

# Magic in the Middle



December 2009

Volume 8, Issue 4

## Principally Speaking...School Security

### December Calendar Marks

7—Band/Choir Christmas Concert

8—STAAR Night, 2:30-5:30

16—8th grade trip to Guthrie Theater

11—Late Start; 2nd quarter, mid-quarter

23-Jan 1—No School

On Thursday, November 12, the Jackson County Sheriff's Canine Law Enforcement team conducted a search in our school. The purpose of the unannounced search was to ensure high building security standards are being met and to make sure that no illegal substances were on campus. I am happy to report that the officers and their canines found no illegal substances! This is great news for our school, and I made an announcement to let the students know of this.

Local area schools also hold these random

searches every year to maintain the integrity of anti-drug programs and to let staff and students know that the safety and security of our students take top priority.

### Mini-Courses

Students will soon begin registering for January's annual Mini-Courses. Please review material coming home that requires a parent signature. Some courses charge a fee, and it's important for you to know that your student may be signing up for something that is going to cost money.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Science

Your 7<sup>th</sup> grader's science teachers will be asking each student to begin looking closely at their leaves. During class they will be looking to find out what type of veining each leaf has and what type of margin (outside edge) it has. They will also identify the characteristics of their tips (tops) and bases (bottom). They will take all of

And finally, please review your student's attendance through Family Access or letters sent from



school. Accumulating excessive tardies (not just "1st hour tardies") may result in a referral to truancy court. Please contact Ms. Erlandson, attendance secretary, or me with any questions or concerns.

Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas to you and yours!

- Mr. Root, Principal

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It's hard to believe that it is December and winter is upon us. It seems only a short time ago that soon to be 7<sup>th</sup> graders were outside trying to find ten different leaves for their leaf collection project. It is now the time to begin a closer examination of these leaves that they worked so hard to find.

this information and put together a leaf collection booklet that they will be taking home so you can see the hard work they put into this project. Be sure to ask your 7<sup>th</sup> grader about how their leaf collection is coming along.

## Eighth Grade Reading

Is your son or daughter reading every night after school? This is the **expected homework every night** in 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading. The amount of time spent reading could be determined between you and your son or daughter. Has your son or daughter done a book share for 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter yet? Students are expected to do a least one book share per quarter. This is 100 points.

Eighth grade reading students will soon discuss self-selected teen issue novels in literature circles.

### Literature Circle Expectations:

\*Students are graded on two things each week: participation in their literature circle and a typed up job.

\* Each student is responsible for one of the following jobs: connections, text-selections, questions, and a visual.

We will take a break from literature circles December 10-16 so students can learn about Charles Dickens and **A Christmas Carol** before attending the **Guthrie Theater on Wednesday, December 16.**

Here are some things you can do to help your son or daughter in reading.

1. Make sure they read each night for a set amount of time.
2. Help prepare them for a book share. The book share needs to be under three minutes. Time them and make sure they share the following things: title, author, genre (fiction, mystery etc...), synthesis (three sentences that tell what the book is about), reading level (easy, average, challenging), read a 30 second text-selection (make sure they set this up before reading), tell if they liked the book and who they would recommend it to.
3. **\*\*\*Have them practice this out loud for you!**

The last day to do a book share or written report for 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter is January 15.

Five books read = 100%

Four books read = 90%

Three books read = 80%

Two books read = 70%

One book read = 60%

Enrichment Activities offered each quarter to your son or daughter:

\*Battle of the Books

\*Who am I?

\*Book Club

## News from the Phy Ed Dept.



A lifetime activity is one which you enjoy participating in throughout your life. This type of activity provides exercise and enjoyment. The two units that we are currently participating in are both lifetime activities. The boys are swimming and the girls are playing badminton. We have wonderful facilities available that allow us to provide this great opportunity to all our students. Encourage your middle school student to take

full advantage of the opportunities that they are fortunate to have.

Now that the temperatures are dropping, students are reminded that they can bring sweatpants to wear in place of their gym shorts at any time. Gym shirts are required and can still be purchased for \$5.00.

