

# *Sycamore Middle School*



Parent Newsletter  
December/January 2009 - 2010  
150 Maplewood Drive  
Sycamore, IL 60178  
Attendance: 815-899-8170  
or 815-899-8182



## From the Principal

The end of 2009 is drawing near already! We have had a great start of the school year here at Sycamore Middle School, and we have many things to celebrate!

First, we'd like to celebrate our students. We have had an excellent beginning in many different ways. Our students participated in two different fund-raisers, the magazine drive and the run-a-thon. Between the two fund-raisers, our students raised over \$13,000. This money goes a long way towards helping to pay for field trips, classroom equipment, and other items that benefit our children. In addition, our teams have completed several different activities to give back to our community. Our teams have held a clothing drive, food drive, soap drive, and a read-a-thon. We also had a team who prepared dinner for Hope Haven. What a great way for our children to give back to the community and understand the importance of giving back!

On another note, we would also like to celebrate our student athletes. Our seventh grade girls volleyball team took second place in the NCJC conference, and our eighth grade football team took first. Our boys cross country team qualified for the state meet, along with Maggie Lalowski, and Mark Stice finished eleventh in the state.

We would also like to take the time to celebrate our families. Without your support, our students could not be as successful as they are. Thanks to all of you who spend the extra time to make sure homework is completed well, that your child gets a good night's sleep, and that they have the supplies and tools that they need to be successful at school. We are very fortunate to have such great kids here at SMS, and that is due in no small part to the parent base that we have. Thank you!

I would also like to celebrate our staff. At any time of the day or night, even on weekends, you can drive past the middle school and see the hard-working, dedicated staff here at Sycamore Middle School. Many of them put in countless hours of planning and preparation, grading, coursework, and research to make sure they are providing the best education possible for your children. I am proud of the staff that we have here at Sycamore Middle School, and I am so grateful to work with them each and every day.

One of the biggest celebrations currently happening at SMS is the construction! We have started Phase One of our new building plan, which includes laying the foundations for our new science labs and media center and digging our retention ponds. If you have not been past the middle school lately, I would encourage you to take a drive past to see how different it already looks. We have been meeting with our architects and builders on a weekly basis to continue to refine the plans. The new look for our building will be extremely welcoming and kid-friendly, and I think it will be a place we can all be proud of.

Sincerely,

James Cleven

## Spartan Spotlight

You're at home or at work, and suddenly, the phone rings, and the caller identifies himself as the principal of the middle school. No good can come from this, right? WRONG!

Each day, teams meet to discuss curriculum and students' learning needs. Mr. Cleven and Mrs. Bickley attend these meetings twice each month, and we have been asking the teams to identify positive students who are making good choices for their learning and citizenship. They describe why the students they mention merit the recognition. Mr. Cleven calls the students down, and explains that the reason they were summoned is a good one! He or she has made some positive choices!

So if you get a call from the principal, most likely, it's for a really great reason.

The following students were acknowledged by their teams. Congratulations to them all; they have a lot to be proud of, as do their parents. Thanks, too, to our teams of teachers, who make time to recognize students for their accomplishments!

Name	Team	Name	Team
Lynnea Racine	Endeavor	Dan Hein	Spirit
Anna Gosciejew	Endeavor	Joshua House	Sprit
Chase Clausen	Endeavor	Rebeka Mines	Intrepid
Ariba Jamil	Endeavor	Deonte Wilson	Intrepid
Kylee Whitley	Endeavor	Hunter Jendrysik	Intrepid
Maddie White	Great Expectations	Michael Brill	Destiny
Michael Stinnett	Great Expectations	Jeff Schwartz	Destiny
David Boyer	Segue	Devin Hanks	Destiny
Efrain Aguirre	Segue	Maddie Kenney	Destiny
Kalene McGrath	Segue	Joshua Armstrong	High Five
Addison Foulk	Segue	Victoria Smith	High Five
Justin Chyson	Spartan 7		
Zoe Paul	Spartan 7		



## Congratulations to Students of the Month!

The **October** recipients of the Student of the Month award were...

