



October 2011



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NOT TO BE MISSED!

- ◆ Oct. 25-28 Book Fair
- ◆ Nov. 1 - PTA Mtg.
@ 7:30 PM
- ◆ Nov. 15- 2nd Quarter
Marking Period Begins
- ◆ Nov. 15-18 Greenkill
Trip
- ◆ Nov. 22-Apple Tasting
Event @2:45 PM

Dr. James Welsch, Principal
Dr. Gina Cartolano, Assistant Principal
Mr. Jerry Cozine, Assistant Principal

Principal's News

Dear South Middle School Parents,

Welcome to the 2011-2012 school year!! I hope the year has begun well for your child(ren) and your family. From my perspective, we are off to a great year. Our leadership class, the eighth graders, are beginning to settle into their role as the leaders of our school; our seventh graders are beginning to see and feel the differences between sixth and seventh grade and are "gearing up" for their leadership opportunity next year; and our sixth graders have made a wonderful transition from the elementary school to our middle school. Life at South Middle School is, as usual, great and busy, and full of excitement and learning.

Our enrollment as of today is 795 students: 264 in sixth grade; 245 in seventh grade, and 286 in eighth grade. We have very good class size averages. Our average class size is approximately 22 for the school in general.

We welcomed several new teachers to our ranks this fall. Dahlia Rosen is teaching both Spanish and French in our World Language Department. Cathleen Dnyprowsky is our new Physical Education Chairperson and Athletic Director. Kristin Bremner also joins our Physical Education Department. Stephanie Oddo joins our Science Department as a part-time staff member. Stephanie is an alumna of South Middle School. Elena Teixeira joins our Family and Consumer Science Department as a part-time staff member. Lawrence Nahoum joins our Social Studies Department as a part-time staff member.; he also is working as a teaching assistant in our television studio. Daniel Isaac joins our Social Studies department as well. Jonathan Ruvio joins our Technology Department. We welcome all new staff and returning staff to their new roles.

We held our "Open House" on the seventh day of school this year, Thursday, September 15. It was a great evening of information sharing and many parents commented to me how supportive they are of our school. If you were unable to make it to open school night, I hope you will call us if you have questions or concerns about your child's experience at South Middle School.

Administrative responsibility will remain the same this year, as it was last year. I am overseeing the sixth grade program, while working with each of the sixth grade teams. Mr. Cozine is working in the same capacity in seventh grade and Dr. Cartolano in eighth grade. We have also divided up the special areas such that a building administrator is working directly with each department head. I will be working with Music, Computer, and Guidance departments. Mr. Cozine will be working with the Special Education and Physical Education departments, and Dr. Cartolano will be working with the World Language, Health, Technology, Home and Careers, and Art departments. **As always, if you have a question regarding your child's experience in any class, please call the teacher directly first.** If you need to follow-up, call the department chair; if you need further follow-up, please call the administrator directly involved.

I would like to devote the remainder of my column to helping parents understand who to call if you have any questions. Schools are complex organizations. Many different individuals serve student needs in a variety of capacities. Often, when a question arises, parents are unsure as to whom to call to have their questions answered. **If a parent has a question about homework, tests, quizzes, assignments, grades, or any aspect of classroom life, he or she is strongly advised to call the teacher first!** In the majority of cases, conversations between parents and teachers resolve most questions. If you have a question concerning your child's adjustment to school, issues regarding friendships or peer pressures, or general academic adjustment concerns, please call your child's counselor. Questions regarding school behavior/consequences and or buses should be directed to the dean or to the assistant principals. Questions regarding curriculum, budget, and staffing, should be directed to the principal.

8th Grade Highlights from Dr. Gina Cartolano, Assistant Principal (continued)

In science research, students began the year learning effective research techniques that will further their investigations into areas of special interest. Background research will help students develop experiments and projects that may be presented at future science competitions. Also, students are currently exploring the stresses on bridges (tension and compression) and will begin to design and build their own structures. Finally, Science Olympiad club and the Science Challenge club have begun and there has been a tremendous turnout. There are still a few slots open.

Ms. Kostopoulos started the year off exploring the world of short stories. Students read short stories and practiced annotating the stories looking for a variety of plot and literary elements. Students used these annotations to begin entries into their Readers' Notebooks. They focused on personal reflection as well as examining the stories as literature. In addition, students analyzed the path of the hero, or protagonist, by revisiting the *Hero's Journey* by Joseph Campbell. Students also used their Writers' Notebooks to practice collecting ideas that will eventually come off the page as personal narrative. These first written assignments are part of the 8th grade Legacy assignment, a thread that will be woven throughout the year. Next, students will be choosing from select short stories and annotating them using the skills they have honed so far this quarter. Ms. Kostopoulos is excited to begin the unit devoted to graphic novels, which will explore the art of visual storytelling. This unit will culminate in students creating visual representations of their own stories. Finally, students will be tackling their first outside reading assignment.



