



November 2009

Letter from the Principal

Scott Murphy

Dear Farquhar Community:

Congratulations on an outstanding first marking period! We are so proud of our students and their achievements. On November 11, students received report cards. There were 336 students on the Honor Roll—about 55% of our student body! Of those, 219 were on the “Principal’s List” by earning a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher, and 75 earned straight A’s. Students and their families should be very proud of these accomplishments and the hard work it reflects.



Farquhar teachers and staff are recognizing students for these honors through grade-level teams and our Recognition of Amazingly Dedicated Students (ROADS) scholars program. On November 25, students will be recognized for earning straight A’s, making the Principal’s List, and making the Honor Roll with a special breakfast party. Students will receive certificates recognizing these achievements, and grade level photos will be displayed in our main hallway soon. During the second marking period, students will also be recognized for these honors, as well as for improvement in their GPA. Students are also being recognized in grade level teams for their citizenship and positive contributions to our school climate. We look forward to recognizing more students through these special programs again in February.

Farquhar Forum



Oh Boy!

When analyzing our student achievement for the first marking period, it is interesting to note that girls are solidly outperforming boys on several measures. For example, among students on the Honor Roll, girls outnumber boys by about 2 to 1. On the straight A list, girls make up 70% of all students earning that honor. Meanwhile, when we look at students with below a C average, boys make up over 80% of this “at risk” list.



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While this is a common phenomenon in middle school, the staff and I are “drilling down” this data and examining the root causes of male academic achievement. Meanwhile, our school improvement plan (SIP) team will meet on December 3 at 3:00 to review the school improvement plan and further discuss issues related to student achievement. Your input, ideas, and involvement in this discussion are welcome!

Mentoring

One of the strategies that we are using this year to improve the achievement of all students is mentoring. Not only do positive relationships with adults at school improve student performance, but a personalized connection to school also allows students to feel more positive about school and motivated to perform. Our goal is that each student has a meaningful relationship with adults at school, and we will be implementing a more formalized mentoring program for students at-risk in the coming months.



Interims & Grades

By the time this newsletter is published, we will be well into the second marking period. Interim reports will be mailed on or around December 11. Although up-to-date reports are available on Edline, we send interim reports each marking period to all students, regardless of the student’s current grade or course level. We want to provide parents with a “snapshot” of all seven classes on a single report, whether a student has all A’s and B’s, or may need help in a class or two. If you do not receive an interim in the mail by December 16, please feel free to contact your child’s counselor. Please note that Edline grades are more up-to-date, and there will be discrepancies by the time the interim report arrives in the mail.

If you have a question about a grade or assignment, please talk to your child and encourage your child to talk to the teacher first. Self-advocacy is an important skill that we want to develop in students, and we want to empower students to talk to their teachers if they have questions or concerns. This trait becomes even more important in high school, and teachers love it! You can also seek the assistance of the teacher, counselor, or administrator in charge of each grade level: Mr. Gitchell, Grade 7 and 6 (A-L), and Ms. Geness, Grade 8 and Grade 6 (M-Z).





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Maryland Attorney General Visits Farquhar

We were thrilled to welcome Maryland's Attorney General, Doug Gansler, at our November PTA meeting. Thank you to Joe Griffin, PTA President, and the executive board for making this happen. Mr. Gansler discussed the important topic of cyber-bullying and online safety, and he also highlighted the "CLICKS" program that addresses these issues. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.oag.state.md.us/clicks.htm>

Each month, our own counselors are visiting each student in classes to reinforce these themes through our core values program known as the Roadrunner Way. This month, counselors discussed honesty, bullying, stereotypes and prejudice, and other issues. Please see our "Counselors Corner" in this newsletter for more information.

Northeast Consortium/Sherwood Cluster News: The elementary, middle, and high school staffs of the Northeast Consortium and Sherwood Cluster continue to meet regularly. We discuss school performance, articulation processes, and strategies to ensure a smooth transition from one level to the next. Believe it or not, planning for next school year has already begun. 8th Grade parents, please note these important dates:

November 9: Northeast Consortium (NEC) Choice Forms Due

Magnet School Applications Due

For more information on the NEC timeline and upcoming dates, please visit: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/nec/>

December 1: Parent information meeting for all 8th grade students going to Sherwood HS (Presented by Mr. Gregory, Principal, Sherwood HS)

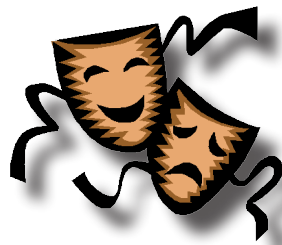
Location: Farquhar, LMC, 7:00 p.m.



