



outside the box

THE HOBOKEN CHARTER SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

MIDDLE SCHOOL 02-26-09



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Important Dates:

Monday - Wednesday, March 3 - 5 - HSPA Testing for the 11th grade
Thursday, March 12 - 1:00p.m. dismissal. Movie day available.
Thursday, March 19 - End of the marking period for grades K-8-Report cards mailed March 30th
Thursday, April 9 - 1:00p.m. dismissal. NO MOVIE DAY AVAILABLE ~ Spring break begins!!!!
Friday, April 10-Friday, April 17 - School Closed for Spring Break
Monday, April 20-School is back in session! Classes resume at 8:30a.m. sharp!!!



Thursday April 30th PA Wine Tasting & Auction...see important details within the meeting notes!!!!



*Please take a few moments and fill out our questionnaire "Will you be returning to HCS?" on page 10
Thank you, we really appreciate it.*



*PA News- see pgs. 7 & 8 for important info and meeting updates!
Hey! Did you know...???*

***** After School Clubs: Aviation and Magic are over, all other clubs continue. New trimester begins on March 15th. Registration material will be available on February 27th.*****



PENNIES FOR PATIENTS DRIVE
From February 25-March 17, 2009

IN HONOR OF LESLIE SMITH

Please read the attached flyer.



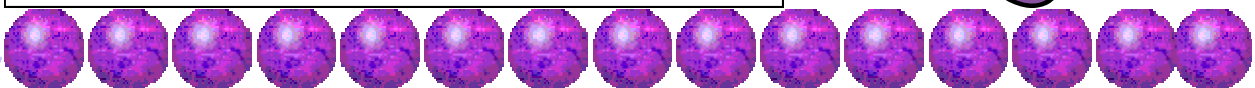
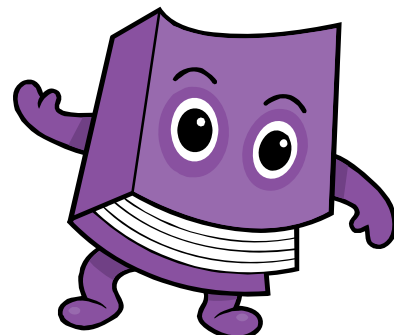
Dear Parents,
The AJ Demarest Lot cannot be utilized to park your vehicle when you are picking up or dropping off your children. This is causing traffic to back up on 4th & Bloomfield Street and most importantly interferes with the safety of our children!



You attention to this matter is greatly appreciated!

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Fifth and Sixth Grade Humanities

Teachers: Mrs. Thiede and Mrs. Tuhari-Katz



Language Arts

Fifth Grade: The fifth graders are in the midst of learning how to answer open-ended questions. We have adopted *Sponge Bob's Krabby Patty* as our formula for how to write an organized open-ended response.

Sixth Grade: The sixth graders have just begun to engage in literature circles. Each circle consists of three to four students reading a different novel about an African-American protagonist navigating the Civil Rights Movement. In their circles, the students discuss the story, make connections and reflections and keep their own dictionary of unknown words that they encounter in their reading.

Social Studies

The fifth and sixth grades are learning about ancient Egyptian civilizations. We have analyzed the importance of the Nile River and using our analysis, the students have used first person to write odes to the Nile from the perspective of an ancient Egyptian. As **Eric Turonis** wrote, "*Ode to the Nile/ the giver of life/ my happiness/ my joy/ My kids and my wife/ we give you our love/ Our wealth and our soul/ and you give us back/ so much more...*"

Middle School Science with Mr. Thom and Mr. Knapp

The middle school science classes continue to learn about exciting topics each and everyday. The science classroom now has a self-sufficient ecosystem. This ecosystem was purchased for us by the PA (Thanks PA!!!). The ecosystem contains 30 gallons of pond water, rocks, plants, large mouth bass, several gold fish and a few catfish. This ecosystem will provide all grades with a hands on learning experience. Some of the things the students may study include, measuring water temperature, pH levels, and mortality or plant growth in the ecosystem. The students will be able to see first hand how an ecosystem works and how living things all co-exist.



