

**Around the Courtyard**

Williams Middle School  
410 Williams St., Longmeadow, MA 01106  
February, 2015



*WILLIAMS MIDDLE  
SCHOOL  
NEWSLETTER*

*February, 2015*

## Upcoming School Events

Feb. 16-20 Winter Break  
February 23 8<sup>th</sup> Grade to LHS for Scheduling Presentation  
9:00—11:00 a.m.  
February 25 LHS Counselors/Gr 8 Students—8:30 a.m.  
**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Info. Night—LHS—6:30 p.m.**  
February 26 School Improvement Council—4:00 p.m.  
March 5 Early Release—1:30 p.m. Dismissal  
March 6 Professional Development Day—No School  
March 10 Band Day—10:00 a.m.-2:45 p.m.  
March 11 LHS District Band—Gr. 6-8, 7:00 p.m.  
March 24 MCAS Long Comp.—Gr.7  
March 26 School Improvement Council 4:00 p.m.  
March 27 MCAS ELA Session 1  
March 31 MCAS ELA Session 2  
April 2 MCAS Long Comp—Gr. 7 Makeup  
April 3 Good Friday—No School  
April 6 Early Release—1:30 p.m. Dismissal  
April 10 Drama Club Presentation—7:00 p.m.  
April 17 Drama Club **School** Presentation—1:30p.m.  
April 20-24 Spring Vacation  
April 30 School Improvement Council 4:00 p.m.

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## **FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK**

### **Happy February!**

Heading into our annual February vacation, this last month or so has been very interesting. Managing to build some continuity into a schedule interrupted each week by a snow day has been a challenge to say the least. I am impressed with the work our teachers and our students have done working together to make the very best of our disjointed schedule.

Since I am on the topic, I would like to take a minute to talk more about the teaching and learning I have the privilege to observe at Williams. It may be the relatively new teacher evaluation process, or the need I have to know what is going on throughout the building, or maybe just that I have come to learn that this is what matters most in my job - whatever the reason, I have been in classrooms observing teachers and students more this year than I can ever remember during any single year as an administrator. What I get to observe is truly inspiring. Regardless of the classroom I walk into, I see teachers delivering rigorous curriculum while supporting and encouraging their students. I see student-teacher interaction that is engaging and respectful. I see students working with one another talking about what they are learning while challenging and supporting one another. I can get a real sense of the culture of each classroom and see and feel how each room supports learning in different ways. There is rarely a day that goes by that I am not reminded how fortunate I am to be working with such an outstanding professional staff and faculty and how fortunate we all are to have this group of students show up at our doors every day.

When we return from our February break, we hit a stretch of school that is really demanding. The eight weeks of classes between the February and April break will require a high level of focus, attention to detail and a consistent work ethic. Additionally, we will complete our ELA MCAS testing during this stretch. While challenging, this is a great opportunity for our students to springboard towards Spring in a motivated and positive manner.

Wishing you all a restful February break!

Chris Collins

## **Grade 6 News**

### **Social Studies**

In Grade Six, students have been busy learning about Ancient Egyptian Civilizations. The sixth graders are digging deep into the five features that make up this great civilization. In addition, the students are excited about “Hot Topics” such as writing in hieroglyphs, the mummification process, and pyramids. Some students brought in pictures and items to share from their experiences visiting Egypt!

### **English**

In Extension, we finished up our non-fiction unit. Skills included main idea, author’s purpose, author’s influence and mood. Students applied these skills while reading their non-fiction choice book. The MCAS prompts also tied into this unit.

### **Science**

We are wrapping up the unit on environmental science. As a closure activity, students will be working cooperatively in groups to solve the mystery as to why the population of sea otters is declining.

### **Math**

In math, the 6th graders are completing chapter 5 on Ratios and Rates. Be sure to ask your child to figure out the tip the next time you go out for dinner, or take them shopping and have him/her calculate the sale price/tax. Chapter 6 is all about integers and plotting points on a coordinate plane. As always, if your child is struggling in math, or just needs a little extra practice, after school support is available.

## **Grade 7 News**

### **Social Studies**

The 7th grade geography classes wrapped up our unit on Sub-Saharan Africa before Winter Break and are now exploring Asia. In the Asia unit, students focus on the cultural and physical geography of the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia. India, China, and North Korea are all looked at more in depth during this unit. Current events are also examined in relation to these areas.

### **Science**

We are beginning our work with microscopes! Students will set us up to begin discussions on cells and heredity. Students will use the microscopes to create wet mount slides and to observe prepared slides of many biological features. Students will complete a cell project in the coming weeks.

