



# Farquhar Forum

January 2012

Letter from the Principal

Diane D'Ambrosio Morris

## **Dear Farquhar Community:**

Happy New Year!

Welcome back from what I hope was a fantastic Winter Break and time spent with friends and family. Having survived the first semester, we stand ready to finish the school year with confidence. While January is certainly cold and often times bleak, it is also a month of looking ahead. It is a time for us to build on our achievements and put away our past disappointments. Remind your son/daughter that every day is a chance to do better, get better and be the best they can be.



January also brings the end of the first semester and signals the half-way point in the year. Before we begin to shift gears and think ahead to the next school year as course selection begins, it is important to stay focused on finishing this semester strong. Parents, please continue to reinforce good attendance habits with your son/daughter. Attendance is extremely important in school and excessive absences and tardies may result in missing work, which is difficult to make up.

Maryland State Assessment (MSA) Testing is right around the corner. The MSA's are one very important measure of student achievement. This school year's testing dates are March 12-21, 2012. Again, attendance during this time is of utmost importance, so please plan accordingly. We have made great strides on this very important test (go to [www.mdreportcard.org](http://www.mdreportcard.org) for more details). I attribute our success to the collaborative efforts of teachers, staff, students and parents. With everyone working together we can make a difference and continue to achieve at high levels.

As many of you know, my husband and I will be welcoming our second child in March. I intend to work through Friday, March 2nd and to be on leave until May 25th. Scott Gitchell, assistant principal, will take the reigns as the acting principal. Mr. Gitchell has nine years experience as an administrator at Farquhar and I have total confidence in his abilities and instincts, and feel so fortunate to have him



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leading our school. Ms. Murray will continue in her role as assistant principal and Ms. Carla Britt, who is currently the Resource Teacher for Mathematics will serve as an acting assistant principal. Mr. Andre Jones, 8th grade math teacher, will serve as Acting Math Resource Teacher. I am so grateful to have the support of such a dedicated and talented group of individuals.

As always, I wish you all well and here is to 2012 being a great year to be a Roadrunner!

Sincerely,

Diane D'Ambrosio Morris

Proud Principal

## **Message from the PTA President, Joe Griffin**

Get ready for our Dance on February 3rd. It promises to be a good time and this year is being held on "Wear your Red Day." In support of the American Heart Association. So get your Valentine's Red out early and come to the PTA dance Friday February 3rd from 7pm-9pm. Pizza and concessions available.



We had a very informative meeting last month with a presentation on helping your child take responsibility for their own school work. After the meeting I remembered a presentation that was made last year for Black History Month by Dr. Frieda Lacey, Deputy Superintendent of schools which spoke on this very same topic. In honor of Black History Month and in step with our last PTA meeting, here is an excerpt from Dr. Lacey's remarks:

"Throughout our history there have always been these famous advocates, those who made the news, those whose voices refused to be silenced, and whose choices changed the course of history. But in homes, classrooms, and houses of worship all over this country



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there have always been those heroes that, while never making the news or showing up on the cover of Time or People magazine, changed lives. Maybe some of you are remembering your own parents and the sacrifices they made for you, or perhaps like me you recall a significant event in your life.

Whether we are talking about Oliver Brown, Dr. King, or Nelson Mandela, what makes them great leaders, great advocates, is the ability to envision that better world. They know what they are fighting for, not just what they are fighting against.

As parents you are your child's best advocate. As you advocate for your child, I urge you to keep at the forefront of your mind what it is you want for your child's education. In today's world of Facebook, Twitter, instant connections, and instant information, it is easy to become overwhelmed, but keep your eyes on the prize.

I am also going to urge you to do something else. Hold your child accountable for being actively engaged in their education. Are they challenging themselves? Are they making themselves available to learning? Are they discovering the power of their own mind?

Don't let them be passive participants, make sure they are aware of their role in their future.

Together we are like the three legs of a stool. The school, the home, and the student. It is imperative that each leg be strong, and it is only by working in concert that the stool stands, none of the legs are dispensable.

The Dali Lama said, 'It is not enough to be compassionate, you must act.' That is our call. Each day our actions must speak to our belief that the education of every child is important. We know that the better world that we envision is one where every child is encouraged and supported to reach their full potential. By marrying action to passion we can continue the legacy of those who have come before."

Our next PTA meeting will be in the media center on March 13th starting at 7pm.

Joseph M. Griffin  
PTA President





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to the challenge, with no Z or zero grades entered for the duration. These students were recognized on the morning announcements and on a seventh grade bulletin board (which is still up in the seventh grade hall). Great work!

## A Message from Math 7:

Parents, the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) will be here in March. It is not too early for your student to start preparing for success on those assessments. In math that would include doing all assigned homework daily, having a personal calculator (scientific) for use daily in the classroom that could be the same calculator used when they take their assessments in March. It is always better to use a calculator that the student is very familiar with rather than to borrow one which they may have never used prior to the assessment. Currently, about half of the Math 7 students arrive in class daily without their own calculators for personal use. They need not be expensive calculators. Scientific calculators can be found from as low as one dollar at most dollar stores to about ten dollars at stores like CVS with many priced in between.