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After-School Activities

I would like to continue to encourage our students' participation in after-school activities. Involvement in extra-curricular activities is a strong indicator of success in school. These activities allow students to feel connected to school, build relationships with students and staff, and develop leadership qualities. In any given week, over 200 students participate in dozens of after-school activities. New clubs are being offered regularly, and activities generally run on Tuesday, Wednesdays, and Thursdays until 4:00, with activity bus transportation provided. Follow our weekly News and website for more information.



One popular activity during the second semester is our annual spring musical. I am pleased to announce that Ms. Erin Lorenz, English teacher, will again be the director for this year's show, *Beauty and the Beast*. Information meetings and auditions will begin in January, so please stay tuned to the News and website for more information.

Getting Extra Help

I would like to again highlight "Roadwork," a program for academic support during lunch. 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 and stay for a few minutes or the entire period. 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!



Meanwhile, dozens of after-school supports are offered each week, including Homework Clubs, Math-on-Call, Spanish Club, and more options for additional academic assistance. Please be sure to check our weekly News and website for more information about after-school activities.



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H1N1 Preparations and Edline

MCPS officials, the county health department, and I are continuing to monitor the flu situation and are making plans accordingly. At this point, student and staff absences are fluctuating and county vaccination options are changing regularly. To stay up-to-date, please regularly visit: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/emergency/h1n1/>.



Parents- we need your help in supporting this effort. Please be sure that your emergency contact information is up-to-date in the main office, and please contact us immediately if a phone number or email address changes. Also, please be sure to sign-up for the PTA Email Listserve (<http://farquharpta.org>) and use your Edline account, which will be used for communication. Edline can be used to find out assignments that your child missed when absent, and it will also be used to continue instruction should there be a major disruption to school operations. Finally, please continue to reinforce good hygiene habits and keep your children home if they have a fever or show any flu-like symptoms. We will continue to keep you updated on this situation and thank you for your support.

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



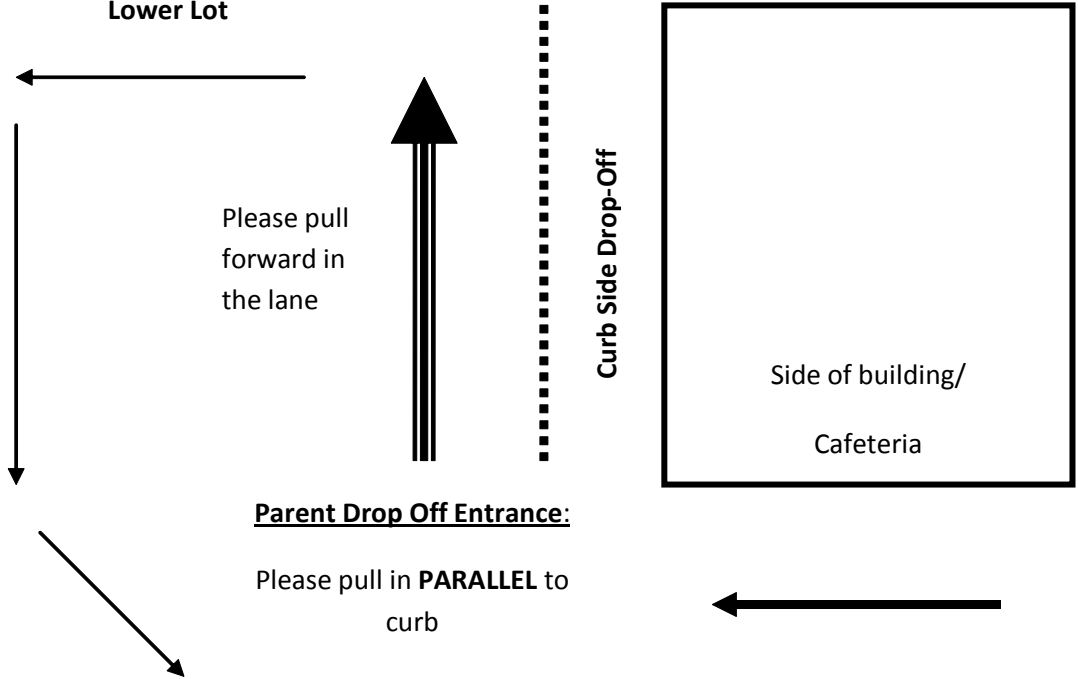
dropping a passenger at the airport), instead of pulling into the parking space and backing out. Please drive through to the front of the lane. We hope that this will create a safer environment for students, parents, and staff who are entering the building in the morning.

