



Newsletter

ABOUT YOUR SCHOOLS

From the Desk of Dr. Beverly Martin, Superintendent “Preparing Our Students to Thrive in a Digital World”

If you have children or grandchildren in your lives, you know that their world revolves around the use of mobile computing devices. Electronic tools such as Smartphones, iPods, laptop computers are a formidable presence in their lives and used heavily for social and entertainment purposes. If these devices were removed from their lives, many students, especially teens, would agree that they would feel cut off from their worlds. Today’s children are fearless and intuitive in their use of new technologies, and we as adults look to them as a source of knowledge about their use.

Yet, how has the digital world impacted education in the K-12 realm? I believe we have barely scratched the surface of what the future of education will hold as we embrace the digital world in our classrooms. Sure, we have computer labs, Interactive Whiteboards, and Student Response Systems in our schools and classrooms. They have done much to increase our productivity, assess student understanding of concepts instantaneously, and provide opportunities for research and discovery that weren’t even imagined when I was in school. Yet there

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Reiffton Is Busy with Many Fall Activities

Principal Gregory Fries, Ed.D.

The start of a new school year is always an exciting time! New books, new teachers, and new learning experiences add to the overall positive atmosphere that we strive for each day at Reiffton. Each year the previous sixth grade class chooses a theme for the incoming fifth and sixth grade classes. This year’s theme is “Light the Torch of Learning.” Our teachers work hard to provide the necessary “spark” to help students “light the torch” for learning and to make sure that the torch burns brightly throughout the school year. Every year our goal is to provide a quality education for our students and challenge them to utilize the knowledge and skills learned here, applying them throughout their lives at school and beyond.

For those students who express an interest in singing, the newly formed Glee Club meets every morning in the music room. At the beginning of the school year several students approached Mrs. Heather Claus, our music and chorus teacher, about the possibility of starting a Glee Club. The Glee Club auditions were held September 22 through 26, and over 60 students sang for their peers and were accepted. The Glee Club will be performing during the spring concerts.

Whether a student is struggling to learn a certain skill or needs more practice learning their math facts, our math club meets each morning in the library to give students extra practice. During this time students can also receive assistance on homework problems that

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Lorane Students Stay Fit with Walk-a-thon Activities



October 5 was the “International Walk to School Day” and Lorane Elementary students pause briefly to enjoy an activity with the Reading Phillies mascot Screwball. The students didn’t walk to school, but participated in numerous fun and fitness activities as they walked around the school property. The walk-a-thon also raised funds through WalkBikeBerks to begin to design a safe walking route to the school from nearby neighborhoods. WBB has helped the district obtain a \$150,000 grant to construct sidewalks and create other roadway crossing safety measures.

From the Desk of Dr. Beverly Martin

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are so many more opportunities to transform education and make education more exciting, relevant, and accessible to our students. And those opportunities are increasing so rapidly that, if you have a kindergartner in the class of 2024, we can barely begin to imagine what college will look like when they graduate from Exeter.

In a report entitled "Speak Up 2008" released in March of 2009 after surveying almost 300,000 students across the nation, the researchers concluded that today's students will carve a path to leverage emerging technologies effectively for teaching and learning ("Speak Up 2008", Project Tomorrow, March 2009). A few of the recommendations for preparing students for this future include incorporating the use of mobile computing devices to extend learning beyond the school day, creating digital textbooks that allow students to personalize their books with electronic highlighting and notes, and get beyond the classroom walls to make learning truly experiential and allow students to engage in real world problem-solving.

In a similar report sponsored by the Department of Education and a non-profit organization called Net Day, a futuristic vision of what K-12 education will look like in the year 2020 was described in these words: "Every student will use a small, handheld wireless computer that is voice activated. The computer will offer high speed access to a kid-friendly Internet, populated with web sites that are safe and designed specifically for students and have no pop-up ads. Using this device, students will complete most of their in-school work and homework, as well as take on-line classes both at school and at home. They will also use it to play educational games and read interactive e-textbooks." ("Visions 2020.2: Student Views on Transforming Education and Training Through Advanced Technologies." U.S. Dept. of Commerce,

Inclement Weather & Emergency Reminders

A decision to close school or have a late start due to inclement weather is usually made by 6 a.m. As soon as the decision is made, information will be disseminated to students, parents, and staff using Connect-ED, the telephone messaging service. Messages for late starts and closings are forwarded to home phone numbers. Emergency communications, including early dismissals, will be forwarded to all phone numbers listed for each student. This includes a parent's home, cell, and work phone, if provided to the district.

