

November 2013

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the first 2013-2014 newsletter! The start of the school year has been a wonderful one, and we hope that continues. As always, we encourage our families to stop in and share all that goes on in the middle school. It goes beyond the school day thanks to athletics, after-school clubs, parent-teacher conferences, concerts, and school assemblies. Our goal is to make our students' time here memorable, exciting, and enriching.

What have we done so far this fall? We had a very successful Veteran's Day Assembly; the 7th grade has done some excavating during their archeology unit; the Phoenix program started their Thanksgiving food drive (including turkey raffle!); and of course all students are busy learning how to use their iPads!

On December 4th we will be having Sidy Maiga come to do a cultural drum performance for all of our students. You can see more at his website: <http://www.sidymaiga.com>

We are also continuing our focus on RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, and READINESS by writing up students' for being a SOARING EAGLE, a recognition received for making good choices in the 3 Rs. We will have weekly winners and monthly winners from each grade, with each winner having a prize of \$3 or \$10 (monthly) to apply to lunch account or donate to the charity of their choice. We were able to provide both organizations with checks at our final assembly last spring!

Infinite Campus will continue to provide students and parents with access to their grades. Please contact the office by phone or email if you are having any issues, or have questions. Parents should register for their own account; just contact the office to get the information.

Rockland District Middle School is trying to go as paperless as possible to be more environmentally friendly. We understand that not all families have access to computers, please let us know if this is the case at your home. We've got lots of valuable information on our website, including our student handbook. Go to RSU13.org and choose RDMS. You can also find athletic and health/nutrition information on the district's website.

Please contact with any questions or concerns. Thank you for all your support. Our staff and our families are a team working towards academic excellence in all our students.

Sincerely,
Kathryn Hollicker, Principal

Parents' Group Meeting Notice: The RDMS Parent Group has been meeting once a month in the library. We are always looking for volunteers for fundraising efforts! You can contact Janet Corcoran (jcorcoran@rsu13.org) or Becca Barstow (rbarstow@rsu13.org), or check out our page on Facebook (RDMS Parent Group). Our next meeting is December 9th at 6pm.

Visitors: All visitors must enter through the main front doors, which are locked during the day, and sign in at the office and sign out when leaving the building. Please help us maintain a safe and secure school for your children. We also ask visitors to wear a "visitor badge."

Dress Code: The dress code, established in policy by the Board of Directors in 2002, will be enforced. Students will be given a T-Shirt to wear if necessary. Students must continue to adhere to the length of skirts over leggings. Leggings are not a replacement for slacks or jeans. Ripped tops, pants, and jeans are also prohibited. Parents may be called to bring appropriate clothing.

YELLOW TEAM NEWS – Grade 5

Mrs. Cornforth, Math: The fifth graders have been busy getting "Middle School" under their belts. Now that the first trimester is just about over, lockers are easy, the routine is old hat, and they are used to the rotating schedule of their AAs: Art, Phys. Ed., IT, Music, and French. The students have shown they can very easily adapt to change, in more ways than one!

iPads are the newest change, even though some students do have them at home. The students have been very quick to learn how to manipulate their iPads and are anxious to use them in class. So far, in Math, we have used various apps: Calculator, Sketchbook, and Math games the students like to play to encourage the learning of their Math facts. Some of the Math games have included: 6 Numbers, Telling Time (I prefer the one with the analog clock), 5th grade Learning Games, Lumosity, and Math vs. Zombies (popular at

Halloween). Some of these were discovered and suggested by the students themselves. At the moment, I am encouraging this site: aaamath.com. This is easily accessible at home on a computer for weekend practice. The skills on this site reinforce not just Math facts, but also ranging from understanding place value to using money to converting fractions, decimals, and percents. By the time this newsletter is released, I hope to have all students on “Khan Academy”, a program that individualizes needs, strengths, and weaknesses in Math.

The homerooms in fifth grade have been receiving Health from their homeroom teachers. My class has been studying various Healths and how they all interrelate: emotional, physical, mental, environmental, spiritual, and social. We also have been examining the body’s senses: the structure of the sense organs, their parts’ purposes, how the sense organs work, and how the brain is involved. The students have learned a lot! Each trimester, the classes will rotate to a new teacher to receive another aspect of Health. My class will go to Mrs. Majunka, and I will receive Ms. Slocum’s class.

We are moving on to the second trimester! Yikes! Time is flying. Hope this finds all families well. Sincere “Happy Thanksgiving” wishes are sent to you from the fifth grade.