(graphic on next page)



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Lower Lot



Please pull forward in the lane

Curb Side Drop-Off

Side of building/
Cafeteria

Parent Drop Off Entrance:

Please pull in **PARALLEL** to curb

Happy Thanksgiving

Congratulations again on an outstanding first marking period; we're off to a great start. As we move into the winter months, it will take sustained effort and an effective partnership between the home and school to keep the momentum going. At home, we are busy with Holiday preparations, celebrations, family, and staying on top of our kids. Meanwhile, the school year does not let up, as the rigor of homework, tests, projects, sports, concerts, religious activities, and more continue. Thank you, parents, for all you do to manage the complexities of your children's lives.

I wish you and yours a happy Thanksgiving, and we look forward to continued successes for all of our students.

Sincerely,

Scott W. Murphy

Principal



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A HUGE THANKS TO ALL OUR WONDERFUL CONTRIBUTORS!!

ROAD RUNNER SILVER LEVEL (\$250-499)

Dawn Sadler

FRIENDS OF FARQUHAR (\$100-\$249)

Virginia & Vernon Jones
Kevin & Lonnie Lewis
Eric Nevins

FARQUHAR SUPPORTERS (UP TO \$99)

Chetan & Sonal Ajmera
Anne Baldini
Jill Chen
Scott Gitchell
Martha Jo Ladd
Charles Lawson
Marcie & Henry Leibowitz
Augusto & Kimberly Macedo
Shyleen & Chris Mayer
Melissa & Kevin Walsh



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Message from the PTA President, Joe Griffin

It is hard to believe we are now already in the second marking period. I want to thank all of the volunteers and staff that helped make the first quarter a success with many events for both the children and the adults. Your contribution is what makes Farquhar an outstanding school. If you have not yet sent in your PTA membership dues or Direct Appeal, I urge you to do so now.

In addition to providing our students with the finest educational tools in the classroom, the funds collected allow us to provide many special activities throughout the year. Some of the events include the Talent Show on November 20th and the Cultural Arts Assembly which will take place December 18th.

As a reminder, if you are dropping your child off at school, please pull all the way to the end of the drop off area. When a vehicle stops at the beginning of the drop off lane it either causes a back up or a dangerous situation for children getting out of vehicles with traffic passing. Pulling to the end of the lane is the most efficient and safest method for dropping off your child.

Please take a moment and look at the coupon books for sale on the PTA website. The books cost \$25 and \$12.50 of that goes to the PTA. The books are loaded with coupons to stores, restaurants and entertainment that we all use regularly. With the holidays upon us I promise if you purchase one of these book you will more than make your money back before New Years and it is good through 2010.

I invite everyone to come to one of the PTA meetings and see what we are working on for the rest of the year. We are trying to couple the meetings with speakers and events to help us help our children. In October we had an outstanding panel of school counselors and Psychologists talk about some of the hurdles and difficulties our children may face. At the November meeting we were please to have MD Attorney General Doug Gansler talk about Cyber bullying and cyber safety. It was a very informative hour and we all came away better informed about the issues. The PTA meeting for December will be on the 8th and will coincide with the book fair, so come out and do both in the same evening. Have a Happy and Safe Thanksgiving.

"Let us remember that, as much has been given us, much will be expected from us, and that true homage comes from the heart as well as from the lips, and shows itself in deeds." - Theodore Roosevelt



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Counselor's Corner



Using Honesty against Bullying

In November, Farquhar is emphasizing the Roadrunner Way value of Honesty. Counselors have been incorporating this value into bullying lessons at all three grade levels, with the phrase, "See it, say it, stop it!" In the sixth grade, counselors spoke with all students about the types of bullying (social, verbal, physical and cyberbullying). Students had the chance to discuss the effects of bullying, personal ex-

periences, what to do if you are bullied, and how a bystander can help. In grades seven and eight, counselors led students through discussion about stereotypes, diversity and prejudice. Students were challenged to look at how they may stereotype and label others, which can contribute to bullying. The importance of accepting differences among peers was emphasized.

Cybersafety : What Can Parents Do?