The *fifth grade* students are currently learning about food chains, food webs, producers, consumers, abiotic and biotic factors that exist.

The *sixth grade* students are currently learning about genetics and how genes are passed down from generation to generation.

The *seventh grade* students are currently learning about climate and what causes climate changes. They took a walking trip around Hoboken to see how different parts of Hoboken have different weather conditions. They were able to see and feel the difference between the wind near school compared with Pier A.

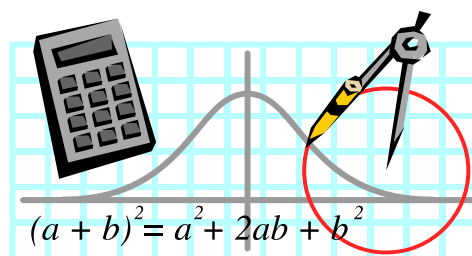
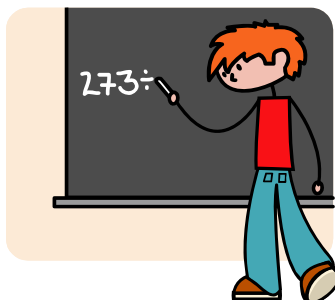
The *eighth grade* students have just started learning about the atmosphere.

Math Grades 5-8 February 2009

Area! Area is under us, over us, besides us. Area is around us. Lately, the area around me has taken on more square inches than I would like to admit, especially with regard to the expanding circumference of my belt. I don't even want to talk about volume and weight, as that will be left for a future more depressing lesson. Note to self: lay off the Oreos!

Most area surfaces can be divided into three basic shapes: a rectangle (including a square), a triangle, and a circle. Yes, there are trapezoids, parallelograms, and a myriad of multisided polygons, ovals, and other kinds of curvy wavy things with their respective formulas, but area of a flat surface can be calculated, more or less, by dividing any such surface into the three basic shapes mentioned. Rectangle: Length times Width; Triangle: Base times Height divided by two; Circle: Pi times the radius squared. Why do we need to know this? Well, as the students discovered in their on-line area project with regards to a floor plan design of a house, unless one desires the rustic vibe of a dirt floor; tile surfaces, hardwood flooring, and carpeting are all calculated on a cost per square foot basis, as in the bigger the house, the bigger the area, the bigger the cost! It was rather humorous to see some of the homes the students selected for their project, as they haven't quite gotten to the concept of: the bigger the house, the bigger the salary required!

A little side bar...indeed: I took a little field trip over to Mrs. K.ouzis' second grade class the other day...something to do with a refrigerator and a Snapple. The little shavers were doing a math lesson on subtraction, so Mrs. K. asked me to stay for a minute. Now, when we were little shavers, this particular lesson would refer to the term "borrowing." Then, some genius decided to call it "re-grouping," and Mrs. K. had yet another term in second grader speak which was way over my head, since I don't speak...um...in second grader, nor, as I just very recently discovered, do I barely understand seventh graders speak, but at least in that case, the topic was not math related. Anyway, when subtracting 14 minus 6, Mrs. K. asked the class: "Can the 6 be subtracted from the 4?" Several of the students said: "No!" But, a couple of kids towards the back of the room called out: "Negative two!" Now, to put this revelation in perspective, in our little world called the Middle School, when someone at the back of the room calls out something, it usually has very little to do with the correct answer as in the second graders' response! Secondly, some of these little shavers would absolutely nail the seventh grade curriculum! In last month's Newsletter, such situations of subtraction are known to bring on fits of tremors and speaking in tongue...seems one only needs to learn to speak second grader! There is hope! Before leaving the class, Mrs. K. asked the class: "Do numbers ever end?" "Nooo!" was their response. "What is that called?" I asked. The whole class in unison says: "INFINITY!" So, if the government needs any help on understanding deficit spending and the Stimulus Package, and I think they just might, perhaps Congress should take a field trip to visit Mrs. K. and the little shavers of her second grade class!



