

**Around the Courtyard**

Williams Middle School  
410 Williams St., Longmeadow, MA 01106  
October, 2013



*WILLIAMS MIDDLE  
SCHOOL  
NEWSLETTER*

*OCTOBER, 2013*

## Upcoming School Events

October 7	Early Release Day—1:30 p.m. Dismissal
October 14	Columbus Day—No School
October 21	Picture Retake Day/Gr. 8 Photo
October 24	Parent Conferences—Gr. 6-8 afternoon & Evening 1/2 Day – 11:30 a.m. dismissal
October 25	<b>Grade 6 Parent Conferences—11:30 a.m. Dismissal (Grade 6 only)</b>
October 31	Halloween
November 4	Early Release Day—1:30 p.m. Dismissal
November 11	Veterans' Day—No School
November 27	1/2 Day—Thanksgiving Recess 11:30 a.m. Dismissal
Nov . 28-29	Thanksgiving Recess—No School
December 6	No School for Students – Professional Development Day

## In this issue:

From the Principal's Desk
Important Announcements
Grade Six News
Grade Seven News
Grade Eight News
PAC News
Student Council
Math Counts
M.S. Cross Country
Drama Club
Meals on Wheels
Inclement Weather Info

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

Happy Fall! Although the recent weather has felt more like summer, fall has officially arrived. It is hard to believe we have completed our first month of the school year. All three grades are beginning to settle in and our teachers are really getting to know their new students. Looking back at September, a lot has happened and I would like to share some of the goings-on with you.

It has been an especially busy start to the school year for our teachers. In addition to rolling out their curriculum to about 85 new students, each teacher has also been responsible for setting professional goals for themselves as part of the new teacher evaluation system now in place. Either Mrs. Fontaine or I have sat with every teacher this month to set professional practice goals and student learning goals. While we have done goal setting in the past, this work has been more specific and focused than ever before. Teachers have access to past testing data for all of their current students and many have done some pre-assessments to get a solid handle of where each of their students are as learners. Teachers have been reviewing all of this data to help frame what they would like to focus on this year in terms of student growth.

Additionally, teachers have each taken a look at themselves professionally and identified areas where they would like to grow. The conversations we have had around these goals have been rich, informative and exciting. Each of our teachers are taking this evaluation process very seriously and Mrs. Fontaine and I have both been so impressed with how earnestly and sincerely each of these professionals want to continue to learn and grow – very inspiring.

In the building, we have equally high expectations of your children. Academically, things will start to ramp up as we settle in to October and the expectations of staying organized, on top of homework, and focused on school, will continue. Of course, these expectations differ depending on the grade your child is in. The building climate and each student's impact on the climate is also something we pay attention to. Our expectations of positive interactions, good decision making and respect are also high priorities for us at Williams. We do set the bar very high with how we expect students to interact with each other and with the adults in our school community. We believe every student is capable of acting respectfully and treating their peers with the caring and respect they expect in return. While not a specific part of our curriculum, all of us, as adults, teach these important values each day. We model these positive behaviors, address situations when someone slips and use each inappropriate interaction as a potential learning experience. This, too, is an important part of what it is to teach young adolescents.

We are fortunate at Williams that so many of our students come to us each day with these qualities and behaviors already in place. I have not worked in any school outside of Longmeadow where so many students say “good morning”, “please”, “thank you”, and “have a nice day” during various parts of the school day. This tells me that these qualities are important outside of school as well. Thank you for the important work of parenting that you do and for being part of the team helping these early adolescents navigate this tricky stage in their lives.

Chris Collins, Principal

## **Important Announcements:**

**Student Dismissal Protocol** – If your child needs to be dismissed during the school day, please send a note in the morning of the dismissal. Having a note will allow us to write your child a pass with the dismissal time on it. When that time comes, they simply need to exit the classroom they are in with no disruption. We have had a large number of students dismissed over the phone to start this year. Calling us when your child needs to be dismissed requires us to call into classrooms disrupting full classes in the process. Please plan ahead and send your child in with a dismissal note – thank you.

**Texting** – As most of you know, students are not allowed to use their cell phones in school during the school day. Recently, we have had some students texting parents and parents texting students during the school day. To be clear, the use of a cell phone, including texting, is not allowed during the school day. If any of our students need to contact home or even a parent on a cell phone, they will be given access to a school phone during the school day. We will warn students on their first texting incident but further texting will result in additional consequences. Please support us in this and do not text or accept texting from your child during school hours – thank you!