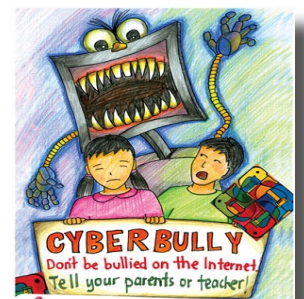
One form of bullying that parents can have a big impact on is cyberbullying. Practicing good cybersafety in the home can help protect your own children and others (thanks to White Oak Middle School for some of these tips):

- * Keep your home computer in easily viewable places, such as a family room or kitchen

- * Talk regularly with your child about online activities that he or she is involved in.

- Talk specifically about cyberbullying and encourage your child to tell you immediately if he or she is the victim of cyberbullying, cyberstalking, or other illegal or troublesome online behavior.

- Encourage your child to tell you if he or she is aware of others who may be the victims of such behavior.





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- Explain that cyberbullying is harmful and unacceptable behavior. Outline your expectations for responsible online behavior and make it clear that there will be consequences for inappropriate behavior.

*Although adults want to respect the privacy of children and youth, concerns for your child's safety may sometimes override these privacy concerns. Tell your child that you may review his or her online communications if you think there is reason for concern.

*Consider installing parental control filtering software and/or tracking programs, but don't rely solely on these tools.

*Contact Law enforcement or Cyber Tipline if:

- You find child pornography on the computer
- Your student has received sexually explicit images or communication
- Your student has been sexually solicited by someone first met online

*** Keep all evidence

Cyber Tipline: 1-800-843-5678

Montgomery County Police Pedophile Section: 240-773-5400

Source: <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/>

<http://www.netsmartz.org>

<http://www.cybertipline.com>

Cybersafety Tips to Share with Your Children: Five things to think about before pressing "send"

- 1) Don't assume anything you send or post is going to remain private.
- 2) There is no changing your mind in cyberspace-anything you send or post will never truly go away.
- 3) Don't give in to the pressure to do something that makes you uncomfortable, even in cyberspace.
- 4) Consider the recipient's reaction.
- 5) Nothing is truly anonymous.

(Continued on the next page)



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Small Counseling Groups

Three new counseling groups are starting during the month of November:

Sixth Grade Friendship Group

Seventh Grade Boys Social Skills Group

Sixth/Seventh Managing Feelings Groups

Look for more groups to start in the New Year, including a group for students who would like support due to parental separation, divorce or remarriage.

If you would like to talk about counseling group options for your child, please contact your grade level counselor or Ms. Heather Sobieralski, Small Groups Counselor.

Sixth Grade News

The sixth graders have now completed their first marking period in middle school. For most, the transition has been a smooth move from elementary to secondary education. Keep up the good work at home by checking Edline for assignments and grades. Make sure that students have an organized time and place to complete their homework. Ask your child to show you completed and graded work so you are kept in touch with what is going on in classes.



We have planned an assembly for the students for Friday, November 20. Mr. Andrew Wilson, of "Under the Sea," will be coming to Farquhar to share his presentation of a variety of animals that live in all areas of the Chesapeake Bay. He will bring the Bay to life, literally.

The sixth grade team teachers wish you and yours enjoy a very happy Thanksgiving holiday.



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Seventh Grade News

Effort Courage Respect Kindness Character Responsibility

The seventh grade team kicked off a year-long recognition program celebrating the attributes listed above with our students and teachers. We will highlight students and staff in the seventh grade hall. Any 7th grade teacher can nominate a student for this award. 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

Students and parents are reminded that the \$5 agenda book fee can still be submitted to Jeff Levine or Adam Heifetz. Checks should be made out to Farquhar Middle School. The 8th Grade is busy planning and preparing for a field trip to the American History Museum, where students will visit various exhibits related to the 8th grade



social studies curriculum. On Wednesday, December 23, students, teachers, and parent volunteers will be visiting the museum for most of the school day.

Teachers will soon be completing Magnet and private school recommendations. Students are reminded to submit forms to teachers with at least five days notice.

In addition, all high school recommendations are completed in January. Any questions regarding high school placement should be directed to individual teachers.

Parents and students are reminded that, as students miss school due to illness and/or travel, it is their responsibility to check Edline and confirm with teacher work that must be made up.

Thank you,

The Eighth Grade Team



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SCIENCE – Eye Dissection

As part of the 7th grade Light and Sound unit, students participated in a cow eye dissection. As you can see from the photos, this is definitely a hands-on learning experience!

Students examined the extrinsic muscles of the eye. These are the muscles that allow the eye to move. They were also able to safely remove the cornea, determine if they could look through it, and record their observations.

We have numerous photos in the 7th grade hall, please stop by and take a look.





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