

January 2017

FTC Robotics Rolling Along

The mission of Quest Charter Academy is to provide a diverse student body with an innovative, world-class education, rich in math, science and technology, focused on preparing students to become bold inquirers, problem solvers and ethical leaders.



FTC Robotics team members Kaylee Munter and Madison Mendoza prepare Quest robot #7317 for competition at a qualifying tournament at Manual Academy. See complete story on pg. 4.

Giving Thanks

Quest graduates will be skill ready for post-secondary education to meet the challenges of a competitive global workforce.



Mayor Ardis, State Rep. Ryan Spain, State's Attorney Jerry Brady and Dr. Bill Collier (Mayor's education liaison)



State Representative Jehan Gordon Booth



Congresswoman Cheri Bustos



State Senator Darin LaHood

A group of Middle and High School students and staff attended the Peoria Chamber of Commerce's Community Thanksgiving Luncheon on November 18 and had the opportunity to visit with several area elected officials.



From the Executive Director



Nicole Couri Wood, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Welcome to 2017! I hope you all had a restful and enjoyable holiday season with your family. As we count our many blessings, we count our Quest family and community in those blessings. We are so appreciative of the wonderful partnership we have between students, families, staff, and our community partners. This school would not be the amazing place that it is without each of you working together to make this dream a daily reality for our students. I am excited about the innovation and next steps that are around the corner as we plan for next year.

For the past few months, a committee of staff, board members, parents and students have been meeting to address the final activity related to one of the strategic directions in our strategic plan - restructuring the school calendar to incorporate a balanced-calendar configuration to begin in the 2017- 2018 school year. This group has been researching and discussing a configuration that will be the best fit for Quest. We spoke with officials from school districts in other communities that have implemented a balanced calendar, as well as parents from Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center right here in Peoria that has been operating on a balanced calendar for more than 20 years. During our research and visits with other schools, we

met with administrators, teachers, parents and students to learn more about their calendar, their feelings about the balanced calendar and ask questions. Everyone we spoke with had nothing but positive feedback. Parents, students and teachers alike really enjoy having breaks more frequently during the year. For parents and students, this allows for more family vacation opportunities; for students and teachers, it offers a chance to get re-energized for learning. Parents like that the summer is shortened a little because of the structure school provides, students are less likely to forget what they learned during the school year, and it is still plenty of time for them to enjoy summer. **Remember, a balanced calendar is the exact same number of school days that we currently have, they are simply more spaced out which results in more frequent breaks throughout the year, and a slightly shorter summer break.** We are excited to unveil what Quest's balanced calendar will look like in 2017-2018 and have scheduled two "town hall" meetings for our families:

Wednesday, January 25 at 5:00 p.m. at Quest High School
Wednesday, February 1 at 5:00 p.m. at Quest Middle School

Any Quest family, whether you have students at just the Middle School or just the High School, may attend *either* session, or attend both if you'd like. These are opportunities for you learn more about the balanced calendar and ask questions.

I would also like to ask you to please participate in the annual 5 Essentials Survey. This survey will provide us with data on what is going well and what you would like to see differently. Please take a few minutes to provide us with this important feedback. Simply go to <http://www.survey.5-essentials.org/illinois/survey/parent> to take the survey. *The survey will be open until January 30, 2017.* Your assistance is greatly appreciated and valuable.

Finally, I would like to celebrate our students and their OUTSTANDING progress on our recent NWEA Winter Assessments. Students tested in Reading, Math and Science in grades 5 – 8 and Reading and Math in grades 9 - 11. This is a national normed test that we administer 3 times each year. As you know, your students share where they are at on this assessment at SLC's with you and they also go over their target goal that NWEA sets for them. We are so thrilled with the number of students who met their mid year goal as set by NWEA! Overall, 57% of our students hit their goal in Reading and 54% hit their goal in Math! This exceeds our end of year goal of 52% meeting the target in Math and is getting close to our goal of 63% of students hitting their goal in Reading. According to NWEA, if 50% of your students meet their goal that is considered GOOD progress. If 60% of your students hit their goal that is considered EXCELLENT progress. We are progressing better than most schools and the results will just continue to climb when we take this again at the end of the year in May. Please congratulate your student on giving this their best! We are proud of them!

