its "target hardening" efforts, that work to ensure only those with a legitimate purpose are on school property. Visitors to any of the PPS properties must have an appointment and be able to show photo identification. More details about the policy are available on the PPS website homepage, under Security and Safety.

Browne explained that as School Safety Specialist he had to complete the state's School Safety Specialist Academy and 10 professional development hours each year in the subject. School Safety Specialists are

designated by the district superintendent, must be an administrator in the district, and successfully apply to the state for the certification.

The School Safety Specialist:

- Supervises school security procedures and personnel.
- Ensures safety and security policies are compliant with state laws.
- Serves as district liaison with local law enforcement.
- Provides safety training and resources to district staff.

There are 10 components included in the district's overall plan covering everything from master schedules, staff rosters, and district and school crisis team members to communication procedures, chain of command, and evacuation and reunification plans, among others.

Of course, many of the components of the plan directly involve staff and students in mandatory drills. In addition to standard, fire and school security drills, others include lockdown, active shooter, bomb threat, non-fire evacuation, shelter-in-place, reverse evacuation, evacuation to a relocation site, and testing of site notification and the communications system drills.

According to Browne, the district's Emergency Management Manual is updated and certified each year by the district's superintendent. He said staff must be trained yearly on the procedures, and any new staff must be trained within his/her first 60 days of employment.





## **GAPCAP Company Representative Profile:**

**Evan R. O'Brien, ExxonMobil,  
Paulsboro Lubricants Plant**

- Joined ExxonMobil in 2007 as a project engineer.
- Currently is Manager with responsibility for safety, security, health, and environment, and ensures regulatory compliance.
- Married to wife Amanda for five years, and proud parent of girls Rowan, aged 3 and Isla, aged 1.

### **What are the benefits of participating on the GAPCAP as an industry representative?**

GAPCAP provides a forum for local residents, peers in industry, and community leaders to have constructive dialogue with one another. We are able to communicate new developments and also find out about events happening in the community.

## **GAPCAP Community Member Profile:**

**Dr. Jennifer Foley-Hindman**

- Joined the GAPCAP in 2015.
- Is serving her fifth year as Superintendent/Principal for the Greenwich Township School District.
- Graduated from Kingsway Regional High School, earned a bachelor's degree from the College of New Jersey, and a master's and doctoral degrees from Rowan University.
- Been with her husband Steve, an elementary school principal, since their first date more than 30 years ago.



### **What are your thoughts on serving on the GAPCAP?**

Being a part of the GAPCAP is informative and interesting. I enjoy the presentations and the welcoming atmosphere of the group. As a school district representative, I also appreciate the support of the GAPCAP through its charitable work and the essay contest.

### **Community Information Line *Magnets Available***

Paulsboro Refining Company places a high priority on answering questions and concerns from its local communities. The company wanted to be certain everyone knows the 24-hour number:

**Community Information Line  
856-224-6177**

To help you remember, Community information Line magnets are available at **Weiss True Value** in Paulsboro, **Hometown Deli** in Paulsboro, as well as the **Borough of Paulsboro** and **Greenwich Township** Municipal Buildings.

If you are interested in receiving a Community Information Line magnet, please visit one of these locations or call 856-224-4354 to speak with Kristi Moore, Community Relations Specialist at the Paulsboro Refining Company.



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## **“Granting” Access to**

# **AP Calculus**

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Math teacher Nelson Hall took Dr. Quint’s initial idea and wrote the action grant that would provide assistance to students in Algebra II and Pre-Calculus be more prepared – and feel more comfortable – enrolling in AP Calculus.

“We knew some of the students had small gaps in their understanding of some concepts, and that makes it difficult to succeed,” said Hall.

Still in its infancy, Hall is meeting with between eight and ten students to fill those “gaps” in the morning before classes begin. He would like to expand the sessions to the afternoons as well, as some students have transportation issues in the mornings.

There are just three students enrolled in AP Calculus this year. Hall expects this to change next year, with the addition of the grant and the sessions it enabled this semester. He expects to have 10 students enrolled in the AP class next year.

“The students seem to enjoy the sessions,” said Hall. “We are taking a more rigorous perspective and getting more into theory, trying to answer questions like, ‘How and why do these methods of solution work?’ These are imperative skills the students need.”