



# Neelsville News



The Neelsville MS PTSA Newsletter

March 2009

## Parent to Parent

**Steve Thornberry**

PTSA President

In our last newsletter we indicated that we were having a successful Scholastic Book Fair, which was held between February 17 and February 23. The final count indicates that it was very profitable financially. We took in over \$5,000.00 in sales, excluding sales tax, an 18 percent increase over last year's sale. It was heartening to see so many students taking an interest in books, and it is a good sign in tough economic times that many parents are willing to spare some badly needed money for books for their children. That is as it should be given the lasting importance books can have on our children.

Not so heartening, however, were the stories that reached us of the many thefts from the book fair. The actual number of students involved was undoubtedly quite small. From what we have been able to learn, most of the items stolen were of no intrinsic value or desirability. While I am convinced that most Neelsville students would never commit such an act, it is unfortunate that the activities of a small number of students have compelled me to mention it here. I encourage all parents and guardians to ensure that their children are aware of the seriousness of such actions.

## From the Principal's Desk

**Dollye McClain**

Principal

Did you know that students in the graduating class of 2009 and beyond will not graduate if they have not passed the **4 required High School Assessments (HSAs)?** There are three ways to pass these tests--- by passing all four exams with the required cut off scores, meet a minimum combined score of 1602 or pass with the "Bridge Plan". **The MSA is a good predictor of how your child would do on the HSAs.**

### Four Core (Foundation) Tests

The four HSAs—algebra/data analysis, biology, English, and government—are based on the Core Learning Goals which clearly outline course content and learning objectives for each content area. The content covered in HSA-related courses and on the HSAs is a basic level of knowledge that will be built on as a student continues his/her education.

### Know the Score

The passing scores for the 4 HSA content areas are:

Algebra/Data Analysis: 412

Biology: 400

English: 396

Government: 394

A student who earns a state-approved score on certain Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) tests does not have to take the HSA in the related subject. The student will receive the passing score for the content area.

Scores are mailed to the local school system (LSS) 6 weeks after the test was taken. The LSS then sends the individual student scores to the schools. The schools are responsible for sending students' scores to

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

parents/guardians. Contact your child's school if you do not receive his/her HSA scores in a timely manner.

### **Know the Plan**

Each local school system has a plan of when HSA-related courses are typically offered to students. The school counselor can help plan a course of study for your child to graduate from high school as well as help prepare him/her for the future.

### **Know the Options**

There are a number of options for meeting the testing requirement, including:

#### **Passing all 4 HSAs:**

Earning a combined score of 1602 on the four HSAs (This Combined-Score Option allows students to offset a lower score on one HSA with higher score on another HSA.); OR

Using the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation, this allows students who meet the eligibility criteria to complete one or more projects in an HSA content area. More information about the Bridge Plan can be found on the [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org) website.

#### **Students with Accommodations**

Students with disabilities are entitled to receive both instructional and testing accommodations as outlined in his/her IEP. If you have questions about your child's accommodations for an HSA or Mod-HSA, or for the Bridge Plan, contact your child's teacher or IEP team.

**The Mod-HSA** is an alternative test for students with an IEP who meet specific participation criteria. A student with an IEP who has taken and failed the HSA once may have the opportunity to take the Mod-HSA if approved by the school.

#### **Take and Retake**

The HSAs are given in October, January, May, and July/August. A special, seniors-only administration will be given in April 2009. Students can retake an HSA as many times as necessary to earn either a passing score or a score high enough to allow them to use the Combined-Score Option. Students who do not pass one or more HSAs must be offered locally-administered or approved assistance.

#### **Help at School**

Students who do not pass one or more HSAs must be offered locally-administered or approved assistance. Each school system has developed strategies for providing assistance, which could include sample test reviews, tutoring, or after-school or Saturday instruction. The school determines what assistance will be provided to students. A student who fails an HSA and is considering the Bridge Plan is required to participate in locally-administered or approved assistance and retake the test a second time. The student is responsible for taking advantage of the assistance to help prepare for retesting.

## School / PTA Calendar

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
14	Activity Bus Resumes PTSA Meeting 7:00 pm
16	Report Card Distribution Girls Soccer vs. Mont. Village
22	Straight "A" Dinner
23	Spring Drama Production 7:00 pm
24	Take Your Child to Work Day 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	8 <sup>th</sup> 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

## MCCPTA Information

### Update On Our Gymnasium Floor

As many of you in the Neelsville Middle School family are aware, the floor in the gymnasium is in rough shape. With the fact that the Montgomery County School District's operating budget would be tight for this year in mind, the PTSA reached out to Delegate Kirill Reznik's office to see if there was anything that could be done to highlight our need.