Finally, please mark your calendars for our 3rd quarter SLC's (Student Led Conferences) which will be held on Friday, February 10th and Saturday, February 11th. Your advisory teacher will be reaching out near the end of January with your conference time. As always, we are looking for 100% attendance and we thank you for making this a top priority!

We look forward to our continued partnership on our Quest to be the best! Thank you for all you do.

Family Engagement on the Rise

I can't believe we have already completed one semester; where has the time gone?! As I reflect upon the past semester, I must say it has been lots of fun meeting and getting to know the students and families here at Quest. Many events took place during the first semester, as we continued to engage our families in our monthly Family Learning Institutes. On October 28, we kicked off the Halloween fun with our Quest Fall-O-Ween, where students got the opportunity to play games and parents participated in Trunk or Treat. We held our first "Celebrating Quest's Cultural Quilt" featuring a taste of Quest on December 15, where families got together to share a dish and information about their culture. We enjoyed cuisine from West Africa, Lebanon, Italy, Germany as well as our infamous American and soul food. On December 19, Quest also welcomed families into our Middle School giving them an opportunity to have breakfast with our Quest Scholars; followed by a fantastic group of parent and family volunteers who gave their time on December 20, to allow teachers a couple of hours of free time to have a special holiday lunch and complete end of semester grades to ensure that the teachers could enjoy their holiday. As we begin a new year, let us not forget how importance family engagement is to the success of your student. The New Year is an occasion for fresh starts and new beginnings; it is a time when people make commitments and resolutions; let us start 2017 by committing to being more involved in our students' educational journey. That being said, please mark your calendar now for our next Family Learning Institute on Tuesday, February 7 at 5:30 p.m. at the Middle School when we will welcome award-winning storyteller and author, Brian "Fox" Ellis. Through his storytelling, "Fox" brings history to life and ignites imaginations. Please remember that all Quest families are welcome to attend all sessions.

Kristina Divil



Mikki Johnson, who has overcome adversity to become successful both personally and professionally, presented "My past does not define me" at the November Family Learning Institute.



Everyone enjoyed learning about the different cultures represented by our Quest families and tasting their cuisine at our first "Celebrating Quest's Cultural Quilt" featuring a taste of Quest.



Great fun at the Middle School Fall Family Festival and Trunk-or-Treat on October 29.



We had a great turnout for the first Breakfast with Quest Scholars at the Middle School on December 19.

FTC Robotics Rolling Along



Quest Charter Academy is supporting two FIRST - For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, FTC robotics teams. FTC stands for FIRST Tech Challenge, and is one of the four programs that FIRST has to offer students to learn hands on from mentors who work first hand in technology fields. The FIRST Robotics Competition is an international competition wherein students work together to build, program, and operate robots to complete a task in a competitive setting. FIRST works hard to make sure that the science and technology are at the forefront of the competition and provide as enthusiastic and exciting an environment as that of any major high school sporting event.

The students in this program learn mechanical design, programming, engineering, electronics, and also non-technical areas of budgeting, marketing, and leadership skills. The positive impact on FIRST Tech Challenge participants is gratifying and well documented. Over 86% have more interest in doing well in school and 87% are more interested in attending college. Students are twice as likely to major in a science or engineering field. There is over 30 million dollars in scholarship funds from 200+ providers to students who participate in FIRST programs.

This year our robots are designed and built to play a game called VELOCITY VORTEX. We are challenged with scoring little plastic balls in goals in the corners of the field and goals that are up in the air. We also get bonus points for lifting a larger heavier ball in the air and capturing light up beacons around the playing field. The playing format has changed for this year to League Play, we have had 2 meets so far that have been practices with one more to go on February 4th in Port Byron, and a qualifying match a week later that will determine if we move on to state playoff round. Mentors Darrin Munter and Diane Lane have been meeting with the students Tuesday through Thursday over the last several months in order to prepare for these meets.