TEAM B

Our team of students has enjoyed a smooth transition into 8th grade, using their strong 7th grade experience as solid foundations for the learning they have been doing during the first quarter. In such a short amount of time, our students have already experienced so much: Mr. Halligan's speech, Advisories, Picture Day, fire drills, all of the code drills, quizzes, tests, homework (and more homework!), and the inaugural "What It Means to Be an Eighth Grader" assembly.

It is official; your child is now part of the "senior" class here at SMS! Our team is also gearing up for its first field trip on Friday, October 28.

We will be leaving at 7 a.m. and making our famed three-state tour! Our first stop will be Washington Crossing State Park in Titusville, NJ. There, students will explore the Visitor Center's exhibit galleries that feature the many facets of America's revolutionary conflict with an emphasis on the military campaign known as "The Ten Crucial Days." The events of these ten days, December 25, 1776 through January 3, 1777, include the Continental Army's crossing of the Delaware River and the Battles of Trenton and Princeton. Students will also experience the shooting of a musket as well as see the authentic revolutionary garb worn by the soldiers. From there, we will drive to the Pearl S. Buck House in Perkasi, PA. To prepare for this trip, English teachers will be reading both fiction and nonfiction pieces either by or about Ms. Buck. Buck, in her lifetime, was an author, activist, and humanitarian.

The last stop planned on this fabulous day will be Peddler's Village in New Hope, PA. Peddler's Village is a quaint and contained colonial-inspired shopping center filled with delightful boutiques, delicious restaurants, and beautiful gardens and decorations. We are so excited to be taking this trip as a team.

While we do like to sprinkle fun into our school year, we are also proud to provide challenging and interesting curricula in all of our disciplines. In our team's math classes, there was a lot going on. Students began the year by studying different number systems and set theory. From there, the students practiced solving equations of all types. We then studied writing and solving ratios and proportions, using applications such as unit rates and scale models to connect the material to the real world.

We are currently studying functions, beginning with linear functions and later moving to quadratics. The students are getting comfortable using their new graphing calculators to draw and analyze the graphs of all types of functions. Students in pre-algebra will also be diving into algebraic word problems.

In English, we are doing a lot of reading and writing...a lot! Students are diligently using their Writers' and Readers' Notebooks to record their thinking while reading. We have done whole-class short stories, short story ReadAlouds, and independent short story workshops. All students are also engaging in an outside reading of Gordon Korman's novel *Schooled* to prepare for his visit to SMS in February. On top of really prying into the reading process, we are also engaging in some personal writings. To complement all of our reading and writing, students have also been exposed to word study and grammar. We will be reading Pearl S. Buck materials in preparation for our upcoming trip.

Social studies opened up with a critical look at current events and the happenings that are currently affecting us as a nation, a society, and a person. Mr. Isaac's students recently completed a project in which they created three dimensional representations of Progressive Era social change movements to represent the Progressive Era's status as a "building block" era.

8th Grade Highlights from Dr. Gina Cartolano, Assistant Principal (continued)

Students have also been quite busy in science. In Science 8, students have been studying matter and implementing the scientific method. Students have also been involved in density labs, during which they used lab equipment to calculate density of various materials and graph their findings. In Earth Science, students also participated in density labs. They also stretched their spatial and numerical knowledge with graph analysis. Students calculated the roundness of the Earth when doing their "Earth's Shape" lab and becoming acclimated to the Reference Table that will be used on all tests and Regents. As a team, we are working to create an interesting, comfortable, and rigorous learning program for your child.

TEAM C

Our school year has been off to an introspective start. Mr. DeSiano's social studies classes began the year with the question, "Who are we?" Considering the tenth anniversary of the September 11th attacks, students discussed the state of the nation today and how it has changed socially, politically, and economically over the past decade. After a comprehensive analysis of the current state of affairs of our nation, we considered in retrospect the journey from past policies to present situations.

Progressivism, our second unit of study, also engenders multiple opportunities to link the past to the present. This tremendous reform movement at the turn of the twentieth century will not only cover the birth of the Food and Drug Administration but will also connect today's attempt to curb the listeria outbreaks. Following Progressivism, classes will focus on Imperialism and the entry of the United States into global politics and conflicts.

Ms. Cahn's English classes are also exercising their critical thinking skills. Through interactive discussion, class presentations, and masterpieces in literature, students have been guided through literary analysis. Learning the language of symbolism and figurative elements, students have acquired a deeper understanding of the author's craft and intention. Subtle hues of mood, tone, and theme have been siphoned from the surface of contextual references. Readers' and writers' notebooks have been put in place to hone the skills of a more sophisticated and burgeoning high school student.

Our year will continue with a progression of literary analysis and a genre study of novels, plays, and poetry. Of course, the rudiments of usage, grammar, and essay structure will complement a rich year of skill refinement.