Closing, late starts, and early dismissal announcements will also be broadcast on local television and radio. The following television stations will air the message: WFMZ Channel 69, WCAU Channel 10, and WPVI Channel 6. Radio stations that will announce the message are: 830 AM, 1340 AM, 107.5 FM, 96 FM, 99.9 FM, Y-102 FM, and 100.7 FM. The information is also available on the Internet at: Cancellations.com (it can also be accessed from the district's website) or www.wfmz.com.

It is imperative that young children know where they should go and what they should do if a parent is not at home and there is a need for an unexpected early dismissal. In order to avoid a problem, please prepare children for this potential circumstance.

If there is a need to delay the opening of school for two hours, a modified schedule will be used for kindergarten. The adjusted schedule will be: AM kindergarten (11 a.m. to 12:50 p.m.) and PM kindergarten (1:50 to 3:40 p.m.).

Junior High Celebrates "Stomp Out Bullying" Day



On Monday, October 3rd ETJHS students and staff participated in "Stomp Out Bullying" Day along with many other schools nationwide. Bullying has become a major concern in schools across our nation. Students wore blue shirts, wore buttons, took the pause before you post promise, made posters, and even ordered shirts for the occasion. The faculty also took part by wearing blue, distributing stickers to stop bullying, and reminding students about the meaning of the day. This is one activity during the school term to show support for the Olweus anti-bullying program and the SAFE program (Student Advocates for Exeter). Social studies teacher Dena Burkhart serves as the advisor for SAFE.

U.S. Dept. of Ed. and NetDay, 2004).

If your child entered kindergarten this year, he or she will likely be entering high school in 2020. As an educator, it is both exciting and frightening to imagine the changes that education

will be facing in the years to come. The possibilities are endless, but we must be ready for them, because we are here to open the world to our children, not to impose limitations on them. We certainly have our work cut



Christy Haller



Thomas Legath

Introducing Two New Administrators

With the start of the 2011-12 school term, two new individuals filled administrative positions. Christy Haller, who had served as the Reiffton Assistant Principal for the last two years, assumed the Lorane principalship. With the retirement of Stan Cieplinski in June, Thomas Legath was hired as the new Athletic Director.

Ms. Haller previously worked in the Reading School District for 10 years as a sixth and eighth grade teacher at Southwest Middle School, a reading coach at Amanda Stout Elementary School, and an instructional supervisor at Northwest Elementary School. Ms. Haller earned a BS from KU and a MS and principal certificate from Alvernia. She and her husband, Christian, are the parents of a son and daughter.

For the last four years Mr. Legath served as the Athletic Director in the Daniel Boone School District. Prior to that he worked at Manito, Inc. for six years as an alternative education teacher and was the varsity boys' basketball head coach at Twin Valley for five years. Tom received a bachelor's degree from Kutztown University where

he majored in elementary education. While at KU he played basketball for four years and was the team captain in his senior year. Tom and his wife, Jen, are the parents of a son and daughter. After working in the district for several months, he said "Exeter is a well run district that takes pride in everything it does."

The Exeter High School Eagles Alumni Assoc.

Membership in the Association is open to all Exeter High School graduates and lifetime dues are \$10. Each year 20 percent of the money donated to the Association is distributed in scholarships to graduating seniors. Next year \$5,000 in scholarships will be awarded. Phone 610-779-7105 for more information.

ECEF's "Gift with a Future" Program

Show your appreciation to someone who is a special mentor in your child's life. This could be your child's teacher, coach, librarian, bus driver, family member or daycare provider. It could simply be to honor your child for excellent academic performance, service achievement, positive attitude or ANY accomplishment. Whatever the reason, your donation will help the foundation's efforts to enhance and enrich student programs throughout the Exeter Township School District. This is a great holiday or anytime gift to show that you care. Printed notification informs the honoree that a donation has been made to ECEF by the donor. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. ECEF is a 501(C)(3) entity. Visit www.ExeterEducationFoundation.org for a "Gift with a Future" form or for more information on ECEF.

