



Neelsville News



The Neelsville MS PTSA Newsletter

February 2009

Parent to Parent

Jodi Bielair

PTSA Vice President

On behalf of the PTSA and Neelsville Middle School, I would like to thank each and every person who came to this year's Scholastic Book Fair and made a purchase. With your help, we were able to reach our goal (and next year we will make it even higher)!

Thanks also go out to all of the parent and student volunteers, because, without them, we could not have held the Book Fair. A special dedication to Mr. and Mrs. Thornberry who donated so much of their time and energy to this fundraiser. Hopefully they'll miss us and come back next year!

The Carnation Sale was even more successful than last year. Over 400 carnations were sold and we made \$355.00 in profit. We are planning on having another sale just prior to Mother's Day - so keep an eye out for more information on that.

Again, we have to thank the volunteers who gave their time to make this fundraiser successful. I can assure you that it was a lot of fun and highly recommend that you consider giving up your lunch hour to help out next time.

From the Principal's Desk

Dollye McClain

Principal

Neelsville's Breakfast Club

With the Maryland School Assessment's (MSA's) fast approaching a new intervention is being set in motion for those students who are "on the cusp." (These are students that can move into either the MSA proficient or advanced level in reading and mathematics if given a little extra help.) One hundred students have received invitations to participate in our breakfast club. This on-line program acts like a tutor for your child to practice the core fundamental skills required to attain student achievement and improve test performance.

It's Not Too Late for Saturday School

Now that we are into the third quarter and report cards have been distributed for the first semester, before we know it, it will be time for spring exams and standardized tests. The George B. Thomas Learning Academy (GBTLA) is available at Watkins Mill High School on Saturdays through May 2009, to help students focus on their studies and sharpen their test-taking skills.

The GBTLA, a tutoring and mentoring program for Montgomery County students in grades 1-12, is dedicated to enhancing students' academic performance and achievement. On Saturday mornings, from 8:30-11 a.m., certified teachers and volunteer tutors work with students in the areas of reading, language arts, and math, and teach successful learning/studying strategies. Secondary students also have access to computer labs to assist them in researching information for assignments and learning valuable technology skills.

The GBTLA is open to all students who desire to improve or enhance their academic growth and

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Departments

- 1-2 Parent to Parent/From the Principal's Desk
- 2 MSA Testing Tips
- 3 School PTSA Calendar/MCCPTA Info.
- 8 PTSA Executive Officers/Committee Chairs

Features

- 4-5 Sixth and Seventh Grade News
- 6 Eighth Grade News and SSL Info
- 7 Safety on the Internet Seminar

continued on page 2

From the Principal's Desk *(cont. from page 1)*

achievement. As participants in the GBTLA, students must meet high academic and behavioral expectations, including regular attendance. They are required to share quarterly report cards with tutors, who use the information to plan tutoring activities and monitor student progress.

Students can enroll any time throughout the year. To register, parents must complete a registration form (including student ID number), pay a \$20 registration fee, and provide a copy of their child's most recent report card from the last reporting period. The registration form is available in the NMS counseling office and on the GBTLA Web site at www.gbtlearningacademy.org. If you have questions about the program, please call the GBTLA main office at 301-320-6545.

Dates to Remember:

MSA Testing March 16-31

3rd Marking Period Ends March 27th

4th Marking Period begins March 31st.

This Just In!

The estimated sales from the Neelsville PTSA Book Fair were \$5,356.78. Thanks to all who helped by purchasing books and for all those that contributed their time. Not only do your purchases help the students and PTSA, but also the library received free books based on our sales.

Test-Taking Strategies to help prepare students for the MSA:

10 Helpful Hints to Remember During Tests

1. Read and pay careful attention to ALL directions.
2. Read each passage and the questions.
3. Read every possible answer—the best one could be the last.
4. If you need to, re-read the parts of a passage needed for selecting the correct answer.
5. Don't make uneducated guesses. Try to get the right answer by reasoning and eliminating wrong answers.
6. Decide exactly what the question is asking. One of the choices is obviously the best one!
7. Don't spend too much time on any one question.
8. Only change an answer if you are absolutely sure the first one you picked was wrong. It is better to stick with your first instinct! Be sure to completely erase changed answers.
9. Process each question; don't rush through it. Pace yourself (balance your time) so you have time to check your work before handing in the test. Use ALL the test time.
10. Keep a good attitude. Think positively!

