

September 2009



Farquhar Forum

Letter from the Principal

Scott Murphy

Dear Parents and Students:

Welcome back to 2009-10! We have had an excellent start to the school year, as students arrived with smiles on their faces and were eager to get their schedules, see their friends, and meet their teachers. Our staff was just as excited to welcome students back to school, and classes are off to a great start. As I walk the halls, roam the cafeteria, and visit classes, I have been so impressed with how all of our students have started the year.

Our enrollment is now at 624 students: 184 students in Grade 6, 211 in Grade 7, and 229 in Grade 8. One of our primary goals this year is to ensure that every student is challenged to the highest level and that students are prepared for high school, college, and beyond. Meanwhile, we will also develop the "whole child" through exposure to the arts, physical education and athletics, interactive learning, extra-curricular activities, and other programs. We are constantly searching for ways to accelerate students into Honors and high school courses when appropriate, while we also are committed to providing support and extra resources when necessary. There are several opportunities for tutoring and extra help; please feel free to contact your child's counselor to discuss these options.

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Letter from PTA President

Joe Griffin

Welcome back to another exciting year at Farquhar Middle school. There are many activities and events planned which will make this a great year of learning, growing and having fun for all of Farquhar's children.

We need all parents to get involved in Farquhar in order to provide our children with the best possible environment to meet their education and developmental needs. The first thing parents should do to help their child is to sign up on Edline. This is an invaluable tool which allows you and your child to track their grades and assignments. Secondly, sign up to be part of the list serve so that the school is able to communicate more efficiently with the parents and to keep you abreast of all important information and/or concerns.

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Letter from the Principal continued...

The staff and I are also focused on providing an enriching school climate, a personalized relationship with each student, and a positive middle school experience that allows students to grow and prosper. We are working to ensure that each student has a positive relationship with adults at school, and we are implementing new mentoring programs and after-school programs to achieve this end.

I would like to draw your attention to our core values program known as *The Roadrunner Way*, a common value system used by our school to promote a positive learning environment. Developed by parents, students, and staff last year, *The Roadrunner Way* focuses on five core values-- respect, responsibility, kindness, honesty, and self-control. These core values are highlighted throughout the year, are the focus of classroom lessons facilitated by counselors in each grade level, and are incorporated into student recognition and anti-bullying programs. Parents-- thank you for your reinforcement at home and thank you to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) for your strong support of these school initiatives.

H1N1 Preparations

As you may be aware from the news headlines, the school system and nation are preparing for a potential outbreak of the H1N1 virus, or "Swine Flu." Parents, please help us by:

- Updating all emergency contact information on the yellow sheets that were distributed during the first week of school. These can be updated at any time via a link on Edline. Please be sure to include a cell phone and email address that can be used in emergency communications.
- Signing up for the PTA Email List (www.farquharpta.org) and activating your Edline account (www.Edline.com)
- Keeping children home if they are sick.
- Helping children learn and practice good hygiene (washing hands regularly, covering coughs and sneezes, keeping personal distance)

Here at school, we are making preparations to use Edline to provide assignments to students in the event that they are absent for an extended period, or if there is a major change in school operations. We will also be reminding our students about good hygiene and have an extensive supply of sanitizing wipes, hand sanitizers, and tissues available for students. The building will be cleaned nightly with the highest grade solutions. To stay informed about H1N1, please visit this website regularly: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/emergency/h1n1/index.aspx>. Should there be increases in flu-like symptoms or absences among students and staff, or major changes in school operations, I will keep all parents updated via the website, email listserve, Edline, phone calling system, and letters through backpack distribution.

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Letter from the Principal continued...

Activate Your Online Accounts

All parents and students must have active Edline accounts! For new parents--activation codes and instructions for account activation should have arrived in the mail. If you have not received an activation code, please call the main office or email our webmaster (below). For returning parents, usernames and passwords will remain the same as in 2008-09. If you have difficulty, please go to www.Edline.com and click "Forgot Username" or "Forgot Password." Students will receive their activation codes at school. For advanced assistance with your Edline account, please contact Beth Hopkins, webmaster, at Beth_A_Hopkins@mcpsmd.org, or go to <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/oars/>

Communication

While we rely on electronic tools like the Listserve and Edline to maintain effective communication between home and school, often a more personalized approach is needed. Please feel free to contact your child's teachers or counselor if there is ever a question or concern. Email is the most efficient way to communicate with staff, and you can also call and leave a message in a staff member's personal voicemail box. A complete directory of email and voicemail information can be found here:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/farquharm/staffcontacts/staffcontacts.shtm>.