Problem solving is a priority in all disciplines. In Pre-Algebra this year Mr. Powder's classes have been exploring the ideas and properties of the real number system. In addition, they have been actively solving algebraic equations and linear inequalities.

Algebra classes have been covering the properties of real numbers and have also been investigating ratio and proportions. They have approached the heart of the course with an introduction to functions.

Mr. Piteris' Science 8 classes are embarking on an energy unit, where energy conversions and alternate renewable sources will be considered. During their investigations, they have learned about properties of matter. Earth Science classes are studying the Earth's varied topography and contour mapping, including actual government maps of students' hometowns. This exploration helps to foster a greater sense of appreciation of their surroundings.

The eight-grade year is one of investigation, enrichment, and cognition. We are so excited to guide, assist, and encourage your children during their transition to high school!

Health

The students in Health 8 are examining the importance of healthy, positive decision making. What happens when you send a text or email out of anger, and then later realize that it was a poor decision? Learning to anticipate the consequences of actions will be an ongoing theme in health classes. Is it possible to make a decision that alters many outcomes for the future? Yes! Our next unit of study in eighth grade will include exploring the dangers and risks associated with alcohol use. Through a variety of interactive lessons, the students will understand alcohol use can lead to serious and even deadly consequences.

World Languages

In 8th grade Spanish classes, students have been using manipulatives and technology in new ways to review previously learned grammatical structures such as "shoe verbs." The teachers and students are using the textbook software to go over vocabulary. The color, touch, and sound appeal to the numerous tactile, visual, and auditory learners. To date, we have looked at food, clothing, and sports using websites, the Smartboard, and the ¡Así Se Dice! software.

In keeping with our PTA initiative, some of the World Languages classes are "going green" with a variety of computer programs. The students are submitting their homework assignments on "Edmodo" as well as using "Voki," avatars that speak Spanish, "Vocaroo," voice recordings, and "Wordle," word clouds, to express themselves in their target language. We are saving the environment AND learning a new language at the same time!

Technology

8th Grade students are exploring Technology through our ten week Scantek program. Classes launched water propelled rockets to learn, hands on, how potential energy is transformed into kinetic energy while studying the Alternative Energy Module.



A water propelled rocket is launched in Technology 8.

7th Grade Highlights from Jerry Cozine, Assistant Principal

7th GRADE HIGHLIGHTS

FROM JERRY COZINE, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Welcome Back! It's hard to believe that we're already into October. I hope that you are excited about your child's seventh grade experience. The opening of the school year has been a great success, and our current seventh graders seem to be enjoying their status as the "upper" classmen of SMS. The first Team Day was held on September 16th, and the seventh grade team teachers utilized this day to introduce several "team-building" activities designed to familiarize students with their teammates and to work toward a common goal.

Below you will find a brief overview of the many exciting activities that have taken place over the first six weeks. Of course, this is just the beginning of what we believe will be a fantastic educational experience for your children.

TEAM 7SW – OLYMPIANS

What is a hero? What is a monster? Can someone be both? In the Heroes & Monsters unit in Mrs. Marr / Mrs. Peretz's English classes, students are thinking critically about the dual nature of man and the values that a culture expresses through its literature by reading and discussing myths of ancient Greece, Beowulf by Robert Nye, a version of the Odyssey by Homer, The Lightning Thief (or another book in the series) by Rick Riordan, and magazine and newspaper articles. There will be a voluntary lunch book club discussing Rick Riordan's new novel The Son of Neptune at the end of October. Students have been annotating texts with Post-Its to show their analysis of characters and plot according to the archetypal *Hero's Journey*. Writing skills have been refined by composing essays with engaging openings, clear thesis statements and specific evidence from the text to support the thesis statement. Students will be writing and sharing creative pieces inspired by stories of heroes and monsters and will be encouraged to submit them to *The Rebel Pen*.

In the Mannixlab, students have been investigating and synthesizing the Colonial time period. Students have displayed an amazing array of talents in their presentations and analyses in the Plymouth Plantation project. From the creation of children's books, visually spectacular websites, well-made dioramas to the construction of colonial newspapers, diaries and cartoons, the students proved that they are ready to jump head first into the 7th grade curriculum. As part of the Connected Classroom, each student has been utilizing a Dell Netbook in the classroom every day. "Do Nows" take place on the computer and on www.mannixlab.com; as well as in our academic networking site www.Edmodo.com. Students utilize this site to get in touch with each other and with the teacher regarding questions about social studies and to collaborate with each other on class assignments. Parents may see their child's homework assignments, grades and comments on all work done in class by joining Edmodo with a child-specific code distributed by Mr. Mannix.