The latest standings are Team #7317 Quest Gators came in 7th this round, and are now 4th in the League. Team #9163 Techna Gators came in 9th this round, and are now 9th in the League.

Our first meet we had help from other teams with our programming. This meet there was a call for help, another team was having problems with one of their motors. A group of 4-5 of our students jumped up and went to go help them figure out what was causing their problem. They not only found out the problem, but were able to help them make repairs using wire and connectors that we had as spares. This is called *Coopertition*®, along with *Gracious Professionalism* these are the founding principles of FIRST. It encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community.

If you would like to learn more about the Quest robotics teams or any of the FIRST Robotics programs please contact Darrin Munter at dmunter@advancedtech.com or visit <http://www.firstinspires.org/>



Partnership in Action—Peoria Symphony Orchestra



Through Peoria Symphony Orchestra's Resident Artist Week, Quest Middle and High Schools welcomed cellist, Richard Hirschl on November 16. Richard Hirschl joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's cello section in 1989. A native of Washington, Missouri, he began cello lessons with his father, an amateur cellist. His intermediate studies were with Savely Schuster, associate principal cellist of the St. Louis Symphony. He was accepted into the class of Leonard Rose and Channing Robbins at the Juilliard School, where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1987 and a master's degree in 1988. Hirschl was an associate teacher at Juilliard before moving to Chicago. He was the winner of the 1988 Juilliard Concerto Competition, 1988 Irving M. Klein International String Competition and 1980 St. Louis Symphony Scholarship Competition. In addition to

his New York debut with the Juilliard Orchestra at Avery Fisher Hall, Hirschl has given concerto performances with the Peoria Symphony, Jupiter Symphony, St. Louis Philharmonic, Maracaibo Symphony (Venezuela), National Repertory Orchestra, St. Louis Chamber Orchestra and Philharmonia Virtuosi of New York. He is pleased to be playing the Brahms Double Concerto with CSO Assistant Concertmaster David Taylor and the Ars Viva Symphony Orchestra in September and the Strauss Don Quixote with CSO violist Lawrence Neuman and the St. Louis Philharmonic in March this season. He has appeared in chamber music performances with celebrated pianists Daniel Barenboim, Andrés Schiff and Ursula Oppens, cellist Lynn Harrell and violinist Vadim Repin. He is on the faculty of the Chicago Conservatory for the Performing Arts at Roosevelt University where he also serves as head of the string department and has a large class of private students. He plays a beautiful Venetian cello made by Matteo Goffriller in 1710. He is the proud father of Ava Clare and Vivian Rose Hirschl. Thank you to PSO Music Director, George Stelluto and PSO Executive Director Susan Hoffman for including Quest in these wonderful learning opportunities for our students!

Well-Deserved Recognition of Art Teachers and Students



Quest Middle and High School art teachers and art students received a proclamation from the City of Peoria on November 15 for participating in the first student art displays at City Hall. Several pieces of student artwork was featured in the display cases on the 4th floor of City Hall from October—December. Thank you to City Clerk, Beth Ball and retired City Clerk, Mary Haynes, for creating this program and for thinking of Quest for this special opportunity.

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Middle School Scoop

From the Interim Principal



Nicole Couri Wood, Ph.D.
Executive Director &
Interim Middle School
Principal

Happy New Year! Welcome back to school and I hope you all had a wonderful and relaxing holiday with your family. We are very excited for what the new year offers for us as a time of new beginnings and renewed hope. I want to take this newsletter to share with you some outstanding achievements that we have seen at our Middle School over the last quarter. We have so many success stories, but I will limit it to a few powerful pieces of data. Please take a moment to celebrate with your student and encourage them to talk about their goals for this quarter.