Please note that "drop-in" appointments are difficult to accommodate because of the time constraints in a school day. If you would like a conference with your child's teachers, please contact the grade level counselor.

If you have ongoing concerns after talking with a teacher, please contact the grade level team leader, counselor, and/or administrator, and we will be happy to address your concern. Please review the "Keys to Effective Communication" page included in this newsletter.

After-School Activities Begin September 22

Dozens of after-school activities will be offered beginning on September 22. An activities fair showcasing all of our programs was held on September 16, and sign-ups are underway. Generally, activities will run on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Activity bus service will be offered with buses departing at approximately 4:15 p.m. Please note that there are only three activity bus routes, so the stops are different than the student's normal route and could take longer. For an entire listing of extra-curricular offerings, please see the flyer in this newsletter or visit

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/farquharm/clubs/clubs.shtm>.

Please note that space is limited and occasionally clubs will fill to capacity. Waiting lists will be maintained and options will rotate throughout the year to ensure that all students have opportunities to participate in activities they are interested in. However, please encourage your child to select alternate activities in order to keep their options open.

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Letter from the Principal continued...

Getting Extra Help

Students are off to a great start in their classes, and there are many upcoming tests and quizzes during the first marking period. I would like to highlight a program at Farquhar for academic support during lunch called “**Roadwork**.” Teachers are available every day during lunch to help students as needed. Roadwork can include tutoring, reassessment, getting organized, preparing for a test, math help, reading, or simply having a quiet place to study during lunch. Students can bring their lunch. As students prepare for high school, seeking these resources and staff support are important skills that all students will need in their school careers. Roadwork is one of several valuable opportunities for all students; please encourage your child to give it a try!

I would also like to draw your attention to the George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy offered on Saturdays at Sherwood High School. The program has an astounding success rate-- over 70% of the students exit the program at or above grade level in reading and math. The program aligns with the MCPS curriculum, maintains a low student-tutor ratio, and develops self-confidence and motivation. Please review the information included in this newsletter and consider taking advantage of this valuable resource in our community. Registration is underway. More information can be found here:
<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/gbtl/>.

Meanwhile, dozens of after-school activities will be offered each week beginning September 22, including Homework Clubs and Math-on-Call for additional academic assistance. Please be sure to check our weekly *News* and website for more information about after-school activities.

Outdoor Education

Our 6th grade students and teachers are off to Outdoor Education at Summit Lake Center near Thurmont, MD October 13-15 (Group 1) and October 19-21 (Group 2). Thank you to all of the parent volunteers who have donated their time to join us to help with overnight supervision in the cabins. More parents are needed, so please contact one of the team leaders if you are interested. High school counselors from Sherwood and Blake will also be joining us.

Should there be weather or other emergencies while students are at Outdoor Education, cancellations or delays to the program could occur. Emergency changes will be published on the Newsbox on the front of our website, the Farquhar/PTA email listserve, Edline, and the automatic phone system which automatically calls the student’s home phone number.

With any questions about Outdoor Education, please contact one of the team leaders: Mrs. Tolkach (Sharyn_L_Tolkach@mcpsmd.org) or Mrs. Leibowitz (Marcie_J_Leibowitz@mcpsmd.org).

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Letter from the Principal continued...**Cell Phones, I-PODS, & Other Electronics**

As a reminder, middle school students are not permitted to use or display portable communication devices on MCPS middle school campuses or at MCPS sponsored activities during the instructional day. Students may possess portable communication devices, but the device must remain off and out of sight for the entire instructional day. The school will not be held responsible for any device that is lost or stolen. Please only allow your child to bring a cell phone to school if you determine it absolutely necessary; middle school students tend to misplace and “show off” these items, and they often disappear during a school day. If there is an emergency, please call the main office and a message will be delivered to your child immediately. Students are also welcome to come to the main office and ask to use the office phone.

All other electronic devices such as IPOD’s also must be off and out of site during the entire instructional day. Please discuss with your child whether it is appropriate to bring these devices to school. Students may listen to music on the bus, for example, but the device must be secured in a locker, off, and out of sight upon arriving to school. These valuable devices are often misplaced, shared, or lost by adolescents. The school will not be held responsible for electronic devices that are lost or stolen.