**6th Grade:** Gabriella Atkins, Chase Clausen, Phoebe Regnery, Stephen Flaherty, and Daniel Hein

**7th Grade:** Madisyn Russell, Russell Swenson, Justin Otte, Baylie Petit, Raelyn Erickson, and Nick Piloni

**8th Grade:** Francesca Prospero, Johan Hernandez, Maggie Meyer, Mark Todd, Brendan Fank, and Kalya DeForest

*Congrats to Team Spirit on winning the MOYA Food Drive. The team received a traveling wall plaque. Way to go Team Spirit!*



### Pumpkin Festival Essay Winners

Congratulations to Jake Pisarski, Kailey Mulligan, Julien Bueno, Emma Johnson, and Natilee Morey who were winners in the Pumpkin Festival story/poem contest. These students were honored as junior grand marshals in this year's Pumpkin Festival Parade. The winners also were treated to a trip to Johnson's Corn Maze and

### Rotary Baking Contest

*Congratulations to the following winners!*

**Pies:** 1st place – Kailey Mulligan, 2nd – Elliott Pritchett

**Baked Goods:** 1st place – Izzy Johnson, 2nd – Trent Englum, 3rd – Kailey Mulligan

A great big congratulations goes out to Isreal Zarate for winning the Grand Prize in the PAMCANI (Plumbing and Mechanical Authority of Northern Illinois) Water Conservation Poster Contest. He won a \$500 savings bond and a \$2000 CDW gift card for the middle school to purchase computer equipment. Olivia Lohse won Honorable Mention in the same contest; she won a \$75 savings bond. Congratulations to both of you on your winnings.

### Band & Orchestra Notes

Sycamore Middle School sent a large contingency to the IMEA District Festivals again this year. Thirty-seven of our students have been selected to participate within the 2009 Illinois Music Educators Association All-District Orchestras, Bands, Jazz Bands, and Choirs. Students who made All-District groups perform specific musical selections for judges in competitive auditions in October. Students who are selected then spend one day in rehearsals, culminating in performances later that day.

The All-District Jazz Festival was held at Hononegah High School on Saturday, November 14, while the IMEA District 2/8 Orchestra Festival was held at Augustana College in Rock Island. The All-District Band and Choir Festivals were held Saturday, November 21 at Northern Illinois University.

Students from Sycamore Middle School that were selected are:

#### **Concert Band**

Rebecca Vidales, Oboe; Emma Olson, Oboe; Rachel Hecht, Bassoon; Michael Ekstrom, Clarinet; Gracia Watson, Alto Saxophone; Andrew Selig, French Horn; Jordyn Shultz, French Horn; Ruchi Patel, French Horn; Jessica Howland, Trombone; Casey Bunge, Trombone.

#### **Jazz Band**

Gracia Watson, Alto Sax; Autumn Salis, Tenor Sax; Tony Gentile, Baritone Sax; Alex Taylor, Trombone; Matthew Johnson, Trombone; Casey Bunge, Trombone; Elizabeth Watson, Piano.

#### **Orchestra**

Zoe Bond, violin; Lizzie Briscoe, violin; Lydia Carpenter, violin; Hannah Cerny, violin; Katie Denius, violin; Trent Englum, viola; Sarah Grant, bass; Dan Hancock, bass; Rebecca Hooey, violin; Seth Kates, bass; Maggie Lalowski, cello; Ryan Lindsey, cello; Madeline Pawola, violin; Baylie Petit, cello; Laleh Pouremad, violin; Alex Tritt, violin; Becca Vidales, viola; Cooper Vinz, cello; Meredith Whisenhunt, violin; Angelina Ye, violin.

Congratulations go out to all the students who participated in the IMEA tryouts. By preparing auditions, they all improved as musicians, and that makes all of the music groups at Sycamore Middle School stronger. Nice job!

# What's Up with the Point System I keep hearing about?

## **Basics:**

Sycamore Middle School has a point system that is designed to reinforce and acknowledge students' good choices with positive points and to remind students of rules and consequences with negative points for poor choices. It helps hold students accountable for their choices throughout their school day.

