

# MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWS

Volume 8 Issue 1

HAMS

October 2013

## Principal's Message

Dear Parent/Guardian,

It's with great pride and honor I submit my first "Principal's Message" as Principal at Huntingdon Area Middle School. It has been a great first month getting to know students and staff! My first message to you is to let you know that Mrs. Rieffannacht and I always have our door open to you and/or your child's concerns or problems. Please make note of our contact information and do not hesitate to use that information! As you will read in this newsletter our teachers are doing a great job of engaging our students to make connections with the content being taught. Some items worth noting at the Middle School are; 1) Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDT's) have begun being administered to all students, all students finished taking their math CDT's this week. The purpose of administering CDT's to our students is to guide instruction specifically targeted to meet students needs, including students strengths and areas of need. Students take CDT's in Math, Reading, Science and Writing. Teachers will then use that data to shape and drive their instruction in class and during our enrichment periods. Reading CDT's are set to begin the week of October 7th, Writing CDT's the week of October 14th and Science CDT's the week of Oct 21st. 2) A joint pep assembly with the High School and Middle School is scheduled for Friday October 18 to culminate Homecoming Week. HAMS will have "sprit week" leading up to Friday's pep assembly. A middle school pep assembly is also tentatively being planned for Thursday October 31 in the middle school gymnasium.



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3) Our first Activity Night is set for Friday November 15th from 5:30-7:30 in the gymnasium. Students will have the chance to socialize, dance, snack and just relax with friends.

4) There is consideration of gauging the interest of parent/guardians wanting to form a HAMS Parent Organization. A meeting will be scheduled to assess the interest level of parents, you will receive notification via School Messenger. In the meantime, please contact me via email or phone if interested. 5) HAMS is revitalizing it's Accelerated Reader (AR) program by subscribing to Renaissance Learning's AR web based version. This will give our student access to thousands of AR books and online quizzes and access to new reporting data. The consensus on behalf of teachers and administration is that this will significantly increase the amount our students read! An incentive program is being developed to increase student participation. 6) National Writing Day is Sunday October 20th. HAMS will be conducting a building wide writing activity during the week to celebrate!. The five steps of the writing process, Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Editing/Proofreading and Publishing, will be the focus. It is such a beautiful time of year I hope you and your family are enjoying the scenic autumn weather.

Brian J. Pelka  
Principal

**Huntingdon Area  
Middle School**

**"Working together so all  
students can learn"**

### PA History is Alive and Well in the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Wing of HAMS

The 6<sup>th</sup> grade students that participate in Mrs. Brown's, Mrs. Dickson's, Mr. Marter's, and Mr. McCarty's PA History class found themselves' stepping back in time to when American Indians ruled the land of Pennsylvania. Guided reading about Native Americans lead to discussions about the Indians' location, government, homes, culture, and transportation. To help the students appreciate the history and hardships the American Indians had to endure, they took on the role of an American Indian. They found themselves trading and bartering his or her colored beads with other students. The goal was to attain a specific number of each color of bead to construct a Wampum belt. This collection of beads would help them survive within the tribe. Some students found themselves wonderful barterers and tradesmen! Others found the task a little more difficult. Students that attained the specific color and number of beads to make their Wampum belt attained a prize. Those finding bonus beads were rewarded with an extra prize. After the completion of the trading activity, the importance was discussed. The students that were able to attain the extra beads would be able to barter for extra resources that they may need to survive during the winter months. Students just attaining the required beads would be the individuals that may or may not make it. These students realized that they had no extra beads to barter or trade with. They would have to rely on just the basic resources they had collected. Students not attaining the required beads would have had the hardest time surviving. The lack of resources to trade and barter with would have made it difficult to make it through the harsh winter conditions. In the end, each student was given a prize for his or her participation in the activity. Along with the prize, the students also left with a new appreciation and understanding of the basic lives the American Indians led.



### Ladies and Gentlemen... "Aim for the Moon!"

It has been an exciting start to the school year for the sixth grade students and teachers. This school year has been full of first time experiences for our new students, and they will continue to have many more as the year progresses. The transition from elementary school to the middle school can be a challenging one, but also a very rewarding one as our students continue their educational journey. It is this challenging and rewarding environment that is strived for in science class.

So far this year, we have been studying astronomy. Students have learned about the Earth and its relationship to our sun. Topics covered while studying the Earth included the rotation and revolution, calendars, and seasons. Students have also learned about Earth's sole natural satellite, the moon. Topics of learning for the moon include the phases of the moon, solar and lunar eclipses, and how the moon (along with the sun) cause our tides. Currently, sixth grade is learning about how early scientists, like Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton have influenced our current understanding of our solar system.

There are two experiences that students have had in science that are noteworthy. The first was an extra credit assignment. The assignment was for students to observe and record their personal reaction to the launching of a NASA moon probe that was visible from our location.