Bus Safety

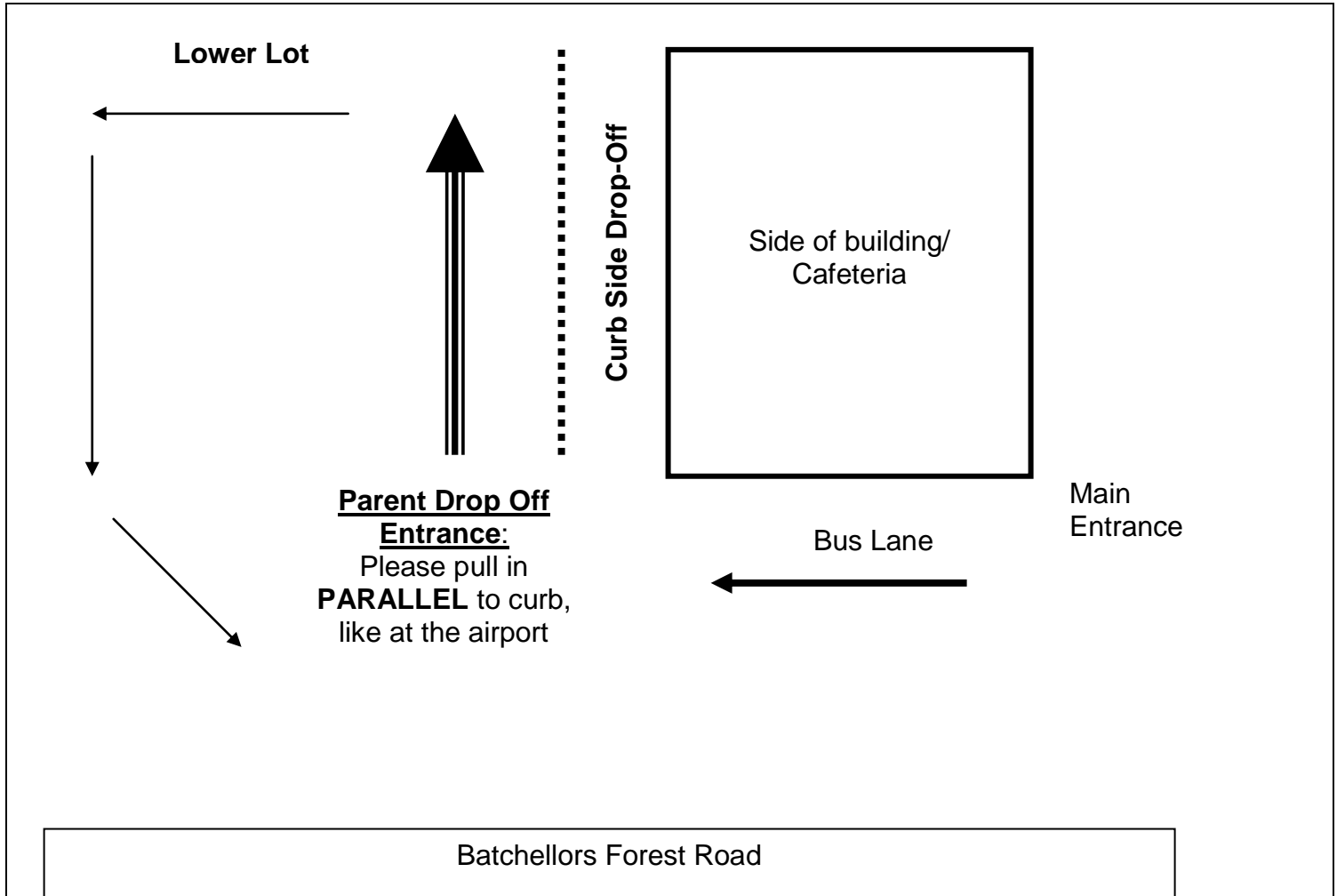
As administrators have met with classes during the first few weeks, we have emphasized student safety at school and on school buses. Parents should encourage their children to report any harassing, bullying, or other harmful behavior to a counselor, administrator, teacher, bus driver, or other school staff. We will take all reports seriously and will take action immediately. Students need to understand that the school bus is an extension of school, and the same standards of behavior apply to the school bus and bus stop. According to MCPS policy, bus riding privileges can be revoked. Any inappropriate behavior or bullying taking place at the bus or stop will not be tolerated.