## **GRADE 6 NEWS**

### Math

In sixth grade we have gotten off to a great start in math. We are just wrapping up chapter one which focuses on numerical expressions and factors. Next we will be moving on to fractions and decimals. Although students are using IXL on a weekly basis in math classes, we encourage at home use to bolster basic math facts and math content.

### Social Studies

The sixth grade social studies curriculum is well underway. We will be testing on chapter one at the beginning of October, which focuses on Early Humans. Chapter two will focus on the Agricultural Revolution and the five features of a civilization. Teachers will continue to emphasize two-column notes as a way of identifying main idea and supporting details.

### Science

Students began the year working cooperatively in groups on curriculum that introduced our first unit, environmental science. After reading the first section, students used Power Point or Keynote to illustrate the levels of organization in an ecosystem. We were impressed by their technological skills. Following this activity, they estimated the number of beans in a jar to kick off section two, which is studying populations. Next we will utilize the Discovery Ed Science Techbook to enhance our curriculum.

## English

To kick off the school year, students worked on projects, relating to Hoot and the elements of fiction. Currently, students are working on their first common writing assessment, which is a person narrative. Please remember to check homeworkknow.com for long-term assignments and test dates.

## GRADE 7 NEWS

### Science 7

We have started discussing water, and its properties. Students have completed a formal lab report relating the scientific method to the growth of radish seeds. Although some of our students were unsuccessful with growth, they learned proper lab technique for future lab success. Students will continue to learn proper use of science tools in upcoming labs.

### Social Studies

In 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies, students have spent the first weeks of school looking at how we study geography. They have learned map skills, information about climate, and have now started looking at culture and how geography shapes people and countries around the world.

### Math

Seventh graders in 7.1 math are finishing up work on integers and getting ready for operations with rational numbers. The work with rational numbers will build on prior knowledge and incorporate positive and negative rationals. Following our unit on rational numbers and exponents, we will look at proportionality and linear relationships. Students are encouraged to continue to look closely at their weekly assignments that will provide another level of challenge and focus on algebraic thinking. Math mornings are on Tuesday and Thursday for math support and challenges. Students looking for an added challenge should consider joining our Math Counts Team.

In 7.2 math, we are now exploring rational numbers. As with integers, students learn how to manipulate positive and negative fractions and mixed numbers using addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division to solve problems in everyday contexts. We encourage students to practice 8<sup>th</sup> grade skills on IXL.

## English

In seventh grade English classes, we began the year talking about identity and began a research study of heraldry. We are creating shields, writing summaries about our research and writing to describe our design choices on our own shields. We also reflected on our summer reading and began to review basic literary terms. We are just about to begin our first novel together, Ask Me

No Questions by Marina Budhos. This novel will also look at issues of identity, as well as make connections to some of our learning in social studies about immigration.

## Notas de español

Students in 7th grade Spanish are just finishing their first unit which focused on basic conversation skills, the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, and the countries where Spanish is spoken. In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, students will choose a famous person of Hispanic background and research their accomplishments and contributions.

## GRADE 8 NEWS

### Science 8

We have started several activities using science tools to calculate density. Students have begun using the triple beam balance, graduated cylinder and rulers to gather data required to calculate density. Students will have a formal lab write up on density in the coming weeks. We will then move on to phases of matter.

### Social Studies

In 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies, students spent the first month of school examining the causes of the American Revolution and overall life for the colonists during this time period. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade field trip to the Freedom Trail in Boston allowed the students to see firsthand much of the history they had learned about in class. We are now exploring the Revolutionary War itself, looking at specific battles, historical figures, and founding documents, like the Declaration of Independence.

### Math

#### **Pre-algebra:**

This year in pre-algebra we will begin to learn and apply algebraic skills that are necessary for success in all future math classes. Success in geometry, pre-calculus, calculus, statistics, chemistry, physics, and all college math and science courses, depends largely on a solid foundation in the math skills we will be studying this year. We will work together to develop the strongest possible foundation in these skills, so that next year students will be well prepared to excel in their high school math course.

### English

In English classes, eighth graders have begun the year thinking about identity. Who are we? Who are the characters in the literature we read? Through a variety of literature, including summer reading, we are beginning to review the basic literary terms. We will

begin reading Chains, by Laurie Halse Anderson, which will dovetail nicely with their American history studies in social studies classes.

## Notas de español

Students in 8th grade Spanish are starting their next unit which focuses on Puerto Rico. We will be talking about the geography and history of the island, and discussing what it means to be a Commonwealth.