In Mr. Nahoum's social studies classes, students are currently learning about Colonial America. They are making connections in

class between events occurring in Colonial America, our Constitution, and their relevance to our lives today such as freedom of speech, and the separation of church and state. In addition, students are working on a Colonial America project that asks the question, "How do people overcome adversity?" This question relates to both Colonial American settlers who faced many challenges and students who overcome obstacles on a daily basis. Each student will report on an individual colony through its social, economic, and political aspects and explain how its leaders and settlers overcame obstacles. For this project, students are producing a variety of exciting finished products including films, documentaries, children's books, newspaper articles, brochures, board games, and many more. Mr. Nahoum's classes are also looking ahead to the causes of the American Revolution, the Revolutionary War, and the creation of our Democratic Republic with the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They will be completing many fun projects that will allow students to realize the importance that these topics and issues have in their daily lives.

Mr. Giannone's math classes began the year by analyzing different number systems. They reviewed square roots and integer operations. The next unit dealt with solving algebraic equations of all types-- 1-step, 2-step, and multi-step equations. Students also practiced translating English phrases into algebraic expressions. (Math is a foreign language, too!) They are currently working on writing and solving algebraic equations from word problems. They will end the quarter by studying inequalities and exponents. Mr. Powder's Pre-Algebra class has been exploring the ideas and properties of the real number system. In addition, they have been covering the topics of solving algebraic equations, and linear inequalities, and ratio and proportions. Mr. Zweig's Pre-Algebra class is finishing up with Chapter 3: Multi-Step Equations and Inequalities. Students will be able to write and solve two-step equations that have like terms and involve parentheses, as well as equations with variables on both sides. They will explore ways to write and solve inequalities and learn how to graph them.

Students in Mrs. Keyes' science class are in full bloom - truly! They are planting and observing bean plants to see the effects of fertilizer on their growth (increased height). Each class period has a representative group and so far, the level of upward growth is TIED! Team Olympians participated in a research study sponsored by a senior at South High. They engaged in a short psychological study, which tested altruism. They anxiously await his results. Finally, students decided on which brand of popcorn to purchase as they munched on the results of the "POPCORN LAB." Orville took a back seat to Pop Secret this year.



7th Grade Highlights from Jerry Cozine, Assistant Principal (continued)



Team Olympian's Student Created Logo

Team Olympians has utilized the Flex program this year with a mix of great excitement and opportunity. Students created and voted on the team name. Students and teachers collaborated to write the team's constitution. Students are currently in the midst of an interdisciplinary Invention Project, which offers them the chance to take direct action in their world by ideating, planning for, researching and designing a product and/or service that they feel could solve some type of problem in the world or just make life a little easier. Students are using the crowd-sourcing website www.Quirky.com as a means of developing ideas and engaging in a community that could potentially produce and engineer the students' ideas. Parents with legal, marketing, and/or accounting expertise are invited to share their experiences with teachers and students.



TEAM 7S – THE LUNCHBOX CHAMELEONS

The Lunchbox Chameleons whose motto is "*we adapt to everything and anything*" started the school year off with some fun team-building activities. These team day activities help students feel a sense of belonging and allow everyone to get to know each other.

In Mrs. Giani's English classes, we are studying a unit on Greek Mythology. We used a Reader's Theatre approach to transform a variety of myths into one our very own stage productions. Working cooperatively in groups, we assigned characters, wrote the script, and made decisions regarding props, key scenes, and speaking lines. Our performances were videotaped, thus enabling us to view and critique the productions from another class period. It was quite interesting to see the varying interpretations of the texts. Some were even quite humorous!

We are now starting our first creative writing piece. Reading a biography of a famous mortal will provide the springboard for a carefully crafted story in which our very own demigod will save the day! The reading of *The Lightning Thief* is giving us another spin on the enthralling world of mythology.

In science we've been conducting labs using our measuring skills. We discovered which soap makes bubbles that last the longest. In flex we participated in a metric scavenger hunt to help prepare for our first quiz.

We combined flex classes and wrote about how we made qualitative observations using our sense of smell. We are currently doing chemistry and performed a chemical indicator lab. At the end of this unit we will do a CSI lab to determine which spooky suspect killed Sam Quiggle.

In Mrs. Galgano's social studies classes, we have completed our unit on English colonization and are just beginning the American Revolution. We began our unit on English colonization by creating a map locating the thirteen colonies, major cities, and the three colonial regions. Our focus for the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies, was on their geography, economy, society, religion and government. While examining African slavery in the Southern colonies, we watched the movie, *Roots*, which depicts a slave auction, the middle passage to America, and life on a plantation. Through documents such as Paul Revere's *Engraving of the Boston Massacre*, we will begin learning about the American Revolution by examining the British actions and the colonists' response.

We will also read and analyze the Declaration of Independence as well as poems, such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "*The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere.*" To understand differing points of view, we will watch clips of both the movies *John Adams* and *The Patriot*.

