

Quabbin Regional Middle School Newsletter

January - February - March 2010

FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM:

Mrs. Susanne R. Musnicki, Principal and Mr. Todd D. Stewart, Assistant Principal

We are pleased to announce a new math program in the middle school. FASTT Math is a computer-based math skill program that is being utilized by students in 7th and 8th grade. The program assesses math facts students have not mastered and then targets these facts. Some students are using the program during Homeroom while others are participating during the Sustained Silent Reading period. When a student has mastered all of their facts, they will test out of the program and there will be opportunities for other students to become involved. We are excited about the program and hope that students who are participating will experience increased confidence and success in their regular math classes as a result.

8th grade candy bar sales continue in support of the Washington, D.C. fieldtrip. Earlier in the year, 8th Grade participated in the Great American sale which raised approximately \$7,000 which will be applied directly to the cost of trip for individual students who sold items during the fundraiser. 7th Graders sold Butter-Braid pastries to fund their fieldtrips throughout the year and raised approximately \$6,000. These fundraising efforts are vital for providing fieldtrip opportunities for our students.

Now that we are nearly halfway through the school year, we would ask that you consider replenishing your student's school supplies. Please make sure that your son or daughter has plenty of working pens and pencils, a binder, an agenda, a calculator and colored pencils at the minimum. Also, please encourage your child to clean out his or her binder and to remove any unneeded papers.

MCAS TESTING: Please mark your calendars with the following MCAS schedule:

| MCAS Dates 2010 | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Gr. 7 | ELA Long Comp | March 23 |
| Gr. 7 & 8 | ELA | March 24, 25 |
| Gr. 7 & 8 | Math | May 12, 13 |
| Gr. 8 | Science | May 18, 19 |

FROM THE GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT:

It's hard to believe that we are already half way through the school year. For many students this is often the most difficult time in a school year; the holidays are over, academic responsibilities have increased and the work has become more challenging. Please encourage your child to complete all his/her assignments, meet deadlines, read the Accelerated Reading book daily and to **study** for tests and quizzes. We want all students to work up to their potential and develop strong study habits and academic skills necessary for lifelong learning and future success. For specific study skills information and homework help check out the following websites: www.how-to-study.com, www.homeworkspot.com and www.factmonster.com.

If your child is not doing well academically please call Mrs. Page (grade 8) or Mrs. Daviau (grade 7) at (978) 355-5042 to schedule a conference with your child and his/her teachers. We are more than willing to help in developing an action plan with strategies to help your child succeed. Many times getting together as a team helps to generate new ideas and impress upon students the importance of working hard in school.

Mrs. Daviau is continuing to meet with her 7th grade students individually to get better acquainted and to identify any problems that students may be having in any of their classes or in school in general. This is also a chance to discuss the student's interests and goals for the future and to give ideas or suggestions for opportunities to enhance them. Some students expressed an interest in a vocational/technical school for high school and were

encouraged to attend the Vocational Interest Program (VIP) this spring.

Monty Tech will sponsor this free after school program (VIP) beginning in March for students who reside in Barre, Hubbardston, Petersham or Athol. Students will be visiting Monty Tech on 5 consecutive Wednesday afternoons to try a variety of shops. Transportation will be provided to central locations. Permission forms will be distributed to interested 7th and 8th grade students. Feel free to call for details.

The field trip to tour Monty Tech took place in October with over 70 students attending. The field trip to Pathfinder was held on December 2 with 27 students attending. Eighth grade students interested in attending a vocational/ technical school next year should submit applications to Mrs. Page by the end of January. Students may turn in applications after this date, which will be forwarded to the schools, but they will be processed according to availability. A representative from Monty Tech will be conducting interviews here at Quabbin in February or March for students who have submitted applications. The date and times of these interviews will be announced. Students should see Mrs. Page if they have any questions about the admissions process.

By the time this newsletter is printed Mrs. Page will have visited 8th grade social studies classes to introduce the Career Targets Online program. Although we have been using the Career Targets workbooks with 8th graders in the past, this year we have subscribed to an online program. With the use of the laptop cart, with its individual computers, all 8th graders will register, complete various career related activities and have a portfolio which includes the results of an interest inventory as well as a skills assessment. Students may access this program from their home computers to re-take or review their results and/or to complete career related research.

We would like to remind you that the second quarter ends on January 22. On March 1 third quarter progress reports will be given to students, from each teacher, to bring home and be signed by parents. If any of your child's reports are missing, please call guidance for a second copy. The third marking period ends on April 2.