## **Benefits:**

All teams have regular positive point activities planned. These are not tied to a certain point total, but to a number of points accrued since the last positive point activity. These activities are fun! They range from games, bowling, walks to the park, movies, popcorn parties, and other activities our students enjoy. Teams try to include as many students as possible, and students have unlimited ways to earn positive points toward admission!

No system of discipline will reach every student, but most systems will reach 85-95% of students, including ours. In addition, the point system helps those students who need more support for behavior, without assigning detentions over and over. Students who earn -10 in a week have a conference with our Assistant Principal, Mrs. Bickley, where they discuss the challenges and problem-solve toward resolution. There is a detention assigned for -10 in a week, but it is coupled with a conference. Students whose balance is -20 confer with Mrs. Bickley and establish a contract/reward system toward resolution.

When these things are not working, and a student earns his/her way to a -30 balance, all school privileges are removed. That student cannot be in the halls without an escort, cannot eat with friends, and cannot attend/participate in extra-curriculars. These students are also discussed at our team meetings and in STAT (Student Teacher Assistance Team.) Further strategies are planned toward success. Our point system is designed to help students be accountable and responsible for their behavior and learning throughout their day. While some of these consequences are not positive for the student, the wrap-around attention and problem solving have far-reaching impact and benefits!

## **Results:**

We are proud of the results our point system has in helping our students reach goals, having fun at school, and most importantly, making responsible choices. Overall, positive points outnumber negative points 7 to 1. Please read the fine details of the system on pg. 7-8 of the student handbook, and feel free to call Mr. Cleven, Mrs. Bickley, or any member of the SMS staff if you have any questions or concerns!

## **Tips for Improving Homework Completion at Home from the National PTA:**

1. Plan quiet time for the family every day.
2. Schedule homework at a time that works for both your child and your family. Some kids like to do homework right after school; some may need a break.
3. Help your child set up a study area. This can be in any room, depending on whether the child prefers to study alone or around others.
4. Resist the impulse to do the work. Doing a child's homework may hinder comprehension of the material. Advise your child without taking over the project.
5. Keep in mind homework's higher purpose: It give a child the opportunity to work independently, develop self-discipline, and cultivate a love of learning.

## PTO News

The fall fundraiser was again a success! The middle school earned \$13,000.00 to help fund educational field trips and other worthy (and child centered) activities. Fifteen students were lucky enough to win a limo lunch. The kids had a great time riding in the bright pink limo!

PTO has **Market Day** each month at the middle school. Ask your child to bring home a flier or go to [www.marketday.com](http://www.marketday.com). If you are interested in helping with Market Day, please contact Noel Smith at (815) 895-7074. We are collecting BoxTops for Education, Swiss Valley Milk tops, Nestle Pure Life water labels and used printer toner cartridges...all of these provide cash back to our school and great stuff for your kids. Send the Box Tops, milk caps, water labels and cartridges to the middle school office.

The November 13<sup>th</sup> dance was extremely well attended by Sycamore Middle Schoolers! Fun was had by all, and the students were quite well behaved!! The next PTO dance is Friday, February 5th. You will not get called for every dance you volunteered for, but you should get called for at least one! If you still want to contribute to **every** dance, baked goods are always in short supply and always welcome! You can drop off baked goods the day of the dance from 8:00 to 4:00 in the main office.

The next PTO meeting will be Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. We hope to see you then!

## Notes from the Library

1. Students must have their ID card in order to check out a book. There are no exceptions. Students may not use a friend's ID. They must use their own.
2. Books are due back three weeks from the time they are checked out.
3. Students are allowed to check out 3 items at a time.
4. If a student has an overdue item, he or she **MAY NOT** check out any books until the overdue item is turned in.
5. Magazines and graphic novels are due back one week from the original date of checkout.
6. Our newest issues of each magazine will not be available for immediate checkout, but can be enjoyed in the LRC until the next issue comes in to replace it -- at this time, of course, the previous issue can be checked out.