Mrs. Swenson and  
Mr. Rufsholm

## Screen Time

Too much time in front of the TV or computer can affect your child's grades, social life and health. In separate studies, researchers have found that:

- High school students who watched more than five hours of television per day had poor eating habits as young adults.
- Watching TV can contribute to obesity. Time spent in front of the TV is time not spent in physical activity. But a study also found that some overweight children ate twice as much after watching TV commercials about food.
- Middle school students get

less sleep if they have a computer or TV in their bedrooms. They go to bed a half hour later than students who do not. But they wake at the same time.

To avoid these poor outcomes for your child:

- Set a strict limit on total screen time. No more than one to two hours per day.
- Keep TVs and computers in family areas, not bedrooms.
- Require that schoolwork, chores and exercise come before any screen time takes place.

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## 6th Grade News

This month the sixth grade math classes have begun fractions, decimals, and percents. The students started the unit by folding strips of paper into fractional sections like fourths and thirds. It was a challenge to complete the fifths and tenths! The strips are used to compare fractions to each other and develop a sense of equivalent fractions. They will continue with fractions and then move on to decimals and percents.

In social studies the students are working hard on an Egypt report. With computer lab research time the students are able to look up interesting facts on Egypt and prepare their report. Many students really enjoy studying the amazing history of Egypt.

Science continues to explore cells of various types and from various forms. The students are working on cell illustrations for choice work as well.

In sports, wrestling is open to 6th graders. The wrestling season will begin in January after the winter break. The coach is Mr. Rufsholm. He is entering his 13<sup>th</sup> season as the coach of wrestling. It's a great opportunity to participate in athletics for sixth graders.

In academic clubs, sixth graders have been able to participate in FCCLA, chess club, and battle of the books. The battle of the books has just begun and teams have formed. The teams have picked what books they will read and are now reading for the competition. In FCCLA students have been working on various leadership projects. One of FCCLA's more popular activities is the sale of cookies on Friday. Chess club is a great place for students to spend an hour or more playing other students in chess. The chess club meets after school and students are always welcome to join.

**Encouraging Reading**

On Wednesday, December 16, 2009, eighth grade students have the amazing educational and cultural opportunity to attend **A Christmas Carol** at the newly-remodeled Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. This is an exciting occurrence many never experience again. To tie our trip into curriculum, students will read, interpret, and reenact segments of *A Christmas Carol* in reading classes, while learning about theater etiquette, Charles Dickens, and Old English vernacular during English classes.

For parents/guardians to plan ahead, we stop for meals twice – once on the way to the Twin Cities and once on the way home. Students will need either money to eat or pack lunches to cover both stops. Also, since this is a cultural, performing arts experience, students are expected to dress appropriately. School dress codes apply, and everyone is encouraged to “dress up” for this event. Dress pants (or nicer jeans) and nice tops, or even dresses for girls, are all suitable. No T-shirts, hoodies, or saggy jeans, please!

Being that this event is unique and special, students are fully aware that their participation is highly contingent on their behavior in school up until the trip. Character-building discussions based around trustworthiness, social restaurant etiquette, and appropriate manners are held in all classes prior to the trip. Those staying back will be required to complete alternative assignments in lieu of the attending the performance itself.

If you have any questions or concerns about this trip, please contact your child’s In House teacher. We look forward to another amazing and memorable learning activity for the eighth graders!

Thank you,

*Eighth Grade Teachers*



**Spending Time Together**

One of the best ways to spend time with your preteen is also one of the easiest: It’s talking. According to research, adolescent girls rate chatting as the thing they most enjoy doing with their moms.

Unfortunately, girls often get frustrated during conversations because they believe their moms:

- Ask too many questions.
  - Are too quick to judge.
  - Just “don’t get it.”
  - Say the wrong thing.
- Complaints aside, preteen girls want--and need--to have meaningful talks with their moms. To get the most from the time you

spend chatting with your preteen:

- Listen. You may have a hundred things to do, but if your preteen wants to talk, be there for her.
  - Don’t shut her down. Avoid phrases like, “You don’t mean that,” or, “You can’t really feel that way.” They’re big roadblocks to conversation and may make your preteen less likely to open up.
- Accept her viewpoint. Hearing out your preteen isn’t the same as agreeing with her. It’s a way to show you respect her opinions.