### **ELA**

We continue to enjoy our new classroom libraries. We are really developing a rich, independent reading culture here at Williams. We continue to encourage 30+ minutes of reading per night at home.

The seventh grade students continue to work on their reading and writing skills in preparation for next month's MCAS tests. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, seventh grade students across the state will be administered the long composition test. The two sections of the ELA test will be administered after that. It is important to remember that students need a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast to prepare for these challenging assessments.

### **Math**

The 7.1 classes will be finishing our chapter on linear expressions and will be moving onto more pre-algebra in our next chapter. The students will be exploring equations and solving both 1-step and 2-step equations as well as writing equations for unique

situations. We'll then move onto inequalities just before our winter break and continue with this concept later in February and March.

The 7.2 classes completed the chapters dealing with algebra, solving equations and inequalities. Students should continue to study the rules for integers as we will be referring to them continuously throughout the year. Currently we are investigating rates, proportions and the various ways these concepts can be used. Our next focus of study will be on percents; then we will move into probability.

## **Grade 8 News**

### **Social Studies**

In 8th grade, we are currently examining American history from 1800-1850 - a time of great change. Students learn about the Early Republic (from Washington's presidency to Jacksonian democracy), the Industrial Revolution, and Westward Expansion. Students learn all about politics, new inventions, factory life, child labor, sectionalism, and how each piece of land became part of the U.S. We also look at Manifest Destiny and how westward expansion impacted the Native Americans.

### **Science**

We have begun our Earth Science concepts and are in the process of discussing earthquakes. This will tie into our previous Plate Tectonics unit and set up for our work with volcanoes. Students are learning the types of stress associated with plate motion, and the types of faulting that result from those stresses. Be sure to check Mrs. Wagner's door for any recently recorded earthquakes posted there.

### **ELA**

In 8th grade English class students have all finished reading an excerpt from the engaging book, Flowers for Algernon. They worked

hard on a persuasive essay about the main character of the story, Charlie Gordon. Taking a stand and writing to convince readers to agree with an opinion using textual evidence, students are developing their thinking and writing skills.

Independent reading continues to be an important part of our classes and many students have enjoyed books from a wide variety of genres. Students read, discuss, and write about their book choices. Writing in their reading journals and engaging in an assortment of other writing assignments, students are applying their knowledge of literary terms and demonstrating their comprehension of texts. Supplementing these choice selections, students are also reading a variety of whole class selections such as nonfiction articles, short stories, poetry, and drama.

## **Algebra**

We are now well over halfway through the core curriculum, having moved on from applications of linear equations to exponential equations and functions. While details still matter, we're increasingly looking at groups of equations and graphs to understand how they work - seeing the forest, vs. focusing on the trees. Modeling situations graphically, numerically, algebraically and verbally is increasingly important, particularly describing the components of more complex mathematical models verbally so that formulas mean something more than just a way to get an answer. Quadratic, rational, root, and inverse functions lie ahead, with applications in physics and finance.

## **Pre-Algebra**

Mr. Scanlan-Emigh's pre-algebra has finished formal study of how linear equations and their graphs work, although these concepts and skills will continue to serve as core tools in studying other topics. We are now studying how angles fit together in various geometric shapes and how shapes can be transformed, an essential precursor to more advanced mathematical modeling and a great opportunity to synthesize much of what we've learned so far. Review of previous skills in fractions, exponents, scientific notation, and other topics

continues. An important final unit will be applying linear equations to modeling and predicting with data.

Mrs. Lawson's pre-algebra classes completed our investigation of functions and we are now applying those ideas to linear equations including slope and solving systems of equations. Our next focus of study will include geometry beginning with triangles and the Pythagorean Theorem.

## Foreign Language

### **Spanish/French**

Students wrote and created Valentines in French and Spanish to their teachers and the staff as a way of thanking them for all their work.

### **Related Arts News.**

#### **Health**

Grade 6 students have been learning about the respiratory system the past few weeks in advance of a unit on tobacco. Prior to the respiratory system, the 6th graders completed a unit on goal setting and decision making.

Grade 7 students just completed a unit on the digestive system and have begun a unit on nutrition. They will track what they eat for a day and input that information into the food tracker on the [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) website to see how nutritiously they ate that day.

Grade 8 students completed a unit on the circulatory system and have just begun a unit on the nervous system. The next unit will be on drugs and alcohol.