GRADE 7 ENGLISH

Mrs. Derr, Ms. DiMartino, Mrs. Inman, and Mrs. Petty's Grade 7 English Classes

The AR deadlines for the spring will be posted by your teacher. Everyone should be reading for 20-30 minutes each night. Reading and taking AR tests are the key to

success for excellent results on the MCAS exams. NOTE: the official AR list can be found on the Quabbin website www.qrsd.org. There are over a thousand books from which to choose. Some of the local town libraries do not have an updated list.

For the next ten weeks everyone will receive homework assignments. Poetry, novels, short stories, and writing will be completed during this session. Please check the agenda book to be certain that all of the work is being accomplished. Teachers have assigned long-range projects; complete some of them each day. The months of January, February and March are very busy in preparation for the MCAS exams. Although we ready the children for all the aspects of the test, we will concentrate on the five paragraph essay and the open response writing.

Thank you for your efforts in helping your child be more successful. Please feel free to write a note in the agenda book if you have any questions.

GRADE 7 MATH

Mrs. Allain-Thomas, Mrs. Como, Mr. Hall and Mrs. Leroux's Grade 7 Math Classes

Students are currently estimating and computing sums, differences, products, and quotients of fractions. Students will build on their knowledge of fractions by writing ratios and unit rates, solving proportions, and finding values in similar figures, maps, and scale models. Students will then look at relationships among percents, fractions, and decimals. Equations and proportions will be used to solve problems involving percent.

Students will evaluate and write expressions and write and solve 1-step and 2-step equations. Then they will draw upon their understanding of these to graph, write, and solve inequalities.

Homework can be expected each evening, as these concepts can be challenging and require practice. MCAS practice will also be provided weekly.

If you or your child has a question, comment, or concern, please feel free to reach us at school. We are available for extra help during homeroom, SSR, and/or on Wednesday's after school until 3:45pm

GRADE 7 SCIENCE

Ms. Holwell, Ms. O'Bryan and Mrs. Vyce's 7th Grade Science Classes

Students have concluded a unit of study on microscopes and cells. After attending "boot camp", the students were able

to use the microscopes to view different objects, including several types of plant and animal cells. They completed drawings of the cells and labeled many of the parts which they studied in class. Each student created a model of a cell to demonstrate what he or she learned about cells. There were some very creative models!

The next units of study will be the six kingdoms of living things, chemistry, and photosynthesis. All seventh graders will be doing projects to illustrate the major concepts of these units.

GRADE 7 SOCIAL STUDIES

Mr. Groner, Mr. Smith and Mrs. Stevens 7th Grade Social Studies Classes

Students in 7th grade geography are studying the continent of Asia. As part of their studies they will investigate the political and physical features as well as the cultures and recent histories of the countries. Part of our curriculum focuses on connecting world geography and current events. An on-going assignment involves students staying up to date on the news through the completion of "news notes" while watching Channel One News in homeroom.

GRADE 7 STUDY SKILLS

Mr. Hall's 7th grade Study Skills Class

Students continue to work on developing more effective study habits. Organizational skills are still stressed in order to maximize time and effort spent on schoolwork.

Writing skills are a very important part of the entire school experience, and we continue to work on issues related to this area. Students are encouraged to use the word processor in order to improve the appearance of their written work. In addition, self-guided typing programs have been installed on classroom computers, and are available to students who wish to improve their keyboarding skills. Continued emphasis is being placed on the use of the agenda book to monitor class assignments.

OTHER 7TH GRADE NEWS:

Congratulations to the 7th grade class who raised \$706.91 through their participation in the Trick or Treat for UNICEF program. These funds will help buy medicines and food for children in the most dire situations around the world. Good job!

Scholastic Book Fair - Jan. 26 - Feb. 4

The Scholastic Book Fair will be open to students and staff beginning January 26 and running through February 4, 2010. This book fair is a wonderful opportunity to purchase popular titles at reasonable prices. The proceeds help to increase our inventory of Accelerated Reader books in our library.

GRADE 7 & 8 ART

Mrs. Hengst

7th Grade

The second quarter classes have accomplished a great deal so far this term. They have completed a full unit on color theory and painted a value scale in watercolor. They are currently working on a positive and negative space bug design. The work is exceptionally good so far. They should be proud of the effort they are putting in to their designs.

8th Grade

The second quarter classes have finished the unit on rendering people in proportion and as a gesture drawing. They are currently working on either textured animals or oil stick designs. We will move on to a three-dimensional project of either room designs or Dr. Seuss houses next.