## Other 8th grade news

Students and teachers enjoyed a beautiful fall day in Boston on September 27th. We started our "Old Towne" trolley tour at the site of the original meetinghouse in Faneuil Hall where costumed guides told us the story of the beginning of the American Revolution. We toured Boston by trolley, stopping at sites along the Freedom Trail like the Boston Common, the Capitol building, and the Granary Burial Ground, where we learned some of the more gruesome details of the Boston Massacre and the revolution. We then circled Bunker Hill and ended our trolley tour in Quincy Market, where everyone enjoyed lunch. In the afternoon, we took a walking tour of various historical sites in the North End including Paul Revere's House, Old North Church, and Mike's Pastry Shop.

## Additional Math News

We are pleased to tell you that we will be using a website called IXL in our classroom this year. IXL is a comprehensive math review site with an unlimited number of math practice questions in hundreds of skills all of which are aligned to state standards. One of the best things about IXL is that your child can access it from home, so you have a chance to see your child's progress! To get your child started on your home computer, please follow these easy steps:

- Go to [www.IXL.com](http://www.IXL.com)
- Enter your child's username and password in the top right-hand corner and click *Sign in*.

Username \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

- Navigate to your child's grade level on the *Practice* tab.
- Find a skill to practice by doing one of the following:

Select a specific skill to practice from the list of skills. You can place your mouse over any skill to see a sample question and click on the link to begin.

Click on the *Awards* tab. Each grade level presents challenges for your child to conquer and virtual prizes to be uncovered. Place your mouse over any challenge to begin.

In addition to making math practice exciting, IXL is designed to help your child learn at his or her own pace. The website is adaptive and will adjust to your child's demonstrated ability level. The site also saves all of your child's results, so you can monitor your child's progress anytime by clicking on the *Reports* tab.

This year our textbook is called *Math Connects*. It is a core mathematics program that is aligned to the *Common Core State Standards*. Each lesson covers a variety of topics and each topic is developed gradually over many days of instruction to help every child be successful and master the content of the lessons.

In class your child received a username and password to access their math book online at home:

Please follow these easy steps:

1. Go to <http://connected.mcgraw-hill.com/connected/login.do>
2. Enter your child's username and password and click *Login*.

Username \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

For technical assistance contact the McGraw-Hill Digital Technical Support Group at 1-800-437-3715 or at [epgtech@mcgraw-hill.com](mailto:epgtech@mcgraw-hill.com).

We hope you'll encourage your son or daughter to use IXL and access their math book online. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact your child's teacher. Here's to a year of working together to make math fun for your child!

## **RELATED ARTS NEWS**

### **Technology:**

We hit the ground running. To date, we have started an online portfolio of our Williams MS work (website). Google and Edmodo have been our main focus. We are learning how to create forms and graph the data collected, how to insert our forms into our websites and manipulate the data in spreadsheets. Our websites will be used to showcase our work from all classes so students are busy practicing how to manipulate their sites to reflect their style. Online communication is key for our digital world so we are practicing our Netiquette on Edmodo. Edmodo is a social learning platform for teachers, students, and parents. Finally, we have created Scratch accounts. "Scratch helps young people learn to think creatively, reason

systematically, and work collaboratively — essential skills for life in the 21st century.”  
<http://scratch.mit.edu/parents/>

### **Health:**

In sixth grade our focus has been on learning about the health triangle and self concept, self image and self esteem. Our next unit will be on decision making and goal setting.

In seventh grade students are learning about mental health and stress. Our next units will focus on the digestive system and nutrition.

Eighth grade students have started out the trimester learning about first aid and that will lead into CPR and using an AED. The second unit in 8th grade focuses on relationships with a unit called “Flirting or Hurting”.

### **Music**

In 6th grade we are reviewing the notes on the treble clef. All students are identifying notes on the staff, playing notes on the keyboards and eventually taking a post test on the notes.

In 7th grade we are doing the same thing as 6th, except they will add notes on the bass clef.

In 8th grade we are doing a guitar unit. We are reviewing notes on the first 3 strings, then we will begin learning chords. All students will be able to strum and play chords to cool pop songs!

In all chorus classes we are doing individual range testing. This is a great way for me to see how many talented singers we have in the school!

### **Band:**

6th graders are beginning to play from the band method book, *Sound Innovations Book 2*. We have been practicing reading rhythms as a class and will begin reviewing note names. A pretest for note naming has been given at the beginning of September.

7th and 8th graders have been reviewing rhythms and will begin working on fundamental skills from method books, *Foundations for Superior Performance* and *Bach & Before*. We have been reading through a lot of music to work on our sight reading skills.