When your child is absent from school, please call the school office **before 9:00 am** at **899-8170 or 899-8182**. Also, if your child has an appointment at the beginning of the day and will be late to school, please call the office as well. We do have voice mail for attendance from 4:00 pm until 7:30 am to allow you to call very early in the morning or during the night.



**Mark your calendar**  
**SCIENCE OLYMPIAD**  
**Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010**  
**6 pm – 8:00 pm**

Please mark your calendar and plan to join us for this exciting event!  
Your child will bring home details in January.

## **Nurse's Office**

### **Information for parents and students regarding H1N1 virus:**

As many of you are aware from the media the H1N1 influenza virus is spreading. At this time there are no blood confirmed cases of it in the Sycamore School District. There are, of course, students who have other viral symptoms such as influenza A, upper respiratory infections, and sore throats including strep, etc.

### **There are 3 C's to remember:**

1. Clean-wash your hands frequently to prevent the spread of germs.
2. Cover-your cough and sneeze with a tissue or sleeve, not your hand.
3. Contain-contain your germs. STAY HOME if you are sick.

Please do not send your student back until they have been fever free without fever reducing medication for 24-48 hours and are not showing significant symptoms.

When calling in your student ill please let the attendance office or recorder know if he or she has a fever with cough and or sore throat.

The following websites provide updated information that you may want to access:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents>

[www.ready.illinois.gov](http://www.ready.illinois.gov)

**Please call your school nurse if you have any additional questions.**

## State of Illinois Registered Sex Offender Search

Information on registered sex offenders is available on the State of Illinois web site at [www.isp.state.il.us/sor](http://www.isp.state.il.us/sor). This information is being provided in accordance with the Illinois Sex Offender Registration Act-to Parents (Public Act 94-0994).

## Club/Activity News

**Art Club:** Art club meets from 3:15 to 4:30 on Fridays. Sycamore Middle School Art Club is an outlet for students to explore who they are and what they might want to become. It allows students to be creative and use their imagination. A unique feature of art club is that children learn through structured play. The club is run democratically. Members of the club present ideas, vote on them and then plan out the activities. This organization gives students the opportunity to express themselves, build confidence, and develop leadership skills while having fun creating art.

Second semester art club will meet: Jan. 22, Jan. 29, Feb. 12, Feb. 26, March 5, March 12, March 9 and March 23.

**Student Council:** Meetings are on Tuesday mornings at 7:45 A.M. Student Council at the Middle School is comprised of representatives from each team 6th - 8th grade. The representatives are elected by the students on their team and bring suggestions from their electorate to the meetings. The representatives also are part of several committees of the council, such as Locker Lotto, Sign, Scrapbook, Meet and Mingle, School Store, Food Advisory, Teacher Appreciation Week, and other committees that may be formed according to need. The student council sponsors a trip each year, open to all three grades, to either a ski resort or to a water park. The council takes part in community service projects and school service projects. Officers for the council are elected by the representatives and consist of a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. The officers can be from 7th or 8th grade except for the president, which is always an 8th grade student.

**Jazz Band:** The SMS Jazz Band is an extracurricular activity that meets from November through April, with rehearsals on Monday nights and Thursday mornings. It is open to all interested students in grades 6-8, with selection in the band determined by an audition. Through the performance of challenging literature and the practice of improvisation, students learn the fundamentals of jazz style and gain an appreciation of this original American art form.

**Peer Mediation:** Peer mediation meets monthly from 7:45-8:10 a.m. in the LRC. Peer mediators are students who help other students solve their conflicts. The mediators meet with students and facilitate the problem-solving process. Peer mediators are students who are responsible, trustworthy, and good listeners. If a student feels he/she needs peer mediation, request forms are available on their team or next to Mrs. Peska's office. Help make peace today!

**Best Buddies:** Best Buddies is an organization that creates buddy pairs between students with and without disabilities. Best Buddies meets once a month to do activities together so that friendships can be developed. If you would like to join, please see Mrs. O'Hagan for an application.