School / PTA Calendar

February

27 Early Release

March

9-13 Spirit Week

10 PTSA Meeting 7:00 pm

13 Academic Pep Rally

16-26 MSA Testing

27 Marking Period Ends

SGA Dance 2:45

27-31 MSA Make-Ups

30 Professional Day – No School for Students

31 No Activity Bus

April

1-2 No Activity Bus

6-13 Spring Break – No School

Activity Bus Resumes

14 PTSA Meeting 7:00 pm

Report Card Distribution

16 Girls Soccer vs. Mont. Village

22 Straight "A" Dinner

23 Spring Drama Production 7:00 pm

Take Your Child to Work Day

24 Spring Drama Production 7:00 pm

29 Boys Soccer vs. Baker

May

5 Girls Soccer vs. Rocky Hill

7 Boys Soccer vs. Clemente

8 SGA Dance 2:45

12 PTSA Meeting 7:00 pm (Final One)

13 Boys Soccer vs. King

15 Variety Show 7:00 pm

18 HSA Algebra

20-21 Spring Concerts

25 Memorial Day Holiday

26 HSA Algebra Make-Up

28 Awards Night at Clarksburg 7:00 pm

29 8th Grade Dance

June

4 Last Day for Activity Bus

9-12 Final Exams

15 Exam Make-Up

16 Last Day of School for Students – Early Release

23 Report Cards Mailed Out

Call to Action from our MCCPTA Representative:

After hearing the serious concerns that have been raised by the administration regarding Neelsville's gymnasium floor, Congressman Reznik has agreed to speak with our MCCPTA delegate to see what can be done to get this repaired...but we need help from the parents here at Neelsville to make sure that he isn't the only delegate that understands the severity of the problem.

Please go to the Maryland General Assembly's Website: <http://mlis.state.md.us/> and contact your delegate to impress upon them that this has gone on for long enough.

Our children deserve better.

A Very Special Thank You from the Fundraising Chairperson

The Valentine's Day Carnation Sale was a huge success. The PTSA sold 450 carnations and made a very nice \$355.00 profit.

Thanks so much to Jodi Bieliar, Carla Magdamo, Vonetta Moore and Steve Thornberry for the wonderful help they provided. Also to the students and parents that helped support the PTSA.

SIXTH GRADE NEWS

The sixth grade science classes will share their Well Designed Investigation Projects done in class during Science Night on February 19th. Many other exciting events will happen that evening at Neelsville as well. We will then continue building Sea Perches in class after taking time to work on our Well Designed Investigation Projects.

The next unit of study in sixth grade science classes will be "Force and Motion." Sixth graders will learn about forces such as friction and gravity, and how these forces affect objects in motion. We will also learn to calculate speed and velocity of moving objects.

In reading, students have been reviewing "the foundational" skills needed to become proficient readers all year. In the second marking period we read classical myths told by the Ancient Greeks. We are beginning a new unit called Triumphs. Students will continue to use essential reading strategies as we learn about individuals who have triumphed in their lifetime. Please ask your child about what inspired people such as Matthew Henson, Diana Golden, Helen Keller, and Mother Teresa to strive for their personal best. Students are expected to read at least 30 minutes each night to earn Accelerated Reader points. AR ensures that students will meet their 25 independent reading novel quota as per MCPS curriculum guidelines as well as building comprehension skills.

As you know, March brings the Maryland School Assessments, 6th graders will be assessed in the reading portion on March 16th and 17th. Please make sure your child practices the reading skills reviewed in school by accessing Skills Tutor and Study Island via the Neelsville Middle School web-site. If you are interested in previewing sample items from the MSA test you may visit The Maryland State School Improvement website at: <http://mdk12.org/> . Grade 6 reading samples can be accessed at: http://mdk12.org/assessments/k_8/sample_grade6_reading.html .