Jazz Band auditions began on September 30. There has been a change to our rehearsal days, rehearsals will be Wednesdays from 3:00 pm- 4:00 pm. Students who are selected to be in Ensemble will begin rehearsals on Wednesday, October 16.

### **Physical Education:**

The 6th grade started the year out filling out our “Get to Know You” survey on our Google Chromebooks in order to help me learn names while learning some fun facts about our new students. We then began our 4 v 4 soccer unit that involves a lot of mastery of the ball types of movements coinciding with small sided matches.

**ART:**



Artwork by Campbell S. A copied Georgia O'Keeffe painting. Acrylic on ceiling tile: **Look for it soon** on the school ceiling!



Original Artwork by sixth grade student Stephanie W. 2013. Silver print on black paper. **Look for this artwork** and others like it in the lobby....coming soon.



GOT CANS? This student observed a Coke can and then pretended to drink from it. It's so well drawn, you have to look twice. Please donate cans that you were going to recycle anyway.....they make excellent still lifes. Thank you in advance for your donations!

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

The WMS student directory will be available by the end of the month. Please don't miss out! The directory only goes to those families who have paid their PAC dues. Also, if you haven't sent in your directory contact information, please do so immediately. The PAC is also selling Taste Books. Please order yours today. All the forms are available on the WMS website under the PAC link.

## **STUDENT COUNCIL NEWS**

### **Hats on Day**

During the month of September, we raised \$293 for our Hats on Day. This money was donated to The Foundation for Children with Cancer. Thanks to everyone who showed their support that day.

### **Advisory Representatives**

Each advisory at Williams elected a Student Council representative that will attend monthly meetings and share community service and spirit day ideas with the group. These representatives are expected to share the information discussed with their advisory group. Meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of each month in room 6 at 8:00 am.

## **Math Counts**

Math Counts strives to engage all middle school students of all ability and interest levels in fun, challenging math problems in order to expand their academic and professional opportunities. We will meet in room 13 every Friday from 2:50-3:30. Hope to see your child there!

## **Middle School Cross-Country**

The Middle School Cross Country team is designed to give novice and advanced runners the opportunity to experience, train, and compete. Whether you are just beginning or a speed runner, the middle school cross-country team gives you an opportunity to excel. The team meets every Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30-5. We have been running between 3-4 miles during every practice. We run through Forest Park, at the high school track, and designated routes through Longmeadow. We are competing at the Wickham Park XC Invitational on October 12.

# WILLIAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL DRAMA CLUB



Sept. 19, 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This is the TENTH year of Drama Club and we are going strong! Each year I have about 35-40 students involved so your cooperation is VERY important;-) Your child is extremely important to our production no matter what role they play or job they carry out. We want to build a team of actors and support staff that are dedicated to putting on the finest performance for you and their peers.

The commitment to achieve this will be extensive. Rehearsals will be every Thursday (excluding non school days such as vacations or religious holidays) from 3pm to 4pm from now until December, then after vacation from 3 to 4:30. In addition, several weeks before our performance, rehearsals will be more often and from 3 to about 5:30/6pm. Our evening performance for family and friends is Friday April 11<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Our performance for the student body will be Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. This is the Thursday before April vacation, so students must commit to attending school that day.

I am writing this before our first meeting, SO I AM NOT SURE OF THE PLAY WE WILL BE DOING. The cast will have some input into our production so, I am sure your child will let you know once we make a decision. Any materials you can contribute for costumes, sets, and/or props would be greatly appreciated; I will send home a list as soon as we settle on a play. I am also looking for volunteers to help with program design/copying, and refreshments for our late rehearsals and a bake sale for the performance night. **MOST important of all we want to have fun:-)**

Please take a moment and sign the permission slip on the bottom of this paper and return to Mrs. Lawson at the next drama club meeting.