Grade 7 & 8 COMPUTER APPLICATIONS

Mrs. Gardner's Computer Applications Classes

Students in grade 7 started out learning computer concepts, Internet safety, and healthy computer uses. Students then learned some basic features of Microsoft Word, concentrating on skills such as formatting documents, and editing. Students did creative writing stories, and also had some fun creating cartoons in Word. We will turn our focus to Excel where the students will create simple worksheets with formulas. We will use Excel to apply math skills such as the order of operations and percentages. The final application will be PowerPoint where students will learn how to use the creative tools of PowerPoint to prepare presentations for the class. Students will end the quarter with a project that will combine all applications learned.

The 8th grade also spent some time with computer concepts, learning terminology that is prevalent in computers today. Students spent some time enhancing their skills in Microsoft Word by creating newsletters and brochures. The 8th grade will also work on a project where Excel and the Discovery web site will be used to create buildings that have better chances of surviving Earthquakes. We will be focusing on the needs and uses of

these applications to assist in further learning and real life situations. The students will end the term working on a research project where they will learn how to find creditable web sites and the correct way to site information on a bibliography.

A reminder to students starting next quarter you will need to remember your password, if you have forgotten please stop by the library to get your password.

Grade 7 & 8 NUMERACY

Mrs. Stankaitis' Numeracy Classes

Students are making gains! They continue to use various computer programs, rotate through stations, and work together to reinforce and strengthen their skills. Some of the skills being worked on include understanding of decimals, operations with decimals, understanding of fractions, operations with fractions, and converting between fraction, decimal, and percents. Students comment that they are feeling a sense of understanding that helps them with their regular math classes.

GRADE 7 & 8 PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mrs. Dickson and Mr. Majoy's Physical Education Classes

All PE classes are now inside the gymnasium for the upcoming winter months. Both 7th and 8th grade PE classes will be focusing on building their fitness through various activities. These activities will include: weight training, fitness stations, PACER training, Tae-Bo and other aerobic training, interval running, as well as fitness testing. The main fitness components that will be targeted are cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance and muscular strength. As part of the fitness focus this winter all students are expected to maintain their in-class and at-home fitness journals.

All PE classes will also be participating in a series of team sports. These sports include floor hockey, basketball and volleyball. In each sport, students will have the opportunity to work together in small groups to improve technical skills, tactics, and sportsmanship.

The PE Volleyball unit will once again conclude with an after school volleyball tournament.

GRADE 7 & 8 READING

Mrs. Lapati's Reading Classes

Homework is not assigned in reading class, unless makeup work is required, however, students must be reading every day to fulfill their English and AR responsibilities. In class, students spend some time each week using

individualized computer reading software to improve fluency and comprehension. We continue to work on improving vocabulary.

GRADE 7 & 8 SPANISH

Ms. Hall's Spanish Classes

It's almost time to say "adiós" to the 7th and 8th graders that I've worked with for two terms. Both grades will be switching to Art or Computer starting next term.

After the break, 7th graders will be working on projects that describe their likes and dislikes. Students have learned basic conversation, and can tell information about themselves in Spanish. The students are now ready to have some basic conversations in Spanish.

Eighth grade students created catalogs or bedrooms of their dreams, which allowed them to practice their room vocabulary, new verbs they have learned, and the numbers. Soon, they will be learning how to express time in Spanish.

I would like to welcome the new group of 7th and 8th graders to Spanish. I am sure it will be a great second half of the year. Seventh graders will start with the alphabet, colors, numbers, months and days of the week. Eighth graders will review last year's vocabulary and move on to more complex sentences. Please remember to study vocabulary nightly.

GRADE 8 ENGLISH

Mrs. Derr, Mrs. George, Mr. Sacramone and Mr. Verrochi's Grade 8 English Classes

For second quarter, the eighth grade English curriculum is covering a myriad of topics: figurative language in poetry, historical fictions with Fallen Angels, and Elie Wiesel's autobiography, Night. And, with the MCAS approaching, time is spent covering test taking strategies as well as answering open response questions.

GRADE 8 MATH

Mrs. Blaszczyk, Mr. Gareau, Mr. Hall and Mr. Morello's Grade 8 Math Classes

As 2010 arrives and semester one winds down, students in Mrs. Blaszczyk's, Mr. Gareau's, and Mr. Morello's classes just completed work with irrational numbers, square roots, the Pythagorean Theorem, and will continue to work in the coordinate plane. As the 3rd term moves along work efforts will be geared towards applications of proportion and percent.