The rocket was launched from Wallops Island, Virginia at 11:27 PM on the sixth of September. The purpose of the moon mission, called LADEE (Lunar Atmosphere and Dust Environment Explorer), was to study the dust on the moon as well as the wispy atmosphere there.

Quite a few students participated in the extra credit activity, and wrote some exciting responses to what they viewed.

The second experience students participated in also related to the moon. Students were responsible for knowing the eight phases of the moon. To help students visualize each of these phases they created models. Instead of using construction paper, styrofoam spheres, or clay to make their models, students used cookies.

Students were given four chocolate sandwich cookies to use as their modeling material. The idea was to recreate each of the phases of the moon using the separated cookies and filling. The filling would be used to represent the visible phase of the moon, while a clean (no filling) cookie halve would represent the new moon phase. Students enjoyed working with a spoon, as their sculpting device, to model each of those eight phases. After showing their models of the phases of the moon, students were rewarded for a job well done by being allowed to eat their moon models. Astronomy never tasted so good!



## It Starts With Us

As our eighth grade students continue their journey into their last year in the middle school, it is imperative that teachers and parents stress the importance of being consistent with academics. So many times, students begin the school year performing extremely well in their classes and then gradually their motivation lessens. The only way for our adolescents to advance their positions in life is through a solid work ethic and dedication to their lives. At thirteen and fourteen years of age, this concept is extremely difficult for students to grasp, which should be all the motivation we need as their parents, teachers, mentors and role models to do everything we can to help develop consistent, positive habits, work ethics and working relationships. As parents and teachers, we can hold our students to higher but attainable expectations. It starts with us to provide the foundation from which a young adolescent can grow into a young man or woman who consistently cares about their future, the future of their community and the future of those who lives they come in contact.

8 Bears

## Feel Free To Contact Us

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## Mr. Smith—Social Studies

Last year, the school purchased Chrome books to replace the 8th grade Social Studies textbook. Even though the Chromebooks were purchased to be used by the 8th graders, the 7th graders have also been using the Chromebooks in their Social Studies classes. Chromebook is designed by Google, and allows users to browse the Internet, use Gmail, and create Google Docs. The Chromebooks that Mr. Smith has in his classroom are smaller and lighter than the PC laptops and MacBooks in the middle school. In terms of pricing, the Chromebooks offer users a quality laptop for a reasonable price. For comparison purposes, the lower end Chromebook begins as low as \$199, and the cheapest MacBook Air starts at \$999.

During the month of September, the 7th and 8th grade classes learned how to create Google Docs and presentations on the Chromebooks. After learning how to do this, both the 7th and 8th graders wrote a paper using Google Docs, and then shared it with another classmate who helped them peer edit their paper. In addition to using it to write papers, the 7th and 8th graders took quizzes online using Google Form. Mr. Smith uses Google Form to create quizzes for his students, which students take online and then submit. The days of paper tests and quizzes are a thing of the past in Mr. Smith's social studies classrooms. Lastly, the 8th graders created a presentation using Google Docs about the Mayans. By using Google Docs to create the presentation, students could work on this project at the same time while not being on the same computer. The future of using technology in education is alive in Mr. Smith's classroom.



## Play-doh Gone Wild

7/8 Cats

In the first few weeks of school, you may have been confused when your child informed you that they were “playing with Play-doh” during Language Arts class. However, this salty material was a pivotal part of our first unit which dealt with the process of creation. While examining the components of creating a piece of writing, students compared the writing process to the techniques of an artist creating a sculpture.

Students examined each stage of the writing process, beginning with prewriting techniques and traveling through the procedure until they completed their published product. Students were to keep a specific focus in mind through the entire creation process; they were to create a pencil holder out of their Play-doh.

To keep things interesting, students competed to win the best sculpture. The prize for having the best was a coveted homework pass, which was awarded to Ben Briggs for his “Hot Doggy” design. A few honorable mentions went out to Victoria Conrad and Nick Zanic for their interesting and creative designs. Ben's winning sculptor is pictured below.



## 7 Bears Ancient Cave Drawings

Imagine what life was like before there was writing. The students in 7 Bears Social Studies class have learned about the processes of prehistory in class. To help students gain valuable background knowledge to what life was like in ancient civilizations they completed a cave drawing project. The students were not permitted to use letters, words, or numbers when completing the drawing. Since some of our ancient ancestors didn't have written records of events they used symbols and other artistic points of view to portray information about them. The students centered their drawings on personal experiences and current interest levels in their lives. The emphasis was for generations years from now being able to analyze or critique the drawings and gain a better understanding of what life was like in 2013.

### 7 Bears Team

L to R: Monica Stromer, Austin Norris, Andrew Lewis, Ian Negri, Noah Lewis and Bradley Maidens



## Yearbook

Orders can be placed NOW for the 2013-2014 Yearbook. Orders can be placed ONLINE with Jostens, Inc.