Thank you,  
Mrs. Lawson

## MEALS ON WHEELS

The Longmeadow Adult Center is in need of Meals on Wheels drivers to deliver the noon meal. If you like to meet new people, want to help others and can volunteer for two hours a month, you are just what we are looking for. If you ever thought you might be interested in performing this vital community service, now is the time to step forward. Training is provided for a specific route in Longmeadow and you can choose the days that are convenient for you. It is perfect for parents of school age children as the deliveries are during school hours. The route consists of approximately 28 homes in Longmeadow and requires about 2 - 2 ½ hours to complete, beginning at 10:30 a.m. We ask for a commitment of one day per month and offer a very flexible schedule. Substitute drivers are available for backup in emergencies or if you are concerned about driving in bad weather. This is a very rewarding volunteer experience and you

will immediately realize how much your time and effort helps the homebound members of our community. For more information please contact Ellen Gold at 565-4150.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ellen Gold  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Longmeadow Adult Center  
231 Maple Road  
Longmeadow, MA 01106  
ph. [413-565-4150](tel:413-565-4150)  
fax [413-565-4152](tel:413-565-4152)

## **Inclement Weather Information:**

DEAR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS:

October, 2013

As we prepare for the coming of winter, I would like to inform you of policies and procedures that will be used in the Longmeadow Public Schools to govern the closing or delay of school on days when the weather makes traveling for students dangerous. By law, the school system is required to open a minimum of 180 days per school year, which, under the Education Reform Law, must include 900 hours for elementary school students and 990 hours for middle and high school students. Because the School Committee recognizes that school may need to be closed occasionally because of severe weather, the school calendar contains 185 days. Five days of school may, therefore, be cancelled without having to extend the established school year. The date of school closing in June is adjusted each year to meet state requirements, if the five inclement weather days are not used.

It is the practice in the Longmeadow Public Schools to take the least drastic action necessary to adjust to weather conditions.

- 1) A one-hour delayed opening to allow for snow removal during relatively light storms.
- 2) A two-hour delayed opening to allow for snow removal and traffic clearance during more severe storms.
- 3) School closing due to storms severe enough that safe paths to school cannot generally be maintained.
- 4) Early Dismissal only in cases of real emergency. **If a storm begins unexpectedly while school is in session, we ordinarily continue school and dismiss the students at the regularly scheduled time.** This decision is based on the fact that most parents would prefer to have their children remain in school rather than have them walking home in the midst of a storm. In case of a real emergency, early dismissal will be announced on the usual radio and television stations, and an announcement will go out using the new *ALERT NOW*® telephone messaging service. PLEASE BE SURE THAT YOUR CHILD KNOWS WHERE TO GO IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING. In case of an emergency school closing, school staff members will stay at school until safe travel is provided for all students.

During each storm that arises, school staff begins checking road conditions by 5:00 a.m. in order to determine the town's readiness to hold school. Staff members also check with Police, Department of Public Works, transportation companies, and area towns to determine our readiness to hold school. If the schedule is to be altered, we will attempt to make announcements on the radio, television, on our website

([sites.longmeadow.k12.ma.us/www](http://sites.longmeadow.k12.ma.us/www) ), and over the *ALERT NOW*® telephone messaging service as early as possible between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m., on days of questionable weather. Our judgment in those circumstances will be based on the best information available about road conditions throughout the area. Should you believe that conditions in your neighborhood require that your child remain out of school for a longer time than is announced for the school department, please feel free to make that decision for your own family. There will be no penalty if you keep your child out of school for reasons of safety.

All the necessary emergency closing information is provided on an attachment to this letter. Please post it for your easy reference in times of inclement weather. Note that announcements regarding school conditions will be made on a number of radio and television stations beginning at 6:00 a.m., on our website and over the *ALERT NOW*® telephone messaging system. Please listen for these announcements. **DO NOT telephone broadcasters, schools, police, or fire departments.** We have been informed that anyone using Emergency 911 for this purpose will automatically be disconnected. **Stay tuned to the radio even after a delayed opening is announced in case worsening conditions require school closing.**

Sincerely,

Marie H. Doyle  
Superintendent of Schools

**INCLEMENT WEATHER INFORMATION**  
**2013-2014**

OPTIONS FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER:

- Schools open one (1) hour late
- Schools open two (2) hours late; no a.m. kindergarten/preschool
- Schools close for the day
- Schools close early

TIME OF ANNOUNCEMENT: Between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.

WEBSITE: [sites.longmeadow.k12.ma.us/www/](http://sites.longmeadow.k12.ma.us/www/)

STATIONS FOR ANNOUNCEMENT (you may also check station websites):

<u>Radio - A.M.</u>	<u>Radio - F.M.</u>	<u>Television</u>
560 - WHYN	93.1 - MIX	12 - Longmeadow Cable
	97.9 - KIX	22 - WWLP
	94.7 - WMAS	40 - WGGB
	100.9 - WRNX	3 - WSHM
	102.1 - WAQY	

**PLEASE BE SURE THAT YOUR CHILD KNOWS WHERE HE OR SHE SHOULD GO IN CASE OF EARLY DISMISSAL**