In the Algebra classes with Mrs. Blaszczyk and Mr. Morello, students have just finished a unit on irrational numbers and will begin a brief exploration of data analysis and statistics. Students will focus on solving solution, mixture, age, coin, and uniform motion problems.

Math classes will complete a special Valentine construction with a secret coded message in February. March will be a busy month with several new concepts being covered as we prepare for MCAS testing in May. Strategies and practice on MCAS open response questions will continue to be a focus in all math classes.

We look forward to the beginning of the second semester. Preparation for class with proper materials continues to be emphasized with calculators, completed homework, and pencils topping the list. The beginning of the second semester is a good time to clean out binders, lockers, and book bags.

GRADE 8 SCIENCE

*Mrs. Carroll Pascale, Mr. Donofrio and Ms. Latka's
Grade 8 Science Classes*

Students continue their exploration of Earth Science with the study of mapping the earth, including the use of topographic maps.

Another topic being studied is plate tectonics. The movement of the earth's crustal plates cause both slow and rapid changes in the earth's surface. Students will understand that these slow changes cause the formation of mountains and ocean basins. Rapid changes are associated with earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The study of volcanoes will also give students the foundation for how igneous rocks form and the role of the rocks in the rock cycle. The Periodic Table of Elements will be discussed and minerals that make up our earth will be examined.

Monthly sky calendars continue to be given to all students each month. Please encourage your son or daughter to use their sky chart daily. We look forward to viewing the winter constellations Gemini, Orion the Hunter, Taurus the Bull, and the Pleiades over the coming months.

An upcoming project students have already been asking about is the "Chair Project." Chair projects are made out of only newspaper and masking tape and will be assigned to all 8th graders at the beginning of February. Please start thinking about saving some of your weekly newspapers for your 8th grader at home.

GRADE 8 SOCIAL STUDIES

Mr. Mark Castriotta's Grade 8 Social Studies Classes

Students in Mr. Mark Castriotta's World History classes will begin a unit on Medieval Africa in the month of January. During the month of January we will also begin a special unit called, "The Global Village." Through this unit students will work in groups and research one topic (examples of topics include: Poverty in the world, people with/without electricity, literacy rates, etc.). Groups will then share their findings with the rest of the class through presentations. During the months of February and March we will be working on the Middle Ages of Europe. Have an enjoyable and safe Christmas vacation.

Mr. Matt Castriotta's Grade 8 Social Studies Classes

All classes recently finished their study of Medieval Japan and are now learning about Medieval Africa. At the conclusion of this unit we will begin our study of Medieval Europe. As always, please check your child's agenda book nightly since homework is assigned at least twice a week. If you have questions or concerns, don't hesitate to email me at mcastriotta@grsd.org.

Mrs. Pelletier's Grade 8 Social Studies Classes

Ms. Pelletier's Social Studies classes will be finishing their unit on Japan in early January and then will move on to Medieval Africa. After Africa we will look at the Middle Ages in Europe, starting with a review of the fall of the Roman Empire. Please check your student's yellow grade sheet at the front of their binder for an updated average.

GRADE 8 STUDY SKILLS

Mrs. Derr's 8th grade Study Skills Class

Students will work on strategies for extracting information from textbooks and are learning note taking strategies for their academic classes. Students work independently and in groups on academic tasks and receive one on one support as needed.

Students are encouraged to maintain neat and organized notebooks. Spending five minutes a night on organizing materials and placing notes and worksheets in the proper place goes a long way in helping students stay organized.

OTHER 8TH GRADE NEWS...

Washington, D.C. Update

The next payment for the 8th Grade Washington Trip is \$85 and is due on January 21. On February 23 an additional \$80 is due.

Craft Fair

The Spring Spectacular Craft and Specialty Food Fair will be held on Saturday, April 10, 2010 from 9:00am to 3:00pm.

There will be approximately 30 plus crafters from the area. The craft fair also features a large silent auction (drawing begins approximately 2:00), cake walk, bake sale, and lunch.

Admission is only \$1, but free admission coupons are available from 8th grade students.

Lost & Found

We have many unclaimed items (clothing and other miscellaneous items) in our lost & found. All items will be donated to charity if unclaimed by **Friday, February 12, 2010**. The lost & found is located in the Middle School office. Please encourage your child to check with us if missing items of clothing and/or other miscellaneous items.