The Exeter Community Education Foundation (ECEF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the education of students in ETSD. ECEF is an independent public charity dedicated to encouraging community-wide participation and philanthropy, including post-secondary scholarships, in order to enhance and expand enrichment opportunities of all students. The mission of the Foundation is to secure resources for our students to support programs for which sufficient funds are not available from federal, state, and local public sources. These programs will promote excellence in learning and mobilize community support for enhancing the quality of education in the Exeter Township School District.



National Honor Society and Academic Hall of Fame Induction Ceremonies

**Saturday, December 3
SHS Auditorium
3 p.m.**



Introducing the Owatin Creek Elementary School

Susan Cook, Principal

We had a wonderfully smooth start to the 2011-12 school year at our new Owatin Creek Elementary School. As we got acclimated to our new surroundings, we had great support with arrival, dismissal and lunch from our parents, aides, professional support staff and central office administrators.

Students and parents had an opportunity to get acquainted with the facility during one of our four Open House sessions this summer that professional staff members, Ken Pitts, and Don Cramer helped facilitate. An evening session was added for working parents and their children at which school board members helped guide tours and provided some information about the building.

Here is some background information about Owatin Creek that might be of interest. First of all it is a green school and will most likely receive gold LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification. Not only did we correlate our curriculum with the features contained in the building, but most of the materials are from local manufacturers or suppliers. For example, the flooring and office countertops contain recycled glass.

The bulletin boards were manufactured in Pennsylvania as well as countertops, glass, doors and cabinetry. There are two recycling centers in the building and an excess of 80 percent of the building material waste was recycled throughout the building project.

On the southern side of the roof there are 235 solar energy panels that maximize our ability to provide an additional energy source. The installation of these panels will pay for itself in about nine years and work efficiently for sixteen years beyond that point. We had two teachers receive training through the Arkema science grant with the FOSS "Solar Energy" kit, so we could have resources and build our knowledge base to teach students accurate information. We will be purchasing mini-solar panels with the grant money so students will have hands-on experience in seeing how solar panels produce energy.

The geo-thermal heating system is another energy conservation feature. The building is heated and cooled efficiently through the energy recovery units. This system provides a comfortable environment throughout the year while maintaining the highest standards

of air quality. There are mechanical closets in the hallways so they can be accessed without disturbing classroom instruction. There is also a mezzanine level above the classroom areas and the lobby/kitchen areas to address maintenance issues in a similar manner.

The building is divided into seasons with each season represented in the core areas where the lobby, gym, music, art and cafeteria are located and again in the classroom wing of the building. For each season there is a floor mosaic, four accent colors and a wall mural. The floor mosaics include three graphics each such as the state flower and state insect in addition to a ladybug, caterpillar, pine cone, snowflake, fall leaves, butterfly and sunflower.

The murals are on a canvas or thicker type of wallpaper. The photos had to be formatted to be enlarged to this extent. John White, a graphic arts teacher at the senior high school, created (rasterized) them with photos selected from web sites given by the architect. The murals are connected to community and green themes as well as school curriculum. They include a local fall landscape picture from a Berks County photographer as well as "Children Around the World" in the lobby/visitor area.

Parents, teachers and especially the students were very patient while the contractors put the final touches on our school. Contractors primarily completed work in the evening, after school and on weekends. Of course the landscaping, fencing, amphitheater and kindergarten playground were some of the last areas to be completed. Playground equipment was installed along with the playground surface material before the end of September as students' anxiously awaited approval to play on it.

As a community-based school, we have opened our doors to various groups throughout the first two months of school. We have provided space for children's basketball practice and



Principal Susan Cook (right) and second grade teacher Jan Bertolet (left) introduce her students to one of the large murals in the Owatin Creek hallways.

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Reiffton Fall Activities

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they may have struggled with the night before. Students are given the opportunity to receive extra help in a relaxed setting with the help of Mrs. Tamme Danko, one of our math aides.