Parent Drop Off/Lower Lot

For those parents who drop children off in the morning, we need your help! As you know, the lower parking lot can become quite congested in the morning as buses, staff, and parent vehicles converge on the lower lot. Parents: we are asking that when dropping off a student in the morning, you pull through parallel to the curb (like dropping a passenger at the airport), instead of pulling into the parking space and backing out. We hope that this will create a safer environment for students and staff who are entering the building.

See diagram on next page... *continued on page 6*

Letter from the Principal continued...



Thank you, parents, for your ongoing support of our school. I look forward to seeing you around school and on October 13—PTA meeting and our student support program with expert panelists. We're off to a great start in 2009-10 and looking forward to a great year!

Sincerely,
Scott W. Murphy
Principal

Letter from PTA President continued...

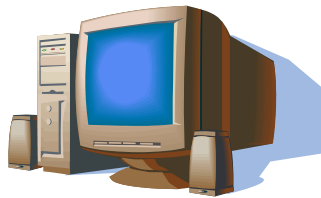
It is also very important for both parents, mothers and fathers alike, to be involved at Farquhar in order to show our children just how important their education is to us. If parents can spend just one hour a week or even a month volunteering for the school, the return to the children will be tremendous. The school needs our help in order to achieve it's goals for our children. When your child sees you helping at Farquhar, they view school with more commitment as well.

Please support Farquhar through our many fundraising opportunities from sending in your direct appeal contribution to purchasing spirit wear and items from the on-line store. This allows us to purchase the latest and greatest in teaching technology for the classrooms.

Parents, the reality of our school system is this, what makes one school more successful than another and what makes the student achievement rate higher is the combined commitment of parents and faculty. We as parents control the success of Farquhar and our children. Please get involved.

Joe Griffin

PTA President



Computer Literacy at Farquhar

6th graders in the elective rotation beginning computer class have learned the home keys and finger reaches. This class will work on keyboarding skills daily. Units of study will include computer vocabulary, word processing, researching safely, and keyboarding. Mrs. Lindstrom is the instructor. Mrs. Lindstrom, Ms. Ladd, Media Specialist and 6th grade Reading teachers met recently to coordinate computer literacy teaching for the sixth graders.

The 7th/8th computer class are learning the basic keyboarding and the basics of Word. These skills will be used to create a PowerPoint presentation titled, "All About Me". Students will learn the basic functions of a flipchart and create a Flip Chart about themselves and their favorite hobbies. Students will use the LCD projector and screen for the class presentations. Mrs. Rodriquez is the instructor.



"First Editions" from the Art Department

Congratulations to Kelsey Morrison-8th Grade and former 8th Grade student-Alex Peters. Their work won the Roadrunner Way contest sponsored by the counseling department at FMS. Alex's digital work can be seen on the back of the student agenda book. Kelsey's art work can be seen in the front hall outside the media center. Congrats to both of you. Farquhar is so proud.

Musings from The Music Department

The Music Department will sponsor the first dance of the school year on Friday, September 25 from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. The DJs are provided by Unique Dreams. There will be prizes, novelties, and free CDs.

Tickets are \$6 and may be purchased the week of the dance during all three lunch periods. Tickets may also be purchased at the door the evening of the dance.

You don't want to miss the first dance of the year!!



Applying to the County's Magnet High Schools

On Friday October 2nd high school magnet application materials for the Blair Magnet, the IB program at Richard Montgomery, and the Whole School Magnet at Poolesville will be available to students. Interested students should see Mr. Ingram, 8th grade counselor. Materials will also be available online at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/specialprograms/ in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, French, and Korean.

All magnet high school applications are due by **November 9, 2009**. Informational meetings for parents and students will be held at the following locations:

Poolesville - Monday, October 12

Blair magnet - Thursday, October 22

RM-IB - Monday, October 26

Application Workshop at Gaithersburg HS - Thursday, October 29

Application Workshop at Wheaton HS - Monday, November 2



Encouragement → Effort → Excellence

Learning how to model the qualities we want from all of our children.