Mrs. Majunka, ELA: Our health class has been studying the circulatory and respiratory systems. We have learned how oxygen gets distributed throughout the body for cell growth and energy and how carbon dioxide and other wastes are removed. We know that our breathing rate varies with the amount of oxygen our bodies need. If you’re willing to run in place for two minutes, your child can explain it to you.

In our ELA classes we are working on fluency and comprehension and how we address them in both reading and writing. We are reviewing and practicing reading, writing, grammar, and spelling skills. Our spelling lessons are based on spelling certain sounds, which gives us decoding practice at the same time. Building sentences of different types and structures helps the flow of our writing, as does identifying and writing topic sentences and supporting details in paragraphs. We completed the District’s Fall Writing Prompt and have identified particular skills to address in our writing this year.

As we come to the close of the first trimester, it’s encouraging to see how the fifth graders are learning to integrate themselves into the middle school climate and embrace the principles of Respect, Ready, and Responsibility.

Ms. Slocum, Science/Social Studies: In 5th grade Science we completed the first unit on cells. Students seemed to enjoy learning about how this tiny unit of all living things works with other cells to make up our body systems. The next science unit is on ecosystems.

In 5th grade Social Studies, we are working to complete the second chapter in our first unit. We have looked at and studied the geography of the United States. Now we are learning about the cultures of the early peoples that lived in the current borders of the United States as well as some in South America.

We have also been trying out the ebackpack application on our iPads. This allows student to listen to the book being read to them and then to turn in work electronically. This work has been frustrating at times; we are working on getting this more streamlined. This does allow students to work more at their own pace.

RED TEAM NEWS – Grade 6

Mrs. Tripp, Social Studies & ELA: English: We spent the first trimester reviewing kinds of sentences, studying subjects and predicates and looking at simple, compound and complex sentences. The students did a nice job identifying the above. In trimester two we will focus on the writing process. The students will practice finding a topic, ordering ideas, revising and editing. We will also study nouns.

Reading: The 6th grade is still working through the unit *Getting Through Hard Times*. We have read and analyzed two poems, a biography, and a story about a family’s experience with racism. The students have studied plot, climax and point of view through the stories that they have read. We are currently finishing an interdisciplinary unit on flight. The students are reading a biography on Amelia Earhart. Please ask your student about what they think happened to her! In trimester two, our goal is to finish the unit *Getting Through Hard Times*.

Social Studies: Trimester one flew by. The children started the year reviewing map skills such as parts of a map, longitude and latitude. We then moved on to *The*

Beginnings of Human Society. In this unit we studied the time before writing, prehistory. The students learned that the Stone Age was broken up into three periods, the Old Stone Age, Middle Stone Age and the New Stone Age. The new Stone Age began when people settled down to make one place home and farm. The students then learned the advantages of farming and how farming lead to rise of civilization.

We are now wrapping up trimester one with a unit on flight. The students are working in groups to complete a webquest on Amelia Earhart. The first part of the webquest requires researching background questions on Amelia's life. Once the background questions are completed, the students construct a timeline with five important events from her life. The last task of the webquest is to discover what really happened to Amelia Earhart on her last flight. Once the group comes up with a theory, they make a broadcast announcing their findings.

Trimester two will focus on the Fertile Crescent, home to the first civilization. As we study the past we are also working on geography of today. Please ask your student about their upcoming map quiz and their daily geography.

Mr. Crossley, Science & ELA:

English: Student will focus on the writing process and organizing information into a cohesive unit. We will look at how to organize ideas and develop a good introduction, body, and conclusion and how to use evidence to support our ideas.

Reading: Students have started reading biographies and autobiographies. They should be bringing their books home and reading for approximately 15 minutes each night. Students have a red folder and need to write any significant events, people or places from the reading that day. Students will then complete a series of book report activities once the book has been completely finished.

Science: Students are completing their force and motion presentations, with emphasis on Newton's three laws of motion. After the Thanksgiving break, we will be studying energy, including types of energy and energy transfers.

Ms. McNeilly, Math & ELA: As we approach November, we are all well into our classroom routines

and students are aware of classroom and teacher expectations.

In Reading class we have started with Theme 6 in the textbook, called *Getting Through Hard Times*. Our major emphasis for the first quarter is nonfiction reading.

In November, we did our interdisciplinary unit on flight. The students are all reading Amelia Earhart by Tanya Lee Stone. They will be putting together a portfolio of their work for this two - week unit.