One of the newest options to students in the morning upon arrival at school is to attend the open computer lab. Lori Bignotti, one of our fifth grade teachers, works with students each morning. Students are closely monitored while they practice math skills, keyboarding basics, spelling words on Spelling City, or brush up on standards through Study Island. This option has been extremely popular and has resulted in our computer lab reaching maximum capacity on a daily basis.

At Reiffton we are committed to preventing all forms of bullying. On Tuesday, October 18, Mike Kafka, a quarterback from the Philadelphia Eagles, was at Reiffton for an anti-bullying assembly. Mr. Kafka's anti-bullying presentation included personal anecdotes and a question and answer session.

Our holiday concerts will set the spirit for December at Reiffton. In order to allow more space for parents and families to enjoy the concerts, we have decided to move our concerts to the high school. Music teachers Ms. Claus, Ms. Kline, Ms. Potlunas, and Mr. Mishler have been working very hard to prepare their students for the first concerts of the school year. This year's grade five concert will take place on Tuesday, December 6, at 4:15 p.m. The grade six holiday concert will be held on Wednesday, December 7, at 4:15 p.m. The doors will open at 3:45 p.m. with both concerts being held at the high school auditorium. The children always work hard over the course of the first half of the year learning songs and learning how to play their instruments, and they will be eager to demonstrate their accomplishments for you.

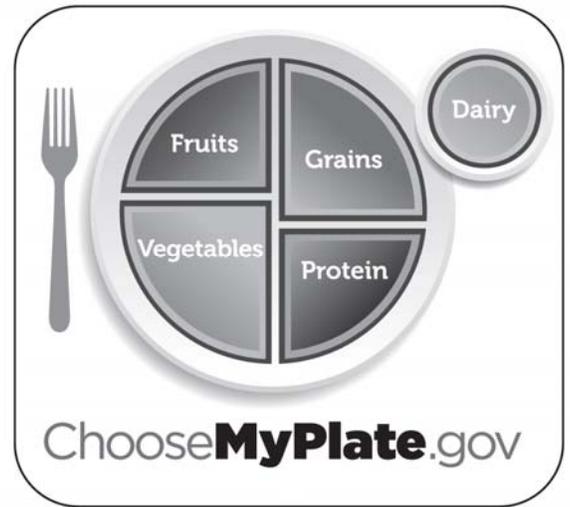
Building a Healthy Plate - MyPlate

Gloria Clay, Food Service Supervisor

The USDA recently replaced the food pyramid with MyPlate. The plate symbol shows the divisions of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and milk that can lead to a healthy meal. A balanced meal should include fruits and vegetables, making up half of your plate. A quarter of the plate should be grains and whole grains, and the last section should be lean protein. In addition, it is recommended to switch to the use of fat-free or lowfat (1%) milk to cut your dairy fat calories.

The USDA also recommends reducing sodium, not only with your salt shaker, but also in the use of processed soups and frozen meals. Calories can be cut by drinking water instead of sugary drinks. Enjoy your food but eat less and avoid supersizing portions.

Fruit and vegetable offerings have increased on the Exeter Food Service



menus, as well as whole grain breads, breads, and pizza. The kitchens have also been using lower sodium cheese, sauces, and bases in food production. Leading the initiative to produce healthy meals is always our goal. Go to www.choosemyplate.gov for more information on MyPlate.

Reiffton Morning Reading Club Enjoys Canine Visit



One morning this fall 268 fifth and sixth graders participated in the Reiffton Morning Reading Club to hear Susan Egolf read the book *Rosie, A Visiting Dog's Story* by Stephanie Calmenson. Students were also excited to meet and greet Zoey, Susan's therapy dog!

Catching Up on Charter Schools, Cyber-Charter Schools and Vouchers

School choice? Vouchers? Charters and Cybers? Who can keep track of all this new buzz about schools? I don't know about you, but I feel a bit lost! Can someone please rewind and help me catch up?

You are not the only one asking this question. This is a great time to do some catching up on these important issues in education. Let's define a few of the players first. A charter school is an independent public school established and operated under a *charter*. The charter is granted from the local school board of the school district in which the charter school is located. Sometimes charter schools are referred to as "brick and mortar" charters because they have actual buildings, unlike cyber charters.