## Technology

All students continue to work on expanding their coding knowledge through code.org. Sixth grade is finishing up a web quest on computer parts. They are then turning their information into a sales brochure using Google slides. Seventh grade has been planning their dream vacation. Students were given a budget of \$3,500, could not travel more than 400 miles from their house, and had many rules to follow in order to complete this assignment including setting up spreadsheets to track their budgeted amount. Eighth grade just finished investing in the stock market. They were given \$100,000 to invest in the NYSE. Their biggest challenge was setting up their spreadsheet with formulas to track their investments. Stay tuned for the winners! The eighth grade also had to use the Internet and Google Sheets to find calories, fat, carbohydrates, and protein in a typical fast food meal. Spreadsheet formulas can be challenging but all students loved learning how to make the spreadsheets do the work for them. As we near the end of our semester we will be perfecting our portfolios to reflect our Williams Middle School work.

My tech tidbit for this newsletter has to do with digital pickpocketing. Click on the link to view the news report.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1NgCDYNhgA>

## MUSIC NOTES

The music department will continue to be active through the months of February and March!

**MMEA-WD Junior District Festival:** Congratulations to those students who were accepted to participate in the Junior District Festival: Ruby Shea, Harry Li, Vivienne Yang, Jasmine Jia, Erica Li, Megan Erwin, Tommy He, Elina Kang, Kelsey Low, Quinn McGrath, Wynton Jarvinen, Chris Hulbert, Kris Stempel, Lily Henshaw and Madigan Tershner-Kolodziejki.

These students will rehearse at Belchertown High School on Saturday, March 7 (snow date is Sunday, March 8) from 9 am to 3 pm. The second rehearsal will take place at the University of

Massachusetts Fine Arts Center starting at 9 am on Saturday, March 14 (snow date is Sunday, March 15). The concert will take place on the same day at 3:00 pm in the Fine Arts Center Concert Hall. All students must be present for the entire length of both rehearsals and the concert.

**Band Day 2015:** Band Day 2015 will be held on Tuesday, March 10 at Longmeadow High School. Band Day includes all seventh and eighth grade band students from both middle schools working together through master classes and ensemble work. Year after year, students really enjoy the experience and learn a great deal.

**Longmeadow Band Festival:** The biennial Longmeadow Band Festival will take place in the Longmeadow High School gym on Wednesday, March 11 starting at 7:00 pm. All Longmeadow Public School bands, grades 5-12, will perform a short program then perform one song together as a grand finale. Our last Band Festival two years ago was incredible and we look forward to another great event! More information on this event, including times for after school combined rehearsals at the high school and when students need be dropped off on the evening of the concert for their warm-up will be distributed soon.

In summary, here are some of the remaining concert dates for the year:

- Tuesday, March 10 – 7/8 Band Day
- Wednesday, March 11 – LPS grades 5-12 Band Festival, Longmeadow High School gymnasium, 7:00 pm
- Sixth Grade Spring Concert - TBA
- Tuesday, June 2 – Seventh and Eighth Grade Spring Concert, 7:00 pm
- Wednesday, June 10 – 7/8 Orchestra/Jazz Band Tour

## **Choral News**

We would like to thank you for your support at our recent concerts. Both shows, the Grade 7/8 performance at LHS, and the Grade 6 concert at Williams, featured some great performances. Thanks so much also for your generous donations! We raised over \$700!

A bit of good news...For the third time, Williams will be sending our 8th Grade vocal group, Ensemble 7:45, to Fenway Park to sing the anthem before the game! The game is on June 1st, thus our Grade 6 concert that was scheduled for that night will be rescheduled. You will be informed of that date very soon.

If you are interested in purchasing discounted tickets to the game, or would like to make a business donation for our expenses, please contact me at [tmsmith@longmeadow.k12.ma.us](mailto:tmsmith@longmeadow.k12.ma.us)

## **Visual Art**

Several students in all grades are assisting with a woolly mammoth sculpture, to be used in an upcoming school play. Eighth grade students are also working on ceramic rain sticks. Seventh grade students are working on acrylic painting assignments, focusing on tint and shade. The sixth grade students are using clay to make mirror frames.

## **Physical Education**

*In the month of March during the college basketball's March Madness, we'll be participating in raising money for the American Heart Association through a Hoops for Heart campaign. This will be the first time for us here at Williams. Mr. Quist (Glenbrook PE Teacher) and I will be ironing out the final details with the American Heart Association and more information will soon follow after break about how the community can support and contribute to this great cause while educating our students about how to help improve their heart health.*

**INTRAMURALS:** We wrapped up our intramural basketball season just after Winter break where we saw the commissioners, Joaquin Camacho and Colin Lockhart, run an exciting basketball season. The winners were UCONN, captained by Michael Carterud. Congratulations.

We have begun our intramural team handball season where we have over 84 students participating this year. The league is run by commissioners Patrick Philbin and Zach Wright which isn't an easy job considering how many players are in the league this year. There have been numerous exciting games already early in the season where the deciding goal came

in the last possession. We look forward to more of the same as the season moves on.