We have seen a drastic decrease in behavior referrals. From September to October, referrals were cut in half. In November and December, referrals were cut in half yet again. Students are modeling our expectations and we are so proud of the progress we have made. We have also been celebrating each month with our core value award winners. When you come into the building, please take a moment to view the winners in the front hallway. Each month, every student nominates someone from their advisory class who exemplifies the core value of the month. Students also write about why that individual should win the award and what specifically they have done. Winners are recognized at the monthly assembly and their picture is proudly displayed for all to see. In addition, the staff chooses one student per grade level to be recognized as the Student of the Month. This individual exemplifies all of our core values all of the time. At the end of each quarter, we also recognize students with perfect attendance and those who are on the A/B Honor Roll. We are really enjoying showcasing our scholars and all that they are doing! For the second quarter, a total of 108 students made the A/B honor roll, an increase of 21 students from the first quarter.



November Award Recipients

You will recall that our students participated in NWEA testing in December. This is a national normed test that is taken three times a year. You will remember your student going over their score and their target goal NWEA has set for them at our Student Led Conferences. We are on cloud 9 with December results! Students were focused, gave it their all, and showed great success. Here are some results we want to share with you:

Percent of students who reached their NWEA mid-year growth target

	Reading	Math	Science
5 th grade	54%	46%	35%
6 th grade	60%	43%	47%
7 th grade	65%	58%	49%
8 th grade	71%	68%	59%
Schoolwide Average	63%	54%	48%

According to NWEA, when 50% of students achieve their individual growth target that is considered *GOOD* progress. When 60% of students achieve their individual growth target that is considered *EXCELLENT* progress. At 70%, it is classified as *OUTSTANDING* progress. Please take a moment to not only congratulate your student on this progress, but also our staff. For mid-year assessments to already be achieving at this level, we are well on our way! I am highly pleased with what this team has accomplished! Keep up the great work!

As a reminder, our schoolwide attendance target is 96%. Please make it a top priority to ensure your student is here every day, on time, when they are not ill.

My door is always open to you. We are on a Quest to be the best! I thank you for your continued partnership and support on this journey.

Middle School Partnerships in Action - U of I College of Medicine at Peoria



We could not be more thrilled with the continuation of the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria's GUIDES program (Guide, Understand, Inform, Drive, Educate and Serve). This program began in 2011 to mentor children and encourage them to pursue careers in Medicine. It has evolved over the years and the UICOMP medical students now are taking a different approach to engage our students; instead of just having a speaker or a simple tour of medical facilities, the medical students are meeting with Middle School students regularly to conduct very interactive, hands-on activities designed to be simulated applications of daily tasks in the medical field. The November GUIDES session sought to expand on skills kids had started building in September/October. This time, instead of being first responders to the scene who would call the EMT, the kids played the part of the EMT, assessing their patient and providing the important intervention. All of this was done against the backdrop of a Star Wars-type scenario. The "patients" were Imperial Storm Troopers and the kids were medics with the Rebellion! Stations included one on heart attack, another on crush injury, and a third on toxic inhalation and burns. The activity was well received and the kids had a lot of fun while learning about the medical field.

First Lego League Establishes a Building Block



On December 17th, three jr. high Quest students attended their first ever Lego League Competition at Woodruff Career and Technical Center. During the competition, the students were

judged on the Robot game, Robot design, Lego League Core Values, and the Project (solving a real-world problem). I am so proud of all their hard work and dedication leading into the competition. We had a little over a month to prepare but that did not stop the students from pulling together as a team in order to accomplish all the tasks. We thank all who came out to cheer us on. With this being the first year for Lego League, I am already looking forward to next school year (Fall 2017) by building the program even bigger and giving students a chance to explore the world of coding and engineering. If you are interested in participating in FLL, please contact Miss Trammel.

Ending the Semester on the Right Note



Students enrolled in first-semester music classes and extra-curricular music ensembles performed in the annual Quest Middle School Music Concert on Dec. 19 & 20. Fifth graders performed a musical revue of "The Lion King," and Students in 6th grade demonstrated their ability to read music and perform on xylophones and other percussion instruments. Seventh graders demonstrated their new skills playing the ukulele, while 8th grade accompanied them on the ukulele. At both concerts, the choir performed one of their first ever harmonized pieces, "The Sound of Silence." One of the most exciting performances was the middle school band, which made their debut performances this year. We congratulate Miss Stapleton and all students who performed on a job well done!