That brings us to our next player. A cyber charter school is an independent public school established and operated under a charter from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. A cyber charter school uses technology to teach students through the Internet or other electronic means. Since cyber charters work through technology, they do not have actual school buildings like a charter.

There are 135 brick and mortar charter schools operating in Pennsylvania and 12 cyber charter schools. Currently, there are over 90,000 students in Pennsylvania enrolled in charter and cyber charter schools. Although both charters and cyber charters must be organized as public nonprofit corporations, charters are established at the local level and cybers are established at the state level. This distinction will become important to know in regards to pending legislation.

Charter and cyber charter schools obtain their funding from the local school districts where the student who is attending the charter school lives. When a student leaves his/her local public school to attend a charter or cyber charter, the local school district pays the charter school the per pupil cost of the home district. For example, if ABC district spends \$10,500 per student, then ABC district must pay the

charter school \$10,500 for that student. By law, the amount paid by the local district to the charter is not based on the actual instructional costs of the charter school to educate the student. It may only cost the charter \$6,500 for that student but the local public school must pay their per student cost.

Maybe now you are saying, "But I thought a voucher paid for a charter school?" No... A voucher is a taxpayer-funded subsidy that a parent may use to pay to send their child to the public, private or parochial school of their choice. It is something like a gift certificate. The money leaves the public school and goes to the "choice" school. There is another one of those buzz words. A choice school is a private or parochial school a parent chooses to send their child to. A choice school can also be a public school outside of the regular attendance area that a parent chooses for their child to attend. In most cases only low income families are eligible for vouchers.

To recap, any student can choose to enroll in a charter or cyber charter and funding will follow from the home district. Vouchers make it possible for low income students to attend the public, private or parochial school of their choice.

So now that we have covered the basics, let's go over the part that is raising some questions. The biggest issue is that charters, cybers and private schools have different rules and regulations than public schools do. Yet, taxpayer dollars are being used to fund these different types of schools. Some people are asking, "Shouldn't charters and schools that receive vouchers have the same oversight and accountability standards that public schools have?"

Additionally, often there is a lower cost-per-student at charters or voucher schools and this fact is aggressively marketed. We are not, however, comparing apples and oranges when we compare a traditional public school to a charter or a private school. The rules and regulations that govern public schools dramatically increase the costs.

O.K., so maybe you have heard

some school officials talk about these "rules and regulations" before but you just aren't really getting how a few rules could make such a difference between the schools. It wasn't specific and you just aren't buying it. Let's take a couple of minutes go over it now then.

Traditional public schools are required to do all of the following. Charter and cyber charter schools, however, have:

- no annual audit of accounts
- no public school governance meetings
- no public hearing or public referendum prior to engaging in construction or agreeing to a lease
- no approval of building plans by the Department of Education
- no State Board of Education regulations for existing buildings
- no advertising/bidding requirements for the purchase of supplies
- no required integrated pest management program.

Without public meetings, audits, and review of purchases it seems there can be no doubt that taxpayers lose the ability to track expenses. Charters and cybers may choose to provide this information to the community but they are not required to.

Private and parochial schools that parents may choose for their child to attend with a voucher also have significant differences from a traditional public school that raise questions about accountability.

- Private schools are not required to test their students and their students do not have to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind legislation. (In other words, children do not have to take the PSSA's and therefore the schools can never be labeled "Failing.")
- Under NCLB and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) public school teachers must be highly qualified to teach

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Catching Up on Charter Schools *(continued)*

their subjects. Nonpublic, non-licensed private schools may hire teachers who are not certified and are not highly qualified to teach.

- Private schools are not required to be state licensed.
- Private schools are not required to teach as broad a curriculum as public schools. For example, a private school must certify that it teaches English to include spelling, reading, writing, language literature, speech and composition. Public schools must teach language arts, integrating reading, writing, phonics, spelling, listening, speaking, literature, grammar and information management, including library skills.
- Pennsylvania’s Sunshine Act and Right-to-Know Law requires that public school performance on assessments and corrective action is all public. Private schools do not have to tell anyone anything about how their students perform. Their meetings, records and test results are private.