**Builders Club:** Builders Club is a community service organization here at the middle school.

Being a part of this club means joining nearly 40,000 other middle school students around the world. Builders Club is a member of the Kiwanis family (K-Kids, Key Club, Kiwanis, Circle K, etc.) Throughout the year we do various projects, collect items, or volunteer our time to help our school and community. We meet in the LRC on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month. Our meetings start at 7:45 A.M. Anyone is welcome to join, even if they have never been a part of a Kiwanis club before. Visit this link for more information about what Builders Club is all about:  
<http://www.buildersclub.org/>

**Yearbook:** Yearbook meets every Wednesday from 3:00 - 4:15 in Mr. Franks' room, 303. Participation in this club is limited.

**Jazz Strings:** Jazz Strings is an ensemble designed for orchestra students who would like an extra challenge. In this honor ensemble, students will play jazz, rock, and other alternative music that is not covered in traditional orchestra class. Students that are enrolled in orchestra may audition to be a part of Jazz Strings. Auditions will take place at the end of September and rehearsals will begin early October. Jazz Strings meets Tuesday mornings before school in the orchestra room from 7:30-8:10. Students are required to attend all rehearsals and performances. For more information, contact Mrs. Tonaki: [atonaki@syc427.org](mailto:atonaki@syc427.org).

**Scholastic Bowl:** Scholastic Bowl is a group of mostly 7th and 8th graders who dedicate their afternoons to learning about every topic under the sun. Scholastic Bowl at the Middle School is in its second year, and we will be competing with other schools in our region for placement in the regional and state tournaments. Scholastic Bowl consists of two teams of five plus two other students who relieve students who need to take a break from the grueling questioning. The teams have matches against other teams in their division and strive to make the regional and state tournaments. Scholastic Bowl officially starts in January, but practice and learning may begin in October.

**Braille Club:** Activities include learning and deciphering the Braille Code and learning to write letter and words with the Braillewriter. Learning is acquired through puzzles, games, riddles etc. In addition to this, students will pick up knowledge on how adaptations are made for people who are blind.

## ATHLETICS

Many congratulations go out to all of our successful fall athletes! Our seventh grade volleyball team finished second place in the NCJC tournament, and eighth grade football finished first! In addition, our boys cross country team finished in second at sectionals and qualified for the state meet. Maggie Lalowski, a girls cross country runner, also qualified for state. Special congratulations go out to Mark Stice for finishing eleventh in the entire state at the state meet!

Current in season sports include boys basketball, cheerleading, poms, and wrestling. Girls basketball will begin after winter break, and track begins in the spring. Please remember, any child who participates in interscholastic athletics must have a current sports physical on file with the athletic office. Without this physical, your child will not be able to participate in try outs or practices. Sports physicals are good for one calendar year.

In addition, our Sports Boosters are seeking out volunteers to sell concessions at high school basketball games. If you would be willing to help, please contact them through their website at <http://www.sycamoresportsboosters.com>. On their website you can also find valuable information about becoming a member or upcoming meetings. Joining Sports Boosters is a great way to support Sycamore Athletics, be a part of the community, and meet other parents.

If you have any questions about SMS athletic schedules, please go to the district website and click on the middle school link (<http://www.syc427.org>). After you get to the middle school page, click on the athletics link and then go to middle school schedules. If you have problems or questions please call the middle school office at 815-899-8170.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Team News...



Team Endeavor



Woo Hoo! We had 78 students on the honor roll first quarter. We will have a presentation of the stickers in our classroom to honor these students that worked so hard to earn these honorable grades.

Thank you very much for fantastic parent teacher conferences. Your partnership is so very important to the success of our students. We look forward to continued communication throughout the year to maintain the highest level of success for your child's learning. We have begun our Second Step non-violence social skills instruction. Each week one of the Endeavor core teachers will be instructing students in one of the 16 skill building lessons. Students have enjoyed a positive point activity and are looking forward to the next one. Congratulations to our representatives on the yearbook staff: **Mallory Beck, Kyleigh Blanchard, Jillian Diehl, Rebecca Hungerford, and Zaven Torian.**

Team Endeavor is teaching the school about the core value of loyalty. We made posters and placed them around the school. We also had our Pack the House night where the students wore red and black to show loyalty for the team, and the proceeds will go to Pay it Forward House to show our loyalty to the community.