High School Happenings

From the Principal



Robyn S. McCracken, EdS
Principal

Congratulations on your student completing first semester! I hope your holiday was relaxing and filled with lots of opportunities to celebrate with family members and friends. We are excited about the positive gains that our NWEA and STAR assessments have revealed, and genuinely look forward to the educational challenges that still lie ahead. Your support and thoughts are deeply appreciated and we know you will continue to assist us in our efforts to make our school the best it can possibly be for your students.

As January brings a new start for our students, it is also good time to look at your student's first semester grades; talk about their goals for their second semester; and develop a plan to achieve those goals. Quest teachers are dedicated to providing students with instructional programs connected with 21st century learning skills that ensure college and career readiness. Please contact teachers with any questions and/or concerns you may have regarding your students' academic progress this quarter.

Juniors are preparing for SAT tests to be taken in April. We are taking and using the SAT practice results to identifying students who need assistance with certain subject areas. Then teachers support students with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform well on the SAT exam. Colleges use SAT results in their admission decisions and scholarships awards. Our juniors and seniors will be participating in the Boy Scouts of America Exploring program designed to provide students with a job shadowing opportunity within the school day.

Senior families should save the date for Quest High School graduation which will be held on Thursday, May 25 at the Woodruff Career and Technical Center Theatre at 6:00 p.m. There is plenty of seating for Quest staff, Board members, students, families, and their guests.

One of the educational challenges we deal with every day is finding sufficient time during the school day to address the unique and diverse learning needs of some of our students. We continue to search for ways to restructure our regular school day to accommodate students who need additional time and assistance to experience academic success. Beginning on January 20, we will begin offering Fast Friday to help students who need additional time to work on their coursework and skills. Every Friday students who are on track will be able to leave school at 2:12. Students who need additional time will be given 7th and 8th hours, 90 minutes, to master essential knowledge and acquire necessary skills for academic success.

By working together to ensure a successful second half of the school year, everyone wins and our partnership between home/school is strengthened! Thank you for your continued support and interest! If you have any questions or concerns about your student's progress, please do not hesitate to ask.

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Robyn McCracken".

Dream it...
Be it...
Do it...

Service is the Key

KEY CLUB



Key club members have been busy this winter continuing their coat drive. We finished up collected over a dozen jackets to donate to Peoria Rescue Mission. It was a very successful drive and many thanks to those that donated. Club members have also spent time volunteering at the middle school basketball games working concessions. We are currently getting organized to work the concessions at the High School basketball game on January 20th so come out and cheer on our boys and say hi to the Key Club members selling snacks. We also had our first bake sale during finals week. Our Key Club members baked many items including brownies, pumpkin bars and cookies and then they sold them to students during lunch to earn money for future events. Thank you to all who donated items to the sale.

Problem, Design, Solve



The Problem, Design, Solve class wrapped up their project on poverty and presented their information to a panel of board and community members. Students provided an overview as to why they chose to research poverty and hunger in Peoria, the importance of educating our community, and the steps they took to make an impact. We are grateful to our panel for giving their time and we congratulate our students on a job well done.

A Lesson in Communications



A group of Quest High School attended the Bradley University Steiner Symposium on Sports Communication on November 15 and had the chance to meet Charlie Steiner himself. The symposium is designed to offer insight into topics and issues in sports and media from experts, who are established professionals and visionary leaders in the industry. We are grateful to Dr. Paul Gullifor, Chair of the Bradley University Communications Program, for extending the invitation to our students.



College Corner

Here we are with the first semester already behind us. For seniors, this means graduation is right around the corner. Here are a few things that you should be doing:

- College is an expensive investment. Make sure you complete the College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile and the [FAFSA](#). You should continue researching [scholarship opportunities](#).
- If you have not submitted any applications to college, don't wait any longer. Also consider applications for honors programs, dual-degree programs, etc.
- The best way to get a feel for a college is to walk around the campus. If you have the opportunity, use this time to visit the schools that are on your final list.