Briefly then, private schools are not required to test students, hire certified teachers or teach the same curriculum. And, while public schools have to accept all students, private schools don’t have to accept anyone they don’t wish to – with or without a voucher. Again, as with charter schools, these differences raise questions about how private schools can be funded with taxpayer dollars without the same account-

ability and regulations of the public schools.

In summary, everyone can agree that we want the best possible educational system for our students. The Pennsylvania legislature is currently debating several bills on charter schools and vouchers as a means to improve our educational system. We hope this information on the basics of charter schools and vouchers helps you to make a decision about whether this is the correct path for our schools in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania School Public Relations Association

Owatin Creek *(continued)*

games, cheerleading, after-school activities and evening meetings for parent and community groups. Hopefully, you will have an occasion to visit the new school at a community event.

As we move forward our staff will focus on building an awareness of our “green features” with students and community members. Future goals include the development of an environmental area near the pond in the back of the property that includes an outdoor classroom. Of course we will continue to work on obtaining grant money from various organizations to help support our future endeavors.



The ESHS Club (Exeter Students Helping Students) and the Leo Club conducted a New Student Social for all new ETSHS students this fall. ESHS Club President Kayla Merkel (right) and Kristen Strenkowski, a member of the ESHS Club, pause for the photo during the event. Deborah Lambdin is the ESHS advisor and Will Lasky serves as the Leo Club advisor.

District Acquires Half-Million Dollars Through Grant Funding

Each year the district applies for and receives numerous grants that provide valuable revenue to enhance programs and services for ETSD students. Compared to the past several years, a much smaller number of federal and state grants were available. Those that still exist are very specific in their purpose and dictate how the funding can be used. The district is pleased to inform residents about the grants received for 2011-12.

<u>Program or Grant Title</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Title I	Improving basic programs	\$308,640
Title II	Increase achievement by improving teacher and principal quality	\$71,146
Accountability Block Grant	Supports student achievement through full-day kdg. and class size reduction in K-3 classrooms	\$180,893

TOTAL **\$560,679**

Upcoming Events for Your Enjoyment

- Dec 6 5th Grade Holiday Concert
SHS aud 4:15 p.m.
- Dec 6 7th Grade Winter Concert
SHS aud 7:30 p.m.
- Dec 7 6th Grade Holiday Concert
SHS aud 4:15 p.m.
- Dec 7 8th Grade Winter Concert
SHS aud 7:30 p.m.
- Dec 19 SHS Choral Winter Concert
SHS aud 7:30 p.m.
- Dec 21 SHS Orchestra Winter Concert
SHS aud 7:30 p.m.



Senior Citizens Tax Rebate Program

The Volunteer Tax Rebate Program for senior citizens is designed to provide assistance for senior citizens in paying real estate taxes and to provide the district with citizens' skills and time. The program is open to residents of Exeter Township School District, 60 years of age or older, who have a household income of less than \$35,000 and are owners of residential property.

In exchange for a tax credit, senior citizens can volunteer to work in a classroom, library, cafeteria, office, playground, or outside groundskeeping. Interested senior citizens should submit completed "Senior Volunteer Application" and "Financial Needs Assessment Information" forms to the business office at 3650 Perkiomen Avenue. The law requires that new volunteers must also submit the Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check, the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance, and the Federal Criminal History (FBI fingerprint).

After a senior is approved for the program, a record of volunteered time must be kept by the volunteer and the department/building office. Every hour of service provided to the district (maximum 100 hours from January 2012 to June 2012), \$5.99 of credit will be set aside towards a rebate on the next fiscal year's property tax bill (maximum \$599.00 or the amount of property tax if less than \$599.00). At the end of the district's fiscal year (e.g. end of June 2012), the business office will calculate the dollars earned during that fiscal year, review the amounts with the superintendent, present the total list to the Board of School Directors for approval, and issue a rebate check after the volunteer has paid his/her next fiscal year property tax bill (e.g. issued in July 2012).

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The Exeter Township School District is an equal opportunity educational institution and in compliance with the requirements of Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The district will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, ancestry, national origin, disability, or handicap. For information regarding civil rights or grievance procedures, contact Don W. Cramer, Compliance Officer, 3650 Perkiomen Ave., Reading, PA 19606.

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