In social studies, students are learning about economics. Students have studied different terms and the different types of economic systems. In a few days students will begin their study of Ancient China. Students will learning about the many different dynasty's of Ancient China and how they have shaped China today. Students will begin working on a research project on China in a few weeks. Please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher with any questions.

In English class students are busy working on taking Cornell Notes. The Cornell method is best when the information is given in a sequential, orderly fashion and allows for more detail. The semantic web/map method works best for instructors who skip around from topic to topic, and provides a "big picture" when you're previewing materials or getting ready to study for a test. The Cornell System provides students with a systematic format for condensing lessons. The student divides the paper into two columns: the note-taking column (is usually on the right side) and is twice the size of the key word column which is on the left. The student should plan for five to six lines, or about two inches, at the bottom of the page. Notes students take from teacher lectures or from class discussions are written in the note-taking column. Students then write the main ideas and rephrase long pieces of information into shorter pieces.

SEVENTH GRADE NEWS

7th Grade World Studies students have begun their 3rd unit - Principles of Geography. We are going to be examining the cultures of the Aztecs and the Incas and how the geography of Latin America affected them. Ask your student about their mental maps! The students will be using technology to create a project on a country of Latin America.

Please help your student to be prepared for school. Check that their binder is organized and that they have the supplies they need to be successful - pencils, pens, paper. Ask them to explain to you what they do during the day in their classes, it will help them to remember what they learned that day.

7th Grade Math students have been working on Unit 3 which focuses on constructions of angles, line segments, and bisectors. This unit should be finished in the next week or so. We will then start Unit 4 that focuses on Proportions and

scale drawings. Please be sure your child keeps all papers from each of the previous units, as they will be covered on the MSA in March.

In English, the seventh grade students are embarking on the third unit titled "Voices from the Past." In this unit, a variety of voices will be "heard" with a focus on the 1940's. Students will explore the experiences of people who were impacted by different places and times. Classes will study the legacy of those who came before in order to reflect on how the past influences the present and how the past is sometimes repeated.

Students should continue to independently read their A.R. books. Seventh grade students are expected to earn a minimum of 34 A.R. points by March 27, 2009.

Seventh Grade science students are excitedly getting ready to present their Science Inquiry Projects on Science Inquiry Night, Feb. 19th. We strongly encourage all students to attend if possible. On grade level students who do not arrive in class on Feb. 17 or 18 with a gradable project in hand will take a test on scientific method. GT students who arrive without a gradable project will earn a "0" test grade on this important assignment.

We are beginning our 3 week unit on Heredity. There will be many labs and an increasing amount of homework as we help prepare our seventh graders for eighth grade. We will be investigating patterns of inheritance culminating in an MCPS assessment. Next unit: Human Body!

EIGHTH GRADE NEWS

U.S. History 8

During the third marking period, students will be studying Andrew Jackson and his new style of democracy. In addition, students will learn about the plight of the Native Americans. Finally, we will be focusing on the geographical growth of the United States through Manifest Destiny.

Please encourage your child to come to class with his/her books and materials. In order to be successful, students must be prepared.

Math

All students are preparing for the upcoming MSA. Teachers went over the last practice MSA with the students in their math classes.

Honors Geometry students are working on indirect measurement methods.

Algebra students are studying probability and Data Analysis.

Math C students are solving equations using math properties.

Science 8

Welcome to Earth Science! Students are now investigating our home planet. The structure of the Earth is the topic for the month of February with Earthquakes and Volcanism not far behind. How do we know what the inside of the Earth is like if we've never been there? What causes Earth's magnetic field? How are earthquake epicenters located? These and many other fascinating questions will be answered as we begin to explore the Structure of the Earth!