Juniors, some things for you to consider are:

- assess where you stand academically. Meet with Mr. Jenkins, Mrs. Troyer, Ms. McCracken or Mr. Herrmann to review where you stand academically and to plan an appropriate course-load for senior year.
- You will be taking the SAT in April, but you should also register to take the ACT if you haven't already. If you haven't already started, you are encouraged to prep for these tests now (including acquiring a collection of #2 pencils!).
- Application time is really just around the corner so start making a list of the colleges you are seriously considering. As you make your list, really consider items and attributes that are important to you (size, location, cost, selectivity, athletics, distance from home, Greek life, scholarship opportunities, housing options, etc.).



A group of students visited Eureka College on November 30 and had the opportunity to visit with Eureka President Dr. Jamel Santa Cruze Wright.



Bradley University visit on November 29



Visit to Monmouth on December 2.

Unique Capstone Preparation for Seniors



Several seniors traveled to Illinois State University to attend a conference with sessions that are in some way similar to the capstone presentations they will have to give at the end of the year. The goal was to have the students spend time on a college campus and also play a part in the type of conferences and activities they will encounter as college students, too.



GATORS ATHLETICS



The Gators basketball team is having the best season in program history! The Varsity Gators are currently 19-1 and ranked 5th in the State of Illinois in Class 1A. The program as a whole (Freshmen, JV and Varsity) has a record of 32-10! Our most notable victory was January 7 over 7th ranked 4A team East Moline United Township, a truly signature win for the Gators! There are several more games yet to play, including a home game at the Illinois Central College Courgarplex and several more home games at Woodruff. Lastly, we are excited to have been chosen to host an IHSA Regional tournament at Woodruff in late February. This is yet another first for Quest. We are very proud of all of the great things happening with the program on and off the court!



Quest Charter Academy 2016-2017 cheerleaders set & accomplished many goals. Cheerleaders wanted to increase in school spirit, bring Community awareness & personal goals were to build their skills in stunts. The Cheerleaders decorated lockers, help out at all school pep rallies & partnered with Peoria heights with homecoming. Quest cheerleaders started their first annual Junior Cheer Club, Quest Cheerleaders will be sponsoring first annual Black History Program. Cheerleaders personal goals are growing weekly. Cheerleaders are building on stunts, jumps and tumbling day by day. Cheerleaders are learning responsibility and becoming role models and they are starting to put the leader in cheerLEADER.

In Memoriam



We are heartbroken over the passing of Mr. Glen Barton, who was the driving force behind the creation of Quest Charter Academy. Quest and Peoria have been truly blessed that Glen and Polly chose to maintain their primary residence in Peoria after his retirement from Caterpillar. Their influence can be seen throughout this community as they have been involved in virtually every major community development project in Peoria. Glen had an undeniable passion for ensuring Peoria youth receive an outstanding education and are well prepared for college and skilled careers. He spent countless hours at Quest working on the physical plant, outside landscaping and just visiting with students and teachers. While his passing is an enormous loss for Quest and the community as a whole, Mr. Barton will always be in our hearts and never far from our minds as we strive to achieve his vision of Quest being the top performing school in the Peoria area.

Mark Your Calendar:

- January 16 - NO SCHOOL; Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- January 25 - Balanced Calendar town hall; 5:00 p.m. at High School
- February 1 - Balanced Calendar town hall; 5:00 p.m. at Middle School
- February 7 - Family Learning Institute; 5:30 at Middle School
- February 10 - Student Led Conferences (10:30 a.m.—6:30 p.m.)
- February 11 - Student Led Conferences (9:00 a.m.—12:30 p.m.)
- February 20 - NO SCHOOL; Presidents' Day
- March 6 - Early Dismissal (Noon); PLC for teachers
- March 27—31 - SPRING BREAK
- April 5 - SAT test for Juniors
- April 14—17 - Easter break



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