In addition, the following website:

[http://www.mdk12.org/assessments/k\\_8/index\\_c.html](http://www.mdk12.org/assessments/k_8/index_c.html) will take you to an index of practice 7th grade math and reading assessments that you can do again and again with your student at home. These assessments include answers for student/parent use and are provided free by the state for students to practice so that they may have the best opportunity for success. We use practice items from the state site in class as warm ups.

Here is a link for how the state offers suggestions on how parents can help at home:

[http://www.mdk12.org/assessments/k\\_8/parents\\_support/index.html](http://www.mdk12.org/assessments/k_8/parents_support/index.html)

If your student exhausts that state practice items, you can go to almost any state in the country on the internet to practice similar assessments by grade level as the states follow the same national math standards. The state of Illinois, as an example, has assessments very similar to Maryland's assessments in math and reading:



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[http://www.isbe.net/assessment/htmls/sample\\_books.htm](http://www.isbe.net/assessment/htmls/sample_books.htm)

In addition, students continue to need pencils, erasers, paper (spiral notebooks), and correcting pencils daily in class. Here is a pretty neat Math Study video that you can view to see some tips on how to help your student study every day in math:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pm-svWfQP0A>

Thanks for your continued and valued support.

If you have any questions or concerns about the information above, please contact Jeff Levine ([Jeff\\_A\\_Levine@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Jeff_A_Levine@mcpsmd.org)).

## **EIGHTH GRADE NEWS**

8th Grade is headed into the second semester, another term closer to high school promotion! We will continue to assist students in becoming "high school-ready," emphasizing being prepared for classes, work completion, study habits and receiving extra help when needed.

"Tuesday Tune-ups" for 8th graders to receive extra help will continue in Room 36 after school.

Students should clean out their notebooks from last semester. Some class notes and materials may need to be kept in a folder at home, such as Spanish and French classes that will need those notes for the exam in June. Please help to replenish school supplies and help everyone get a "fresh start" on Tuesday, Jan. 24th, the first day of the new marking period/semester.

Important upcoming dates include:

Jan. 27th – Teacher recommendations due for high school courses.

June 1st – Hershey Park trip

- Preliminary notifications sent home Jan. 24th





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- Permission slips sent home Feb. 3rd.
- Permission slips due with \$66.00 for bus & admission due Feb.17th
- Miscellaneous spending money needed for drinks, food, any souvenirs

June 2nd – Farewell Dance

June 12th – Awards Ceremony

Please continue to email and “check in” with your child’s teachers at any time. We appreciate your communication and your support.

## **WORLD LANGUAGES**

### **Full year courses-Spanish 1A, 1B & French 1A, 1B:**

The MCPS 1A full year and 1B full year exams for high school credit are in June. This exam includes material covered over the entire year, starting back in September. Study guides will be provided in class. Exams include an oral, listening, reading, writing and culture section. The oral communication portion of the exam is done in class prior to the exam block. Grades for the course are determined by:

First Quarter grade  
Second Qtr. Grade  
Third Qtr. Grade  
Fourth Qtr. Grade  
+ MCPS Exam in June worth 25%  
Final 1A/1B Grade, Permanent on High School Transcript

### **Spanish 2A –**

Grades for the course are determined by:  
First Quarter grade  
Second Qtr. Grade  
+ 2A Exam in January worth 25%  
Final 2A Grade, Permanent on High School Transcript





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## Continuing with Spanish 2B this semester:

Third Qtr. Grade  
Fourth Qtr. Grade  
+ 2B Exam in June worth 25%  
Final 2B Grade, Permanent on High School Transcript

\*2B classes with Ms. Rivas are planning for a restaurant field trip on Friday, May 25th, beginning the Memorial Day weekend.

Please plan to join the sessions planned on Curriculum Night on Feb. 1st with Ms. Rivas in room 36 if you have questions about the World Languages courses offered at Farquhar!

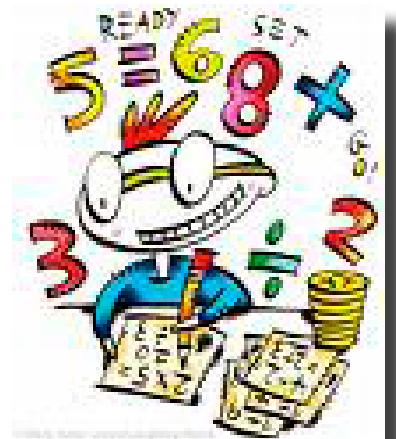
## MATH MATTERS

How do I choose the most appropriate Math course for my child?

During this time of year, parents begin to have questions about choosing courses for next year, especially math. This month, I want to share with you the in-depth processes each math teacher uses when making a recommendation for your child.