In Mrs. Hodgson's Math 7, we explored the concepts of variables, mathematical expressions, equations, and formulas. We evaluated expressions using order of operations, checked solutions of equations, and used perimeter, area, and distance formulas to solve problems. Integers were the next topic of study as students solved problems involving all integer operations. These topics lay the foundation for topics to be studied later on in the curriculum. We are now working on using the properties of real numbers to simplify algebraic expressions. Next, we will be solving equations and applying these to solving word problems.

In Pre-Algebra, we started off by reviewing all integer operations and graphing integers on the coordinate plane. Students were introduced to scatter plots and they used a table of values to show graphically the relationship between two variable quantities. Next, we delved into the properties of real numbers and used these properties to simplify algebraic expressions. We are forging ahead with solving some fairly complicated equations and using these to solve word problems.

The classes also learned about some famous mathematicians. Ask your children to tell you about Descartes and Gauss!

7th Grade Highlights *(continued)*

TEAM 7SM – UNDEFEATABLE REBELS

Our first team day was a success. Fun was had by all! After breaking the ice with a silent birthday chain, we broke into small groups to design a logo and come up with a team name. The votes are in. Our team name for this year is ***Undeatable Rebels***.

For our flex period we have decided on an eight day rotation schedule. This allows each teacher to see all of the students on the team over an eight day period in small groups, rather than just the 20 - 25 that have been assigned to that teacher. Each individual teacher is using this time for supplemental instruction to his / her curriculum.

What can we learn about the world today through our study of Greek Mythology? Even though these stories were told thousands of years ago, they still hold particular truths about human life today. Ms. Pearce's English students have spent time in the library immersing themselves in the reading of myths and creation stories from around the world in preparation for writing their own original myths. Their encounters with the heroes, monsters, and gods of mythology will also prepare them as they explore the hero's journey in Rick Riordan's fantasy novel, *The Lightning Thief*, and Robert Nye's telling of *Beowulf*.

Mrs. Doyle's classes will be starting Study Island, an online assessment practice with lessons, games, and drills. In class, the students will be extending their algebraic skills. In her flex groups they will be exploring alternate methods of solving math problems.

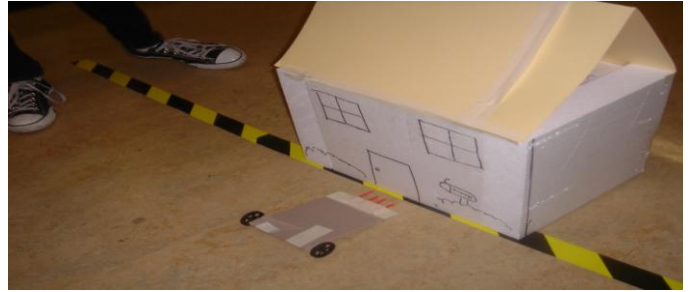
In science, Mrs. Whidden's students used their new knowledge of experimental design to test which type of soap, dishwashing or hand soap, would create a bubble that lasts the longest. The students set up and carried out their experiment by creating soap solutions and timing their bubbles. The students also participated in a metric system scavenger hunt during their science flex period. The students searched the room for tickets with metric conversion problems and solved them as they found them!

Mr. D'Angelo and Mr. DeSiano's social studies classes started off the year by doing a short review of Native Americans and the Age of Exploration. They then moved on to discussing the English colonial period in North America, giving special attention to the crazy life of England's King Henry VIII and the repulsive medicinal and hygienic practices of colonial times. They have now moved on to the peculiar institution of slavery. Scenes from the groundbreaking miniseries, *Roots*, are being discussed in class. In Flex, students have been working on two very important skills: map reading and political cartoon interpretation.



Technology

Students in Technology 7 are having a lot of fun exploring problem solving. They are building vehicles that must meet the constraints of a specific problem. Some students had to build a vehicle that traveled down a ramp and stopped as close as possible to a house at the bottom without hitting it. What a lot of fun and learning was had by all, and a lot of crashes too!



SCREEECH! - A student-made car stops just short of a house.

Health

Have you ever put yourself in someone else's shoes? If you have, you have empathy. The seventh grade students are learning about the important skill of empathy. When we show and understand empathy we feel better about ourselves and become better citizens.

We are studying the social problems of harassment and bullying. As this topic is explored, we are learning about the laws that protect young people who are victimized. In health class, we have a variety of activities that help our students understand their behaviors and actions.

World Languages

In 7th grade, Spanish classes began to talk and write about themselves and their fellow classmates. There were a variety of techniques used in the pursuit of the conversational objectives. Some classes designed group puzzles written in Spanish to create a collaborative expression of their class. In some classes the students were reporters, and interviewed each other to learn even more about their classmates. Once students were successful in discussing themselves, the scope was broadened to include being able to refer to families, homes, and the chores done around the house. The children had lots of fun using the new vocabulary to create family trees. Students also participated in activities with authentic situations in which students bought and sold homes, and created "dream houses," using classified ads and dialogues with real estate agents.