The Delegate's Office has responded energetically, making phone calls and sending letters to the School Board and recently discovered that Neelsville's Gym Floor is not scheduled for repair until approximately 2012. While they are attempting to pressure the School Board into moving us up on the priority list, added activism on the part of the parents at Neelsville Middle School will go a long way towards assisting them in helping our children.

Please contact the County Executive's Office, as well as the School Board and make your voice heard. Our children deserve to have a safe and secure environment for learning.

County Executive's Office 240-777-2500; TTY 240-777-2544; oemail@montgomerycountymd.gov

School Board President's Office 301-320-6564;  
Shirley\_Brandman@mcpsmd.org

Vice President's Office 301-320-7600;  
Patricia\_O'Neill@mcpsmd.org

Superintendent's Office 301-279-3381;  
Suzanne\_Peang-Meth@mcpsmd.org

## **Math B**

This month in we will be finishing up Unit 4 creating scale drawings using proportions, as well as creating circle graphs. We will then move into Unit 5 which focuses on sequences and using function tables to plot points and create graphs using those tables.

## **SIXTH GRADE NEWS**

Science classes in 6<sup>th</sup> grade are currently covering “Force and Motion” which is our physical science unit. The students are learning about speed, velocity, and acceleration. We will be doing labs and collecting data from moving objects in class. Later we will be covering “Newton’s Laws of Motion” through reading, writing, and hands-on experiences.

The Sea Perches will be completed after spring break. The wiring of the remote control boxes is the most challenging part of the procedure. We will have guest engineers from the Naval Surface Warfare Center – Carderock Division, to check over the motors when we have completed them.

## **SEVENTH GRADE NEWS**

7<sup>TH</sup> Grade World Studies-

The 7<sup>th</sup> graders are currently in the middle of the Latin America unit. The classes started out by learning the geography of Latin America. Next the students did a research project on a country located in Latin America. They were to make a brochure about their country on the computer. The information was about environmental regions, animal and plant life, urban centers, economic activities and the cultural sites of their country. Each student made their own brochure and was able to put their creative touch on it by using different pictures, colors and fonts. Most students found this to be a very enjoyable project! Finally we will begin studying the cultures of the Aztec and Incan societies.

Seventh grade scientists are wrapping up their study of heredity with an in-class pet mating project, and the MCPS Heredity unit exam.

Exams will be given March 20 & 23, days that we don’t have MSA’s. Students need to review the notes on asexual reproduction and Punnett squares that are in their binders. We are rapidly approaching the Human body unit, which involves dissection. Look for a parent permission slip soon that you need to sign if you DO NOT want your student to participate in the dissection activities.

Seventh grade English classes are continuing their studies of “Voices from the Past” while also gearing up for the MSAs. Students recently completed the formative assessment that incorporated literature about the 1940s or from the 1940s. Students demonstrated understanding of skills that have been practiced thus far in the unit. Classes have been revisiting and practicing the CSI (Claim – Support – Interpretation) strategy for writing well-constructed paragraphs. Accelerated Reader (A.R.) points are due by the end of the quarter. Seventh grade students are expected to earn at least 34 points each quarter. Students should aim to score 80% or higher for their comprehension average on each A.R. test.

**Student Service Learning (SSL) Tips**  
**Give a Little Time...Make a Big Difference**  
March 2009

***Students expand citizenship skills.***

- Spring break is coming (April 6–13) ...make a plan now to serve and learn!
- All SSL requires advance approval. At the website [www.mcpsssl.org](http://www.mcpsssl.org) select an organization tagged, "Approved SSL MCPS" and an opportunity tagged, "MCPS SSL Approved" OR submit MCPS Form 560-50, *Request for SSL Preapproval* for organizations and opportunities not tagged as approved.
- *Preparation, Action, and Reflection* are phases of SSL that set it apart from volunteering and community service. Click on this link to see important aspects of each.  
[http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/ssl/three\\_phases.shtm](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/ssl/three_phases.shtm)
- Middle school students who have documented 75 hours by May 1, 2009 will receive the Superintendent's SSL Award. Students who have completed 150 SSL hours or 225 hours by May 1 of a middle school year will also receive the Superintendent's SSL Award.
- One SSL hour for every hour of service outside of the instructional day. (Max 8 in 24 hours)