September is here! You have purchased pounds of notebook paper and pencils, set aside a time for homework, and helped your child create a quiet place for nightly math assignments. Your job is done. Or is it just beginning?

The physical environment is important, but a productive home working environment is critical to your child's success as well.

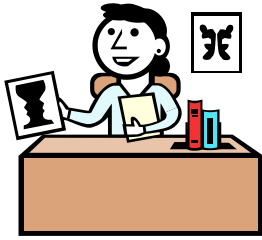
You may often notice your child applying a new math skill in conjunction with a previously practiced objective. It is important to encourage your child to refer to class notes and review practice problems before coming to you with questions. These two resources help your child begin to understand the effort required to learn new concepts well. As one takes the time to read and review, he/she can become a more independent learner.

As you observe your child's study habits, continue to verbally praise the time and effort directed toward nightly math homework. It does take a commitment to sit down each evening, recognize their efforts. Homework completion is an effort-based grade. However, teachers have noticed those who have made the commitment to establishing a nightly homework routine are more likely to have completed work in class. This allows them to ask questions, have extra opportunities for teacher feedback, and improve their mastery level.

I encourage you to keep in contact with your child's math teacher. Remember when we work together, we improve your child's chance for excellence.

Thank you-

Ms. Carla Britt
Math Resource Teacher



Counselors' Corner

The FMS counselors would like to extend a warm welcome to both our new and returning families! The counselors have been busy fine tuning your children's schedules, hosting new student lunches, helping with back -to- school adjustment concerns and planning for a jam- packed and exciting new school year!

Middle school is a time of growth and change. Your child's social and emotional health are critical components in their academic success. If one is out of balance, your child may be affected at school. Counselors are in school to help students through the typical "bumps" as well as larger issues which impact school performance. We are here to help remove obstacles so that your child can reach his or her full potential. We can work together to meet your child's social, emotional and academic needs so that they can have a happy, well-rounded and successful middle school experience.

Highlight Your Year with the Roadrunner Way!

Counselors are looking forward to their first class visit! We will talk to all students in their social studies classes during the month of September. Our lesson will involve a counselor introduction (how we can help), we will also highlight the FMS "Roadrunner Way" and the FMS values (Respect, Responsibility, Kindness, Honesty and Self Control), providing an overview of the year's counseling activities.

The year at a glance....

We will highlight one of our core values each month with classroom lessons, school- wide programs, monthly anti-bullying initiatives and a PTA -supported parent education component. Topics for the 2009-10 school year will include:

- Relational aggression and social bullying (Respect)
- Managing feelings (Self Control)
- Bullying-See it, Say it, Stop it (Honesty)
- Peer pressure and making healthy choices (Responsibility)
- Healthy relationships (Kindness)
- Career and college exploration (Responsibility)

Additional support

Small group counseling

We offer small group counseling during the school day for students who may need additional support dealing with normal middle school adjustments issues. Topics may include stress management, anger control, making and keeping friends, increasing self esteem, grief and loss, making positive choices or dealing with family changes such as divorce or separation.

If you would like more information on group counseling please contact your child's grade level counselor or Ms. Sobieralski, small group counselor.

Navigating through difficult times

Almost every student will need some extra support from their counselor during their time in middle school. School counseling services are for EVERYONE. Please feel comfortable contacting us if your child is experiencing something that may interfere with their learning at school. Often, potential problems can be avoided if you just give the counselors a heads up as to what your child is experiencing. Your concerns are handled respectfully and discreetly. Together we can make a plan for helping your child over the hurdle. Please feel free to call us (301) 924-3100 or email us with any concern.

Mr. Chuck Lawson-(Grade 6)
Ms. Susan James-(Grade 7 and Department Chair)
Mr. Jason Ingram (Grade 8)
Ms. Heather Sobieralski (Group Counseling and Programs)

Additional resources

Have you ever heard of PEP (Parent Encouragement Program)? It is worth a look! Do you ever wonder if other families are having the same growing pains and parenting struggles that you are experiencing? PEP offers classes and workshops to teach practical parenting skills geared toward each stage of your child's development. The website also has a lengthy library of helpful parenting publications. Check it out! www.PEPparent.org

Farquhar Parent "TO DO" List:



We know the first month of school is hectic so here's a "Things to do" list to help keep you on track and organized

- Activate your Edline account
- Join the FMS **YAHOO!** Group
- Join the PTA via the "Online Store" *New*
- Sign up for **Giant A+ Bonus Bucks**
- Sign up for **Safeway eScrip**

Have a great school year and we look forward to seeing you at the monthly PTA meetings, which are held every 2nd Tuesday of the month.