English 8

Students in 8th grade English have been engaged in a research report based on a controversial issue approved by the teacher. Students learned to cite sources correctly and studied the techniques of propaganda. We are finishing up reading our unit novel and preparing for the end-of-semester exams. English students identified an individual who has impacted the community and wrote a 5 paragraph essay on the topic. Students should be reading a book every night. Some students may need that extra push from parents to read for 30 minutes on a daily basis. Please note that

students are required to take weekly Accelerated Reader tests which are a part of their English grade. As students think about next year,

They should consider reading some of the books at the high school level. Here are some books that have been on the Black-eyed Susan list. Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*. Bagnold, Enid. *National Velvet*. Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Christopher, John. *The White Mountains*. Cleaver, Vera. *Where the Lilies Bloom*. Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Last of the Mohicans*. Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Dumas, Alexander. *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Eckert, Allan W. *Incident At Hawk's Hill*. Forbes, Esther. *Johnny Tremain*. Frost, Robert. *Poems*. Hilton, James. *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*. Hunt, Irene. *Across Five Aprils*. Hunter, Mollie. *A Stranger Came Ashore*. Irving, Washington. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Keith, Harold. *Rifles for Watie*. Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*. LeGuin, Ursula K. *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Lester, Julius. *To Be a Slave*. Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Mazer, Harry. *The Last Mission*. Peck, Richard. *The Ghost Belonged To Me*. Pyle, Howard. *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*. Rawlings, Marjorie Kinnan. *The Yearling*. Reiss, Johanna. *The Upstairs Room*. Schaefer, Jack. *Shane*. Scott, Sir Walter. *Ivanhoe*. Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Smith, Betty. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. Sperry, Armstrong. *Call It Courage*. Steinbeck, John. *The Red Pony*. Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*. Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Twain, Mark. *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Uchida, Yoshiko. *Journey to Topaz*. Verne, Jules. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Webster, Jean. *Daddy Long Legs*. Wells, H.G. *War of the Worlds*. Wilder.

We encourage students to study literary terms. We encourage students to be mindful of the 6 traits of writing when submitting written work. We invite students who need extra help to make an appointment to come in during lunch or after school.

Student Service Learning (SSL) Tips

Give a Little Time...Make a Big Difference

February 2009

Students expand analysis and synthesis skills.

- Progress toward the SSL graduation requirement can be checked on quarterly report cards. An immediate follow-up with the school-based SSL coordinator is recommended for any inconsistencies.
- All SSL forms (MCPS Form 560-50 *Request for SSL Pre-approval*, and 560-51 *SSL Activity Verification*) may be downloaded from the website www.mcpsssl.org. They should be completed legibly in ink before submission to the school-based SSL coordinator.
- June graduates with 260 or more documented SSL hours receive Certificates of Meritorious Service from the Maryland State Department of Education and Montgomery County Public Schools. A purple tassel is also given to these students to wear during commencement to identify them as meritorious service contributors.
- SSL is a state graduation requirement. This requirement does not replace the support that is given to family members, neighbors, friends or fellow religious organization members.
- The SSL website, www.mcpsssl.org is a great source of information about the SSL program that has been approved for Montgomery County Public Schools by the Maryland State Department of Education.



Safety On The Internet For Your Family

**Thursday, March 26, 2009
7:00pm – 9:00pm**

Rocky Hill Middle School Cafeteria

Tired of hearing the same dire warnings and statistics on the dangers of the Internet? **Come get some practical information that will help you protect your family!!!**

Guest Speaker: Larry Wong, MCPS Chief Technology Officer

- How to talk with your children about Internet safety.
- The "Social Media" environment: Facebook, MySpace, online gaming and more – are your children chatting with friends, or talking with strangers?
- How to intervene in the Facebook and MySpace world – it's never too late!
- The "Bully Bulletin Boards" that have cropped up in our neighborhood online – and what we can do about it.
- Downloading music and videos: what's legal and what's not?

Bring your own questions and experiences to share! We'll get advice from Internet safety professionals, learn strategies that have worked for some parents, and have lively discussion.

**OPEN TO ALL! Invite your neighbors and friends!
We hope to see you there!**

Refreshments will be served.

Sponsored by the Rocky Hill PTA and
Educational Facilities Officer Russell Larson

Feel free to email questions and discussion topics in advance!

Please call or email to register at melanekhoffmann@aol.com or 301-972-6430. Registration is not mandatory, but will help us have enough seating and refreshments.