My English class is finishing their study of sentence structure. This includes subjects, predicates, compound and complex sentences. We will also be doing a writing assignment to go with our unit on flight.

My math classes are finished with Module 1 and are working on polygons and line symmetry. Having the iPad has allowed us to join Khan Academy for improving math skills and allows students to progress at their own levels. They can also use Khan Academy at home if they have access to a computer.

BLUE TEAM NEWS – Grade 7

Mr. Gallagher, Math & ELA: Here we are at the end of the first trimester of the school year. We have completed the first Module in the text and will be starting Module 2 after the Thanksgiving break. In Module 2 students will work on angles and coordinate graphing before getting into addition and subtraction of integers. Once that is completed, most of Module 3 will be taken up with working with fractions. You can help your student out by making sure that he or she has a protractor with which to complete homework assignments (nothing expensive – just a cheap plastic protractor).

We also have the Aleks program coming on line and will be working with that program to enhance students' math skills.

If you have any questions about the math program or your student's math homework, please do not hesitate to contact me. Every student has been told not to stress over math. They just have to see me in the morning so that I can help them understand what they have to do and give them more time to get it done.

Miss Campbell, Social Studies and ELA:

ELA: This first trimester our ELA classes focused on writing strategies such as creating a topics and sub-topics, out-lining, using graphic organizers, checklists, as well as proofreading and peer editing each other's work. The students then used those strategies to write a persuasive essay. We also worked on supporting their own ideas with evidence and being able to make a thesis statement. We also have focused every day on daily oral language and practicing the spelling and meanings of specific vocabulary words. The entire 7th grade spent time reading a book of their choice. They then had to create their own book cover for that book. Along with creating their own cover of the book they had to write a book report that contained details focused on the characters, plot development, setting, conflict, and the resolution of the story. Miss Campbell's and Mr. Roberge's class just finished reading the book *The Revealers* by Doug Wilhelm which is a story about 7th grade students who overcome and rise above being bullied. The 7th grade has also started their autobiography for the year. This is a year-long project that the students will be working on. So far, they have made a Map and Key of their life and a chart that compares categories from the year they were born to the year it is now.

For the 2nd trimester we plan on focusing on writing, sentence structures, studying more grammar, another class book reading, and many non-fiction readings too. We plan on taking time to focus on identifying main ideas, citing evidence, analyzing literary elements, points of view, and identifying an author's purpose. Please be sure your child is reading a book at night! Along with all of this we are also involved with the Farnsworth Museum and their *Stories of the Land and Its People* project. The students will be going out into the community and photographing a certain topic and then together we will create a writing piece on their photograph. In the spring their artwork will be displayed at Julia's Gallery. It's a wonderful project and opportunity for all the kids!

Social Studies: We started the year with our unit on World Geography. We studied the different continents, oceans, as well as latitude and longitude. We spent a long time researching interesting facts about each continent as well as each of their own major landforms and features. The students worked in groups researching a specific continent and its major land features and "taught" their findings to the rest of the class. They handed out worksheets to help each student

learn the information and use it as a study guide for their assessment that followed. We are now moving on to our Maine studies. We have been studying the many different industries, geography, and facts about Maine. Students have been engaged in scavenger hunts, studying the rivers, mountains, and bays, and just recently have been assigned a Maine Map Project that will be due December 6th. We will be moving on to studying the settlement and history of Maine, as well as studying the Native American tribes of Maine. Trimester two will be full of many projects for the students to do! I'm looking forward to seeing all the creative projects!

Mr. Roberge, Science & ELA: In 7th grade science students are completing the cell unit. They have learned types of cells and the differences between them, what defines life, and organelles. They have also been using and learning about the microscope. As this unit ends we will begin the evolution unit for trimester two. We will have live animals in to help them connect adaptations to real animals. They will be learning about how life has changed over time and how it still changes. This unit includes some very basic genetics as well.

ALLIED ARTS TEAM NEWS

Mrs. Groene, Resource Room 5-7: I have thoroughly enjoyed the first trimester of the 2013-14 school year. The students have been very courteous and hardworking. In English, in the resource room students are learning how to improve sentences and have completed our fall writing prompt. In reading, students are studying reading strategies, and working on decoding skills and comprehension. In math, students are locating information on charts and making bar graphs to represent that information. Students are also being introduced to logical reasoning. The students have opportunities to use their iPads daily and seem to really enjoy the availability of the advanced technology as a learning/reinforcing tool. Additionally, we will be working on drill and practice activities to improve in the areas of math facts and skills, reading, grammar and vocabulary throughout the year.