Once again, I encourage you to check our website www.greatneck.k12.ny.us/GNPS/SMS/ on a regular basis to see the great things occurring at SMS.

Be well,

Jerry Cozine

6th Grade Highlights

Only half way through the first quarter, yet, we have confident sixth graders navigating the halls, managing nine periods a day, and learning what being organized is all about. On September 6th, South Middle welcomed 273 members into our family. Nervous, anxious students entered the auditorium where they were greeted by their guidance counselor, Ms. Wendy Gerstein, and the sixth-grade teachers. Ms. Gerstein introduced them to their homeroom teacher, who then escorted them to their rooms. For the next two days, an experienced sixth grade staff helped the students understand their schedules, the layout of the building, and how to efficiently use their lockers and plan books.

During the first week of school, the three teams worked on organizational skills, as well as team-building activities. These activities were geared towards helping them discover interesting facts about their classmates, their teachers, and the school. From human scavenger hunts to tours of the building, the students had an opportunity to learn about each other and to maneuver through the maze that is SMS.

Now with five weeks of the school year completed, these anxious students are experienced members of the SMS student body. School pictures have been taken, an assembly for the Greenkill trip has been held, and numerous tests have been given. This is a very exciting year as sixth graders enjoy the freedom of changing classes, participate in clubs and activities after school, and stay for extra help to further enhance their knowledge of the sixth grade curriculum.

Math

Calculate the following: $87 - 8 \cdot 6$

Did you get the answer of 474 or 39? Ask your sixth grade student, and he/she will tell you it is 39. One of the fundamental principles that we reinforce at the beginning of sixth grade is Order of Operations, which states that all multiplication and division is calculated before any addition and subtraction when multiple operations are involved. Students quickly learn PEMDAS, which gives the proper order for calculating: Parentheses, Exponents, Multiplication/Division (in line order), and Addition and Subtraction (in line order). This key concept is essential as we introduce algebraic concepts, from learning the language of algebra to solving one and two-step equations.

In order to best serve the students, the sixth grade math teachers work closely together, planning curriculum and assessments. At our weekly meeting, we plan lessons and decide on homework assignments. As a result, the students are presented with the same material and are tested on that material at the same time. This allows the students to attend extra help after school on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday with a sixth grade math teacher.

The students may also go to the math center room 803 during their lunch period, or any day after school, Monday through Friday. We encourage students to avail themselves of the resources that are provided to get the help they need in order to master the material.

English

The year has begun with us fully immersed in the *Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop*. Students are, or soon will be, actively drafting in their very own writers' notebooks. Our first unit, personal narrative writing, has the students collecting "small moments." This process has helped them to develop one of those moments into a longer personal narrative with an introduction to memoir. Specific mini-lessons are geared toward the creative process, as well as enabling students to partner and share their work.

Likewise, the reading workshop model has students delving into short stories. Students are learning to read and annotate with a critical eye. This will help them keep track of their "thinking" and "noticing" as they read. Ask your child to explain the idea that all stories are based on the same pattern.

From our earliest classic writers, to our modern day writers, authors have used Joseph Campbell's, "Home-Threshold-Adventure -Home" story pattern. Application of this technique will be studied through picture books and short stories, as well as outside reading novels. In addition, elements of fiction, such as plot development, will also be examined. Students are starting to practice these skills and, throughout the year, this will be reinforced.

Grammar, spelling, and editing skills are all important components of our sixth grade English curriculum. These topics are interwoven into the reading and writing workshop process. The focus for this quarter will be on capitalization, end mark usage, sentence structure, and quotation marks. We will continue emphasizing these important skills throughout the year and know that your children will flourish as readers and writers.

As you heard at the Open House, the iPads have arrived! Mrs. Rauch's English classes are actively immersed in iBooks. The classics have come alive with this exciting technology. Ms. Kuhn's classes will work with the iPads after winter break, and it will Mrs. Cooper's turn in the spring.

"Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren't used to an environment where excellence is expected." Steve Jobs

ESL

At all levels of English language learning there must be a focus on grammar. At the beginning of this school year, all ESL classes have focused on nouns and verbs. Through games, practice activities and some "Schoolhouse Rock" videos, ESL students have become experts on these parts of speech!



6th Grade Highlights and Miscellaneous

World Languages

In 6th grade language classes, students began their study of their chosen language by learning about those countries in the world where the target language is spoken. The students also learned to greet one another, and are already able to briefly converse about school related topics. The culmination of the hard work was a student-designed project which depicted “the school world.” The results of the projects demonstrate a high level of achievement and a strong synthesis of the material.