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Kids who like to read tend to become lifelong bookworms. To encourage your child’s love of reading:

- Make it easy for him to discover new books. Whether it’s a ride to the library or time on your laptop to browse booksellers, offer your child plenty of chances to explore new titles. If he’s not sure where to start, give him a nudge. “I heard about this cool book. Let’s see if we can find it.”
- Surround him with words. Of course you should have paperbacks and hardcovers around the house. But

don’t forget about magazines, newspapers, maps and crossword puzzles.

- Follow his lead. Is your middle schooler gushing about an awesome novel he’s halfway through? Ask if you can read it next. Letting him introduce you to a book he enjoys will inspire him to keep reading.
- Find a reading club. See if your library or local bookstore offers a reading club for preteens. Chatting about books with his peers may make your middle schooler’s own love of stories that much stronger.

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**Working With Your School**

Here’s one change from elementary to middle school you may not have thought of:

In elementary school, few students have cell phones. In middle school, many do. Your child is likely to want one. If you agree, be aware that having a phone is a serious responsibility both on and off school property.

Here are some things to think about before you make a decision:

School rules. Many middle schools permit students to have phones on the property. But almost all require that phones be off during the academic day. Learn the policy. Spell out for your child the consequences of not following it.

Money. Cell phone use can be expensive. For middle and high school students, most of the

expense comes from sending and receiving text messages. Some students have thousands of texts a month. Who will pay for the use of the phone? Will your child have unlimited text messaging? Decide, and get agreement from your child before getting a phone.

Danger. Sending a threatening text on a phone can get your child in huge trouble. Another danger zone is the camera feature on most phones. Forbid your child from sending or receiving photos that are threatening or even slightly sexually suggestive.

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**MIDDLE SCHOOL EXTENSIONS:**

~ Dial 284-4357, then the extension of the person with whom you wish to speak.

Mr. Roou	3001	Mr. Markee	3212
Mr. Amborn	3114	Mr. Markhardt	2210
Ms. Anderson	3201	Ms. Massart	3214
Mrs. Boerger	3113	Mrs. Nelson	3006
Mrs. Bragee	3215	Mrs. Nortman	3101

Mrs. Carlsen	3205	Mrs. Reichenbach	3114
Mr. Cowley	3216	Mrs. Rodney	3110
Mrs. DeBerg	3208	Mr. Rufsholm	3150
Mr. Dokkestul	3102	Mrs. Rumsey	3117
Mr. Downie	3106	Mr. Schmitt	3214
Mr. Dutton	3202	Ms. Schwarz	3210
Ms. Erlandson	3003	Mr. Shepard	3206
Mrs. Ferstenou	3002	Ms. Skogstad	3212
Ms. Ghelf	3109	Mr. Stanley	3022
Ms. Hendrickson	3207	Mr. Stemper	3116
Mr. Jensen	3108	Mrs. Swenson	3152
Mrs. Jensen	3112	Mr. Tande	3111
Mr. Johnson	3211	Ms. Weberg	3203
Mrs. Krista	3105	Mr. Wester	3107
Mrs. Kundingger	3103	Mrs. Zillmer	3204



**To teach your middle schooler respect, lead by example**

You can always talk to your preteen about respect, but he'll likely grasp the concept more quickly if you show him what it looks like. In other words, teach respect by modeling it! Here's how:

- Value your child's opinions. You're the parent and you're in charge. But that doesn't mean you can't let your preteen speak his mind (within reason). Show respect by listening to him.
- Take an interest in your

child's life. Find out who your preteen's friends are. Ask about what everyone's learning in school. Show your preteen that his daily life matters to you.

Acknowledge your child's maturity. As your child becomes more responsible, make sure your house rules reflect it. Give him chances to earn more freedom.

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