Ms. Spring, Library: In the RDMS library I have been experimenting with QR codes and the scanning ability of the iPads. These were made very easily to link to the Library Catalog and the MARVEL databases. This is a quick and easy way for students to

get where they need to be. Try them out yourselves with a phone or iPad, or anything that has scanning ability.



Ms. Nash, Band: As the end of the year draws near, the band students at RDMS are busy preparing for their holiday concert. We have several exciting pieces that will soon be showcased at our winter concert which will be held December 10 at 6 pm.

Over the last few months, the band has learned several pieces of music. We also were honored to perform at the Veteran's Day Assembly. Most recently, 5 7th graders tried out for District 3 Honors Band. Bea Weinand successfully passed her audition and will be joining the 7/8 District 3 band this coming spring!

The 5th grade band is also doing well. The students have been playing for about a month now and all seem very excited, enthusiastic, and talented. I look forward to seeing how they continue to progress as time continues!

Mr. Walton, Chorus: All grades have been busy learning new songs in class. Those in grade 6/7 chorus have been working very hard in 6/7 chorus to prepare for our concert on December 10th.

Mrs. McMackin's Read 180/RTI 2 classes: Reading classes - My sixth and seventh grade classes have completed two novels this trimester. They are working on their final project for the second book at this time: a dodecahedron ball with information and pictures on the book *Among the Impostors*. We have also started working in the Read 180 program and have been reading about the possible hazards of peer pressure at this age. They will be completing this unit with a persuasive essay. For spelling, we are using the Megawords program which teaches the syllabication rules to help them in writing and pronouncing unfamiliar words.

My fifth grade classes are also completing their second novel and will be doing their final project in December. The *Watson's Go to Birmingham - 1963* is a historical novel built around the church bombing and killing of four young girls. For spelling, we are using a survival and everyday words book.

Expectations for all students are to read every night approximately 10-15 pages. When we do a novel, students are given a bookmark with dates and what pages or chapters they are expected to read that evening. Parents should talk to students about what they have just read about and initial the bookmark to say the child has done his homework. Between books they should be reading a book of their choice for 20-30 minutes each night.

Mrs. Johnson, Art: Art classes at RDMS have been very busy this first trimester. Working with the elements and principles of art, students have engaged in lessons pertaining to line (zentangle), shape, color, texture, and value (face/vase lesson, drawing assignments on hands and room spaces, paintings of pumpkin shapes, gourds, and sunflowers, paper weaving, clay sculptures and more!). Students are very receptive to the change in their art teacher. All is well in the art room.

Students of all grades will start a gingerbread house lesson next week during their art classes (December 11 and 12). Students will be taught the history of gingerbread houses as well as connect with the fairy tale, Hansel and Gretel.

Students are asked to bring a clean milk carton from the lunch room with their name on the bottom. Some students will opt to bring in items to decorate their house. We will supply a limited variety of decorating items such as colorful cereals, pretzels, candy of different colors, textures, and shapes. Anyone wishing to contribute to the lesson is welcome to send in items by way of their student. If you get an opportunity to stop by the school, stroll the hallway from the main office to the gymnasium and take in the beautiful works of art our young people are creating.

Mrs. Duke, Health and PE:
LOVE YOUR BODY, EXERCISE!

Exercising as little as 30-45 minutes a day is a great ways to love your body. It's also fun—so go for the gold! When you exercise, you get a more alert mind so

you can do better in school. Exercise increases the blood flow to the brain and all parts of your body!

The physical education units covered this trimester have been soccer, football, archery, fitness, and basketball.

In health education, the 6th graders have worked on a good character quilt, discussed making good healthy decisions, and now are focusing on fitness and nutrition. The 7th graders studied the importance of being responsible of their health. We learned about melanoma and ways to promote good healthy skin. We have also started studying about drug prevention. The students are becoming DEAs, experts in the field of a particular drug. The students will be presenting their drug research projects soon!

Madame Barnard, Foreign Language: Le Français has a new room this year with clearer articulation for students of procedures entering, “traveling” and earning work related points toward our whole class goal: a crêpe party!

Congratulations to Mrs. Cornforth’s class for earning their crêpe party first for bringing the 5 R’s to life: engaging the Routine effectively, being Respectful, Responsible (completing their passport correctly, speaking only French for all routine activities such as asking to leave class for or a drink, for the bathroom, etc...) being Ready and Recycling.