Social Studies

In an attempt to develop an awareness of local and world issues, current events are an important focus in the sixth grade social studies classroom. This is achieved through weekly discussions and a variety of resources including print and Internet. To further the students’ 21st century skills, all classes have gotten subscriptions to the *New York Times* online. They have been introduced to the website and will be given further instructions on how to access it from home. *Newsday* is also being delivered once a week to further their knowledge of local, national, and international news. The year began with activities commemorating 9/11. After a presentation on the morning news, our classes viewed a news show sponsored by *Nickelodeon* geared towards middle school students and hosted by Linda Ellerbee. A discussion followed.

Our classes celebrated Constitution Day. We interpreted the Bill of Rights and talked about life without it. The arrival of the delegates to the meeting of the General Assembly led to a discussion of the role and responsibilities of the United Nation. Students watched *A Day in the Life of Ban Ki-moon* to see what happens on a typical day at the UN.

The year continues with an exploration of world geography. Map skills including legend, scale, latitude, and longitude are being honed using the classroom atlases. Through the “Five Themes of Geography,” students will be able to organize the world in a meaningful way. The goal is for students to understand that, where a person lives affects how a person lives.

Technology

Some 6th grade students are completing their mass production project. They learned woodworking skills, basic hand tool use, and some machines while creating a stationery organizer. Students are excited to bring home their personal creations and put them to use.



A 6th grade student prepares his stationery organizer

Science

September and October have been exciting times in 6th grade science class. We started the year off by learning how to make observations and inferences about the wonderful world around us. We will use these new skills throughout our science lessons. Currently, we are exploring the world around us by studying ecology. We will delve into the importance of our Earth and the resources it provides to us. These topics will make our trip to Greenkill, where nature will become both the classroom and the teacher, that much more meaningful as the children apply what they learned in the classroom to a real life outdoor environment. The students who do not go to Greenkill will have a similar experience right here in our own school. The unit will culminate in an interdisciplinary project about an organism of each student’s choice from the country they are studying in social studies.

Health

Have you ever examined the safety of your environment? Did you know your kitchen, bathroom, basement and bedroom may be loaded with hidden dangers? The sixth grade students are exploring all the hazards that lurk in our homes and yards. Homework includes a family safety-check assignment.

Back to the Basics...health and hygiene go “hand-in-hand.” Students are exploring the importance of head-to-toe hygiene! Hand washing is the number one way to prevent the spread of disease. Students are learning valuable grooming lessons from hair to nails and everything in between.

Physical Education

The students started the year off with cooperative games. Students were presented with an assortment of innovative and imaginative situations whose solutions had physical and social dimensions. The classes had a lot of fun using problem solving skills to come up with creative solutions. Our next unit was soccer. We continued to build on our problem solving and teamwork in soccer skill activities and small sided games. We are looking forward to the football, field hockey and fitness units that are coming soon!

Morning Intramurals are held every day at 7:25 in Gym 1. After School Intramurals are held Monday - Thursday, from 3:00-4:00 in the recess area (Gym 1 or fitness center when the weather doesn’t cooperate). Bring a friend and join a game!



The fall season is in full swing! We have over 200 students involved in our interscholastic athletic teams. Our teams are practicing or playing in a game every school day. For more information, including schedules and highlights please visit our website:

www.greatneck.k12.ny.us/GNPS/SMS/athletics/index.htm

Lego Club

The Lego club got off to a great start this year. We have a set of Legos that students may use during club time. However, students are encouraged to bring their own sets to use if they want. We also welcome any "used sets" to add to our collection. Some of the activities planned for this year will be "Lego Town," "Multicultural," "Amusement Park," "Inventions," Stop-animation movies, and more. The club meets every Wednesday in room 403 with Mr. Moore.

Multi-Cultural Club

The Multi-Cultural Club started the dance rehearsals with the previous 7th and 8th graders and the new 6th grade students. They are learning the history of the dance, as well as the choreography for it. Later, Mrs. Blanco and the students will choose the dance that will be performed at our Cultural Heritage Celebration on February 9, 2012.

Mah Jongg Club

One of the new clubs at South Middle this year is the **MAH JONGG CLUB**. Each Wednesday we meet to learn about the basic game and to take a look at some of the different versions that exist. We are learning how to play American Mah Jongg and many of our Asian students have offered to show us how to play traditional Chinese Mah Jongg. We will also use Mah Jongg playing cards to try our hands at another version. At our weekly meetings we add a little "flavor" by talking a little bit about related Chinese culture and enjoy authentic Chinese snacks while we play. As we continue to learn and play the game, we will be looking to learn how to strategize and play defensively. We will join our friends each week to relax and have fun playing Mah Jongg!

Gay Straight Alliance

On October 12, students at South Middle participated in the National Coming Out Day School Awareness Campaign. NCOD raises awareness, decreases violence, and builds leadership to create safer and more supportive learning environments for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) youth, families, and allies. Some of the GSA club members performed in a student made public service announcement. This PSA highlighted how to show support on NCOD and was broadcast to homerooms. The GSA distributed over 600 rainbow ribbons, information cards, and "Ally" stickers. The GSA meets weekly on Wednesday in room 215.