Seventh and Eighth Grade Social Studies
with Ms. Karl and Ms. Grode



As we continue our study of the Middle Ages, 8th graders have explored the Islamic faith, and its significance to the time period. From there, we investigated pilgrimages during medieval times and discussed reasons why individuals chose to go on a pilgrimage.

Ms. Karl, having just returned from vacation in Spain, shared pictures and stories about her experience at the Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela, a main pilgrimage destination during the Middle Ages and still today as the remains of St. James (the patron saint of pilgrims) are located there. Students then looked at the prologue of *The Canterbury Tales*, written by Geoffrey Chaucer about the journey of various individuals on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, and were able to identify Chaucer's significance as writer to the time period.

In seventh grade, students have been exploring the African continent. They created projects that illustrated their understanding of the geography and demographics of the continent and its regions. In addition, they took a quiz on the countries earning extra credit for national capitols. Recently they have begun exploring ancient kingdoms and trade states and daily life in ancient African societies. Students will present their research they conducted and the visual representation they have created on specific kingdoms through oral presentations next week. In addition, they will share their essays comparing life then and now.

Seventh and Eighth Grade Language Arts
with Ms. Grode and Ms. Karl



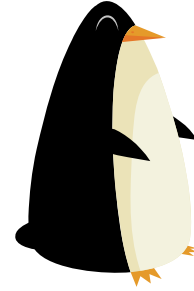
Prior to the break, eighth graders finished reading Maya Angelou's autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and began working on their culminating projects to the text. Currently, we have begun pre-reading activities to Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, looking at a brief biography of the author, and background information on Hemingway's inspiration for the character Santiago. In addition, students have continued preparing for the NJASK in the context of our studies as well as for the SATs with their biweekly vocabulary words.

Seventh graders have been reading the difficult text *Lord of the Flies* and exploring mood, themes and characterization. In addition, they have been studying narrative poems by Julia Alvarez and Nissim Ezequiel and have begun writing their own narrative poems. NJASK preparation has been embedded into the curriculum including speculative writing, open-ended response writing with textual support, reading comprehension and persuasive essay writing. Our grammar focus has been on sentence structures (simple, compound, complex and compound-complex) and students' writing quality has been improving dramatically since they have been editing their own writing accordingly.

HCS Parents' Association Meeting

Notes

February 12, 8:30-9:30 am, Room 310B



Welcome

Paul McConnell welcomed all and thanked Laurie Lui for providing coffee and snack for the meeting.

Issues

Meeting Time Change

Paul reminded all that PA meetings will be held on the third **THURSDAY** of the month due to newly occurring scheduling conflicts. This meeting was being held on the 12th (second Thursday) because of school closing. The schedule is as follows: Feb 12, Mar 19, Apr 23, May 21, and Jun 18.

Status

Wine Tasting and Auction

Cindy Altberger announced that the HCS wine tasting and auction will be held April 30. She is still looking for a few items to be donated such as NY Giants football tickets, Air Miles, gift certificate for restaurants, wine. These items would be packaged with other prizes to create themed gift baskets.

Flea Market Fundraising Idea

Jacqui Zwiren suggested a flea market type fundraising event in the spring where space around the school would be "rented" to vendors to sell their wares. Sales could benefit a variety of causes, but the rental fee would be raise funds for the PA. The date is to be determined and Jacqui volunteered to chair the event. The PA was highly accepting of the idea and looks forward to details as the project progresses.

5K Run

Kristen Sykes explained that she is investigating resources needed to host a 5K run fundraising event to assess if such a project is feasible. Preliminary findings show that the project would require 30-60 volunteers and six months preparation time. She is also searching for potential community partners and event planners that would be able to oversee such an undertaking. If feasible, the PA will seek volunteers to chair/co-chair the event.