## Notes from the Nurse

Since February is American Heart Association Month, it's a good time for families to look at their heart health. Inactivity, obesity, high blood pressure, and a history of smoking are some of the major risks for heart disease. Evaluate your family's lifestyle and try to make changes where needed. Get out and exercise with your kids. You might have fun. Watch your cholesterol intake and quit smoking if you can. Our children follow our lead and what better way to lead than with a healthy lifestyle! The American Heart Association website at [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org) has hints and ideas about ways to improve heart health. Please see Life's Simple 7 information

# Life's Simple 7™



Here's to your heart health!

Liz Gartman, RN  
School Nurse

## **Parent Advisory Council (PAC)**

We'd like to offer a special thank you to all who baked for our concerts. Your delicious treats helped us raise almost \$700 for our general fund. Coming up in March, please be on the look-out for information regarding our Boston Coffee Cake fundraiser. Bertucci's at the Longmeadow Shops will host a Dining for Dollars event to benefit WMS on Wednesday, March 18th (a flyer is forthcoming). To date (2014-2015), your participation in our fundraising efforts has enabled PAC to contribute almost \$6,000 towards guest speakers, classroom libraries, and field trips. Families of eighth grade students: please be on the look-out for information regarding end-of-year activities and graduation. We will be seeking volunteers to ensure these events are a success. As always, thank you for your support.

## **Variety Show**

Due to high participation by our cast and stage crew in Ski Club, the night performance has been rescheduled for Tuesday, February 24th (moved from Wednesday, February 25th).

The show will feature some pretty unbelievable talent, including singers, bands, dancers, and comedians. The stage crew and performers have worked very hard to put together a professional level show so please join us for our night performance on February 24th!

## **Student Council**

The student council recently raised \$700.00 for "Pennies for Patients." Additionally, the student council will start our "Hope Tote" collection soon. The personal care items collected during this time will go to the Springfield Rescue Mission.

## **Literacy Lab News**

We held our first semi-annual book swap recently with several enthusiastic participants. Swappers brought in at least one book and exchanged it for multiple books of their choice. This was good opportunity to expand their reading selections and notice what their peers were reading as well. I was

delighted to hear mini “book talks” taking place while students were browsing. The second book swap will be held before summer break so please keep an eye on your bookshelves and encourage your children to participate.

Mrs. McSheffrey

### **Quebec Trip**

The Quebec trip is now only 3 months away! From May 21st-May 23rd, 13 students from Williams and 6 students from Glenbrook will be traveling to Québec City to experience first hand the language and culture of Québec. Students will visit many sites of French history and government, the Montmorency Falls, Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré basilica, among many other wonderful sites. Parents of students going on the Québec trip, please remember that the remaining balance for the trip is due by March 4th.

### **Yearbook**

Order forms will be sent home after the break. The cost is \$17 and will be due by April 1st to Anna Gelinias. Starting March 1st, you will be able to order and pay online as well. Refer to the Williams website for details.

### **Math Counts**

The Math Counts Team competed with 10 other schools at the Connecticut Valley Chapter. The team received 1st place and will be competing at the State competition in Boston next month! Math Counts meets every Friday after school. Come join the fun!

### **Math Counts Team Members:**

Back: Julia Cummings, Harry Li, Jason Carrier, Tommy He

Front: Claire Yun, Jonathan Yun, Benjamin Moss, Angela Jiang

## **Drama Club**

Williams Middle School Drama Club



February 2015

Williams Drama Club is working hard every Thursday on our production of "Night at the Wax Museum" by Craig Sodaro. We are now meeting from 3pm to 4:30pm. Our evening performance this year will be on April 10th at 7:00pm. It is always fun to see, so save the date.

We do need some help collecting items for the play, 14-15 white or off white flat sheets. If you have any and are willing to donate them to the Drama Club please drop them off in the office with attention to Mrs. Lawson, THANK YOU in advance for any help!

## **Field Day**

It is hard to think about June with all of this snow, but Field Day will be Friday, June 12th. We have already chosen the 8th grade captains and are forming the teams. T-shirt order forms will be sent home after break to 8th grade students. 6th & 7th grade order forms will be sent home mid-March. T-shirts cost \$7. Any questions regarding field day can be directed to Kathy Russotto or Anna Gelinis.

## **Lego Class**

Mr. Scanlan-Emigh's after-school Lego robotics enrichment course is pursuing a variety of interests, from sweepers to self-driving cars to capture the flag. Slots are still available - young engineers are invited to drop by on Thursdays until the second Thursday after break!