It is important for a student to demonstrate proficiency in the content of course indicators before he/she is moved to the next level. Acceleration at the middle school level occurs in Grade 6 through Grade 8. Acceleration does not mean that the student "skips" a course. When a student demonstrates mastery of multiple course objectives within one school year, then the course recommendation will reflect that. Teachers are using this information to recommend the course in which your child can demonstrate the highest level of success.

The mathematics department is currently starting the recommendation process for the 2012-2013 school year. Teachers review student performance on county assessments which may also include performance on challenge indicators. They examine overall course averages, MSA performance, and student work/study habits.





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Students receive a Math recommendation form during the first part of February to take home. Teachers will also note if your child would benefit from any summer enrichment programs offered by MCPS.

The mathematics recommendation form is in addition to the hard-stock form that includes all course recommendations. Students at all levels usually have multiple course options when transitioning from one grade to the next. Please review the document carefully.

**Grade 6 Math 7** FARQUHAR MIDDLE SCHOOL Mathematics Course Recommendation Form

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Current Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: February 2012

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The following chart lists the indicators that were used to determine the recommendation for next year's math course. My recommendation is noted in the paragraph below the chart.

Indicator	Description	Performance	Indicator that suggests Math 7 is appropriate.	Indicator that IM is the appropriate course.	Indicator that Algebra is the appropriate course.
Grade Averages First Quarter Second Quarter	Assesses mastery of MCPS objectives (with weighting @ 30% each) @ work habits.				
MCPS Semester assessment average <i>calculators permitted on portions</i>	Assesses initial performance mastery level of MCPS objectives (with weighting @ 30% each).	9/10			
MCPS Unit Tests Challenge Indicators	1. Statistics units 2. Pre-algebra Concepts	No Calc No NO calc No calc			
Algebra Diagnostic <i>Tested up to some sections for signs</i>	45 minute testing session. No calculator.	9/10			

Based on the above information, I am recommending that the student enroll in MATH 7 IM / Algebra next year. If you have any questions, please contact me via email at [TCOURNAME@mcpsmd.org](mailto:TCOURNAME@mcpsmd.org)

**if checked:** The IM summer program is also recommended. Information regarding MCPS summer offerings will be sent home in the spring. Course offerings are based on MCPS funding.

**APPEALS:** If you choose to appeal the recommendation and the course change is approved, please enroll your child in the appropriate summer program (IM or Algebra). Student placement is revisited after the summer program is completed.

(Above is the what the document looks like)

MCPS has created numerous Math pathways that provide many course options as students move through middle school. You can learn more about the math pathways by attending the FMS curriculum night. Rising 7th & 8th grade information will be discussed on Wednesday, February 1.

If you are uncertain about the course recommendation, please contact your child's current math teacher.

Ms. Carla Britt  
 Mathematics Resource Teacher  
 Carla\_R\_Britt@mcpsmd.org



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## Annual Geography Bee

On January 6, 21 students representing each of the grade levels participated in the annual school wide Geography Bee. This contest is sponsored by the National Geographic Society. The contest, which is in its 24th year, is for students in grades four through eight. Each year, thousands of schools from across the United States participate in this event. Farquhar is pleased to be a participant in 2012 Bee. School winners are eligible to win the national championship and its first prize, a \$25,000 college scholarship, at the national competition on May 24 in Washington, D.C.

To qualify for the school wide competition, all students took a preliminary qualifying test in their social studies classes on January 3. Based on the results of this test, students receiving the highest scores were asked to participate in the school wide bee. Congratulations to the following students who represented Farquhar in the school wide completion on January 6.

6th grade participants were: Katie Cobb, Alice Creel, Austin Gil, Lydia Jones, Cassidy Kutz, Andrew Montgomery and Brian Ventura.

7th Grade participants were: Matt Bauk, TeguenFeldbush, Ryan O'Neale, Sam Redman, Michael Rosenberg Robert Schilling, Chris Wiggins and Ngou Yin Yip

8th Grade participants were: Kara Carney, Evan Ford, Sara Jacob, Blake Munsell, Tony Niverth, Haley Stuart, and Brayden Walker

In an exciting and spirited competition, seventh grade student Matt Bauk won the Geo Bee and Ngou Yin Yip also a 7th grader placed second in the competition. Eighth grader Evan Ford was third. Congratulations and way to go boys!!! Matt Bauk, the winner of the school wide bee, will advance to the next level of competition, by taking a written examination to determine who will compete at the Maryland State Geography on March 30 in Annapolis.





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## Student Service Learning Hours Notes for February 2012:

(A graduation cap icon  signifies SSL Approval at [www.mcpsssl.org](http://www.mcpsssl.org) "SSL Community Opportunities".)

- Consider getting involved in service on President's Day February 20 and the "Early Release" day on March 2.
- Local, State, and National elections provide opportunities for students to be involved in the political process. Political organizations and opportunities identified with a graduation cap icon on the website [www.mcpsssl.org](http://www.mcpsssl.org) are approved for SSL. Any service provided to an individual running for public office requires MCPS Form 560-50, Request for SSL Preapproval granted in advance.
- Remember: SSL is a graduation requirement. SSL along with all other requirements must be met for a high school diploma to be awarded.