[www.jostens.com](http://www.jostens.com)

Search Huntingdon Middle School

Cost: \$22.00 + Tax= \$23.32

Order your Yearbook now.!

## HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

This is an exciting year for the Middle School Health and Physical Education Department. We now have a new gymnasium, a new health room equipped with a smartboard and plenty of whiteboards and beautiful locker rooms for both boys and girls.. Each student has Health and Physical Education for a nine week period and then moves on to another special area. Instruction, safety, fitness, and fun are our main goals in the health and physical education classes and we get the students actively involved as quickly as possible. We try to incorporate other areas of learning into our curriculum to maintain the middle school concept of teaming. Some of the activities that students will participate in are: flicker football, floor hockey, volleyball, soccer, archery, kickball, basketball, speedball, angle ball, softball, wiffleball, tennis, badminton, scooter ball, relay races, physical fitness tests, and the fitness center.

Students will learn several units in the health curriculum such as: nutrition, body image, eating disorders, physical fitness and activity level, personal health and hygiene, growth and development, and abstinence education/HIV/AIDS. Mrs. Schneider and Mr. Carlson are looking forward to a good school year and are hoping to give every student a nine weeks filled with learning, fun, enthusiasm, and physical fitness. They want to inspire students to take their activities and fitness to the next level and to lead a healthy lifestyle.



### A rare opportunity: World Recognized Artists Visit HAMS!

Many thanks extended to The Huntingdon County Arts Council for providing this program.

We've all heard the saying "think outside the box." This week our middle school and high school students had the opportunity to do just that. Kevin Box, a Pennsylvania native who now resides in New Mexico had the students' eyes wide with wonder as he described his 12 week, 35 step process of Lost Wax Casting. Kevin recently teamed up with Dr. Robert Lang, one of the world's foremost origami artists, and pioneer in computational origami and the development of formal design algorithms for folding. The artists installed "Peace Flight," a sculpture commemorating J.C. Blair's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Next time you take a drive by Bryan Street be sure to notice the beautiful sculpture as you travel up Hospital Hill. Using a team approach to their artwork, Box and Lang, have shown our students the true advantage of thinking cross-curricularly. It was a room full of mathematicians and artist alike. What amazing results can be achieved when the opposite hemispheres of our brain unite!

Erin States, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader at HAMS, said "when they talked about how they got the shape for the sculpture and how they molded it and turned paper into metal, I thought that was really neat!" Duncan Wentzel (6<sup>th</sup> grade) said "It was complex! The 12 week process of making a paper sculpture into a metal sculpture." Here's a glimpse of what that process looked like:



Please take time to enjoy getting to know more about the artists who have permanently touched our community by visiting their websites with your children:

Dr. Robert Lang <http://www.langorigami.com/>

Mr. Kevin Box <http://outsidetheboxstudio.com/>

Erin Shaffer:

HAMS ART TEACHER

### Homework Help

Monday through Thursday of each week, help for students will be available. Our homework Help tutoring program is available to all students that need more time to develop academic skills and time to complete homework. Hours for help are 2:45 –4:00 PM and transportation will be the responsibility of the parents. Please contact the school if you are interested in the program.



### **Career Exploration**

In a quest to explore the fascinating world of career development, students completed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. This personality inventory measures psychological preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions. The four preferences of the Myers-Briggs include attitude: extroversion/introversion (E, I); functions: sensing/intuition (S, N) and thinking/feeling (T, F); lifestyle: judgment/perception (J,P). After answering a series of questions, students identified their four letter personality profile. There are sixteen personality profiles which identify interests, values, needs, and motivation. Adolescents were able to view possible careers that correspond to their personality profile. The students enjoyed this activity and will continue the journey of career exploration at HAMS.

### **Career Announcement Endeavor**

During the month of October and for the duration of the academic year, students will begin to hear daily announcements pertaining to the world of work. Adolescents will learn about new developments in the job market and acquire valuable information that will lead to a successful future.



## **EVENTS**

- October 4 Half day—Act 80
- October 9 School Photos
- October 14-18 SPIRIT WEEK
- October 18 Pep Assembly at HS
- October 23 No School -Act 80
- October 29 End of 1st Marking Period
- October 31 MS Pep Assembly
- November 7 Parent Conferences 3:00-7:00
- November 11 Staff Development—NO School
- November 14 Parent Conferences 3:00-7:00
- November 19 6 Bears to Shavers Creek
- November 21 6 Cats to Shavers Creek
- November 27 Early Dismissal—12 Noon
- November 28 –December 3—Thanksgiving Vacation

### **Mission**

**Our community engages all students to maximize their learning and leadership potential as global contributors.**

### **Vision**

**Our students achieve their full potential and experience success, leaving school inspired to continue learning every day.**

### **Values**

**Safety, Excellence, Respect, Integrity, Lifelong Learning.**



















