Art Club

The Art Club has been working on decorating pumpkins for Halloween. The pumpkins, both scary and cute, will be displayed in the South Middle School Library starting October 27th. Please stop by and treat your eye to the students' Halloween creations.



Community Action

The Community Action Committee is working on the first project of the year by sponsoring a food drive to benefit families in our own district who are in need. The members will be addressing the student body via the morning news show, thus encouraging the entire school body to bring in non-perishable food. Food will be deposited in student created turkey boxes located in the front of the building.

In addition, CAC runs a bake sale every Friday. The profits are donated to St. Mary's Hospital. The photo shows

Shared Decision Making

The Shared Decision Making committee is a forum for the home-school community of administrators, teachers, parents, and students. It meets one Wednesday a month with the goal of improving the educational performance of all students in the school. With an equal voice of all constituent groups, a list of goals are proposed and explained, amended, and prioritized.

At the district training session, held in October at the Merchant Marine Academy, Dr. Dolan asked each school to reflect upon the following: "**Graduating with a Great Neck education is considered a success when...**" This led to a lively conversation at each school's table and then a sharing of responses with the whole group. This was a means of brainstorming, leading to each school's discussion of possible goals for the year. We all look forward to continuing to share our ideas at future meetings of Shared Decision Making.

Message from the President



PTA President's Message

Dear SMS Families:

I wanted to welcome all the new parents who have joined the Great Neck South Middle School PTA and welcome those of you who are returning. The PTA would like to thank Dr. Welsch, Dr. Gina Cartolano and Mr. Cozine for their continued service to our school. We also want to thank our hard working teachers who we entrust everyday with our most precious cargo, our kids.

The organization is made up of administrators, teachers and parents. The PTA through volunteerism is a part of events throughout the year: Photo Day, Apple Tasting, Cultural Heritage, Shared Decision meetings, Spaghetti Night, the Book Fair, the Author's visit, the teacher appreciation luncheon, and the Dancing program for 8th grade. Fundraising and your dues have contributed to enhancing the physical environs, by giving the school new picnic tables, and also the wonderful greenhouse that is being utilized by our teachers and students in a variety of learning ways. Science in particular will be a benefited area.

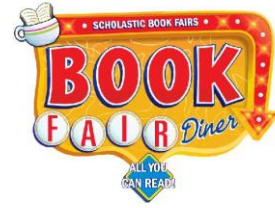
The first PTA meeting was fantastic! The opening was a video produced by the GNSMS television department's Mr. Robert Zahn. The video focused on what a "Great Neck Education" means. It sounds rote, but fear, not... it was cool. Your children enlightened and entertained us by being forthright and true to themselves. Dr. Welsch and Dr. Cartolano spoke and described daily and overall activities regarding the school, and we also welcomed Dr. Stephen Lando, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education. Please mark your calendars now for the next general PTA meeting slated for Tuesday November 1st, at 7:30 p.m. The topic will be our Encore subjects: Technology, Art, Music, Health, Family and Consumer Science (formerly Home and Careers). SMS embraces the encore subject areas, as they are essential in helping develop the well-rounded complete student.

I hope to see you all at the next meeting.

Thank you for your continued financial and volunteerism support.

Best Wishes,

Judy Liman



The SMS Scholastic Book Fair is here!!!

Please note that your child will be attending the Scholastic Book fair next week (10/25-10/28) with their English teacher during a class period. The schedule is also attached. There will be many reasonably priced titles on sale at the fair, and each child might want to bring at least \$5-\$10 dollars to school to purchase a new book.

For the first time, Scholastic will allow customers to shop online through their website from October 21st to November 10th. There are close to 900 wonderful titles available online, and every purchase will be shipped to Great Neck South Middle School. Please note your child's homeroom teacher at the check-out, and the books will be delivered directly to the classroom.

Please use the following link to access Scholastic Book Fair: <http://onlinebookfairs.scholastic.com/default.aspx?f=2857632>

Thank you so much for your support.



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Great Neck South Middle School PTA
349 Lakeville Road
Great Neck, New York 11020



SMS Becomes Even More Environmentally Friendly

In cooperation with The Town of North Hempstead, South Middle has joined with many schools throughout Long Island in a new recycling endeavor. The **“CAPS BACK”** program partners The Town of North Hempstead with Estee Lauder, the maker of Aveda products, to lead this innovative plastic bottle cap recycling initiative. Students, staff and families are urged to collect/drop plastic bottle caps, as well as any type of plastic lid (ex. butter) in the **“CAPS BACK”** bin located in the front lobby. Collected caps will be ground down, remolded, and reused on Aveda’s organic products. This program will reduce the amount of waste material and teach our students the importance of taking responsibility for their environment and the future.