Wanted...Career Café Speakers!

Please share your career with FMS students!

Parents -- please make a one-time commitment to be a part of **Career Café**, the popular lunchtime program where FMS students learn about careers! We know that students achieve even more when they see the connection between school and the adult world.

Won't you please consider speaking to our children about your career? Students are truly thrilled to have someone they know and care about be a part of our program. Our goal is to have a **variety of careers** represented this year. Any job is a great job for them to find out about.

For those who may be nervous about speaking, you would be meeting with small groups for only 20 minutes at a time... with staff members there to assist you with anything you need.

It's really a great experience! The kids love it – and so will you! Please contact Mrs. James at 301-924-3100 or Susan_C_James@mcpsmd.org or by completing the form below and sending it into the Main Office.

I would love to come and speak at FMS! Please contact me!

Name:

Home Phone:

Work Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email address:

Brief Description of Career/Job:

Online Store is now Open!

We are “going green” again! The PTA now offers a virtual online store using PayPal as a convenient way to collect and process your membership fees, donations to the direct appeal, and spirit wear purchases.

The key benefits of PayPal are:

- No more checks and paperwork to complete, which will reduce paper waste and expense
- Make payments from the convenience of your own home
- Fast and secure way to pay online
- Use any kind of debit or credit card
- Children can ensure that they do not lose valuable school time, worrying about when, how and where they are going to hand in their money.
- Staff can spend less time on administration handling checks and cash, and more time working directly with the children.
- PTA's cash flow can be increased!

Sixth Grade News



The sixth grade team welcomes all of the new sixth graders to Farquhar. We look forward to having a very successful year. You can help your child be successful by checking their agendas (assignment books) daily to see that all assigned homework is completed when it is assigned. If your child has had difficulty in the past completing his/her homework, please use Edline every day to help ensure that he/she completes nightly assignments.

Parents are asked to examine the helpful features of their children's assignment books (agendas). The agendas contain many lists, organizers, calendars, and strategies for well-organized planning of assignments and activities as well as the student handbook. Parents should require that their children use the agendas not only for homework and study, but also for planning life outside of school including family and personal events that may affect school activities. Parents should also check their children's agendas to make sure assignments are being recorded every day. Help them make sure the completed work is placed into the correct section in their binder. Talk with your child to make sure their binder is meeting their daily needs including having all of the supplies they need to make it through the day.

Sixth Grade News (cont.)

Working together, we can ensure the students' smooth transition to middle school and all of the expectations that comes with secondary school.

We are eagerly looking forward to our outdoor education experience. There is much to do before we go. Money and permission slips need to be turned in by Wednesday, September 30, 2009. If your child needs or might need any medication (both prescription and over the counter) administered while at camp, a special form needs to be completed for each medication and turned in with the permission slip. Parents need to bring medicines to school by Wednesday, September 30, 2009. They may not be packed into the suitcase.

If you have any questions about the program, please call or email either Mrs. Leibowitz or Mrs. Tolkach.

Seventh Grade News



Medieval Times



We are looking forward to our annual seventh grade trip from FMS to Medieval Times. This experience is always fun, exciting, and interesting. Students will feel like they have been transported back in time to a real medieval jousting tournament. The King's Counselor will be able to share information about the clothes people wore, the food people ate, and the customs they practiced.



Effort Courage Respect Kindness Character Responsibility

The seventh grade team will be kicking off a yearlong recognition program celebrating the attributes listed above with our students and teachers. We will highlight students and staff in the seventh grade hall. Each person creates a personal collage and each piece becomes part of a large design. Please come and see for yourself the next time you are in the building.

Eighth Grade News

The 8th grade is off to a great start of the 2009-2010 school year!

Students are quickly becoming acclimated to 8th grade, and teachers and students are excitedly anticipating the implementation of our reward celebrations for good behavior and continued focus on academics.

8th Grade teachers are excitedly preparing for Back to School Night (September 17). We hope to see many parents there!

8th grade team leaders are still collecting agenda book payments (\$5). Checks can be made out to Farquhar Middle School.