Teacher Survey

Don De Pascale reported that results of the Teacher Survey have been distributed. Action items already undertaken in response to survey results include appointing a non-voting teacher representative on the Board of Trustees, meetings between the Board and teachers, and collegial focus groups. Deborah Hecht, author of the survey will be invited to discuss results with the PA.

Financial Update

Paul announced that the annual fund as raised approximately \$11,000 so far.

School Play

Chase Leyner announced that auditions for this year's school play, Mulan, will take place March 3 and rehearsals would begin March 17. The performances will be April 23, 24. Look for a flyer in students' take home folders and newsletters or contact Chase at chase8888@yahoo.com. She is looking to recruit enough boys to participate in warrior scenes.

Board of Trustees Update

Dan Weisz reported the following highlights of the Feb 11 Board of Trustees meeting:

- Following the lottery for placement into HCS, the 9th grade will have a full class of students.
- Arstbridge electives this year will include, among other classes drafting and young entrepreneurs, etc.
- The Board approved the Schoolhouse/Stationhouse Adjustment Warning document which is an articulated procedure for discipline incidents that may have to involve the police.
- The high school will run a school store as part of the business/entrepreneur classes, selling Cougar school mascot themed items. Look for that.
- Members formally approved the creation of a non-voting teacher position on the Board.

The Superintendent of Hoboken Schools verbally confirmed that there are no plans to renovate Connors school this school year or next, delaying the possibility of the need to displace HCS from its current facility until July 2010. The Board began discussions of developing long term facilities planning including: more actively seeking multi-year leases; retaining professional advice and assistance; and strategically involving local government.

Middle School Dance

The PA thanked Jacqui Zwiren, Marissa Picardo, and Annabelle Luis for organizing a very successful event for the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. Enthusiasm generated for the event will likely allow this project to be repeated.

Next Meeting

The next PA meeting will be THURSDAY, March 19, 8:30-9:30am.



PENNIES FOR PATIENTS

Benefiting the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society

— In Honor of LESLIE SMITH —

Because approximately every 5 minutes, someone is diagnosed with some form of blood cancer; and leukemia causes more deaths than any other cancer among children and young adults.

OUR Drive will take place Feb. 25 – March 17, 2009

- There will be a school-wide assembly to kick off the drive and to honor Ms. Smith
- We could win a school-wide pizza or ice cream sundae party or even digital cameras for the school...
- *But we do it because it is important and because we want to show our love and honor Ms. Smith!!!*

We'll compete classroom by classroom for the collection of the most pennies (*change, even dollars*) raised and the winning grade level here at HCS will win a special artful prize... AND our overall school-wide fundraising will be entered in competition against other schools...*

Funds will be counted in math classes. *AND lesson plans and incentives are on the way... To be provided to teachers after winter break... "Because service learning is not a thing to teach, but a way to teach" --*

PLUS, AGGGers will be leading and producing a VERY special project in honor of Ms. Smith in collaboration with younger HCS students!

**Individual students who want to canvas and collect outside of school, can do so... PLEASE see Mr. Duff for canisters and more information.*

For more health information on Leukemia and Lymphoma, please see Nurse Koelsch (who kindly brought this to our attention)

Sponsored by AGGG!!! AKA Art of Greater Gravity & Giving

HOBOKEN CHARTER SCHOOL

February 12, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We are checking with all of our families to see if there is anyone who may not be returning next year, thereby making an additional space for those students entering for the 2009-2010 academic year. If you are definitely sure you will be making alternate arrangements for next year and will not be returning to HCS, please sign and return the form below as soon as possible, but definitely before April 1, 2009.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Maria Spinella
Lottery Facilitator

My child/children, will not be returning to the Hoboken Charter School for the academic year 2009-2010, please feel free to give away my spot for next year to another family.

Child's name

Current grade

I am considering other options for my child/ren (listed below), but am not yet prepared to give away my spot(s).

Child's name

Current grade

Parent's Signature

Date