For Trimester 2, students will collect points as small groups, within their traveling homebase centers (Orange, Purple, Red, Blue, Green and Yellow) and will also earn points for particular classroom jobs (banquaire: compter les points et garder un compte bancaire, arroser les plantes! etc...) toward another goal. Stay tuned for this goal.

Trimester 3 students will be responsible individually for keeping their own bank account and bank account “balances” will reflect not only their completing their jobs and meeting an individualized Learning Contract but will also be closely tied to their overall Trimester 3 grade on Infinite Campus.

Each trimester features one film in which a child is asked to adapt to challenges. We have viewed the film “Wild Child” and created cultural maps of the specific cultures to which Victor, the 18th century child found raised in the wild, has had to adapt—and begun the

process of cultural observation of our own lives through the creative use of our iPads. These cultural observations are posted on our new “Cultures Wall” leading into the Café at RDMS.

Vocabulary building routines and writing will be the focus of Trimester 2 whereas this trimester it has been on learning how to use and adapt a Readers Theater Script for speaking in a range of formal and informal cultural contexts. Students will extend this oral work during Trimester 2 by adapting their script to their cultural research on one francophone locale (village, town, city, state, country or region) for which each student will increasingly become the class expert ! Our hope is to present new characters in this traditional greeting script that *show evidence* of coming from new location and creatively *reflect a cultural situation* in which two francophone citizens exchange this pertinent information. It will be up to the students to discover and re-create this culturally defined situation. By Trimester Three (3) students will be extending this Oral work (speaking) by not only enacting folktales from around the French speaking world but filling-in French for missing lines central to stories such as Haïti’s *Magic Orange Tree* and Viet Nam’s *Shadow on the Wall*. Parents will be invited to the First Annual French Festival sometime in early June.

Please be on the look-out for a document to be signed before Holiday Break: Learning Target Contract delivered to you from students early in Trimester 2.

Student Activities

Mr. Leonard, Athletics: Rockland District Middle School will have the team name Oceanside Blue for 7th grade boys and girls basketball this winter. Coaches this year are Teel Foster (girls) and Jason Skarka (boys).

To view the 7th grade basketball schedules online, log on to www.rsu13.org; click on the Sports link in the top right hand corner; when the Athletics page loads click on Calendars & Schedules and click on the RDMS link.

Mrs. Rogers, RASA After-School Clubs Rockland After-School Alliance (RASA): The current session of clubs runs November 4 till December 19. If you have any questions about the after-school programs call Youthlinks at 594-2221, or contact Club

Coordinator, Sarah Rogers, at 975-5495 or srogers@rsu13.org.

Ms. Schierman, School Nurse: Well, the heat is on and with it a rise in chapped lips, headaches, nosebleeds, and dry skin (among other things). Please encourage your children to drink LOTS of water (clear water bottles that close are welcome at school!!). Lots of rest and healthy food are other simple, yet effective ways to make sure that your body is in the best shape to fend off illness. Dressing appropriately for the weather is also a good way to take care of yourself and your children – layers are great at school as the indoor temperature is sometimes unpredictable.

A couple of reminders:

If your child has a fever (temperature 100F or above) s/he must be home until fever resolves and be fever free WITHOUT medicine for 24 hours before returning to school. If your child has vomited s/he must be home for at least 24 hours without vomiting before returning to school.

Schools will ALWAYS have cases of head lice. While generally a minor and temporary annoyance to the child, an infestation of head lice is NOT caused by poor hygiene or parental neglect. Head lice are RARELY a medical problem and they do NOT pose a public health risk. They canNOT jump from one person to another and they do NOT fly. Head lice are most readily transmitted by direct head to head contact and schools, surprisingly, are not the most common source of their spread. When children come in close contact with one another, especially during play time and sleep-overs, it is easy to pass head lice along. Please check your child's head on a regular basis and look for nits (tiny, grayish eggs that are attached to the hair) or lice (tiny insects about the size of a sesame seed). There are many effective products available over the counter. Read and follow all directions carefully. For recurrent or persistent cases of head lice, please notify the school nurse and your doctor.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns (or just to introduce yourself). As you know, I am new this year, and the more I know about your children the easier it is to help them if they come to the office.

Have a warm and healthy winter,
Annabelle Schierman, RN
School Nurse RDMS/South School