We are here Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at 7:35 to help any student that needs to catch up or does not understand assignments. Please take advantage of this special time set aside to get extra help.

**Ms. Brady's Literature** - We are currently running a reading workshop in our class. Students are expected to read at least 30 minutes a night. Every three weeks, we will write a letter to someone about a book that they have completed. We have been visiting web sites that include cool video book trailers! The students get great ideas for books to read from these sites. The videos will also serve as examples when we do our own video book talks! All of the students seem to be excited to share the books that they are reading with the class!

**In English**, we are continuing our goal of increasing our vocabulary. Word Analysis is a great help in our quest for more morphemes. Students have been defining many words and are learning how to determine parts of speech by morphemes. In addition, to help students learn more about word choice (one of the 6 traits of good writers), we will be doing some more intense grammar study. We will go beyond nouns and verbs by stepping up to "vivacious verbs." If that's not enough, we will also be working on admirable adjectives and adverbs. Students will be doing a more involved descriptive writing piece using higher level vocabulary, sensory adjectives. We will also learn about the rest of the 6 traits of successful writers through exploration and explanation of the writing rubric that will be used by them, as well as me, for all writing assignments. Students will learn that revising their essays goes beyond just using spell check to edit their essays for the conventions of writing.

**Ms. Stracner's Literature** - We will be working in Literature Circles with specific jobs for each

student which will rotate throughout the novel. Some of the books the students have chosen are: Flipped, The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle, Milkweed, The Outsiders, The Secret of NIMH, Bridge to Terabithia and A Wrinkle in Time. The jobs students will choose from are: Word Wizard, Clever Connector, Summary Statement Server, and Illustrious Illustrator. Copies of information needed are under resources on [www.homeworklive.com](http://www.homeworklive.com), an excellent tool to back up assignment notebook information.

**Mrs. Bolda's literature** class is currently working on novel studies. We started with The Pistachio Prescription and will be reading Flipped afterwards. Students should continue to read a book of their choice outside of class and will periodically be working on detailed book reports. Impact math class is learning about patterns, numbers, and rules. We will be changing our focus to fraction and decimal operations in December and then exploring rates, ratios, and proportions later in January.

**CMP2 math** classes have completed their introduction to two-dimensional geometry and are continuing to work with fractions, decimals, and percents. Homework continues to be assigned nearly every night. Please check homeworklive.com on a regular basis to make sure your child is filling out his/her assignment notebook and to find out when the next quiz or test will be and what it will be assessing.

It was good to see so many of you at parent/teacher conferences in November. If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding your child's progress throughout the year, please do not hesitate to contact us. In addition, please ask your child if supplies need to be replenished. Some students are coming to classes without pens, pencils, and notebook paper.

**In Mrs. Hooper's science** classes, we have been learning the relationship among force, energy, and work. We are currently studying the six simple machines: lever, wheel and axle, screw, pulley, inclined plane and wedge, and how they impact our everyday life. Students construct simple and compound machines with Legos and explain how they work. Our next unit of study will be astronomy. Please remember to check Homework Live for assignments and copies of notes and vocabulary.

**In Mrs. Hooper's Talented Language Arts**, we have been reading *The Little Prince* analyzing the symbolism represented by each character. After *The Little Prince*, we will begin a unit on short stories.

**In Social Studies**, students are continuing to learning about geography. Students have used their map skills to learn about the geography of each continent both physically and politically. In addition, students have used the Five Themes of Geography to explore each continent in more detail. After Thanksgiving, students will be learning about the ancient river civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Students are also keeping informed with current events through classroom discussion and the *Time for Kids* magazines. Students will have weekly quizzes over notes and classroom discussions. Please encourage them to study their notes a few minutes each night to be prepared.

## Segue

It was wonderful to meet with so many of you at **parent/teacher conferences**. We were also pleased that many of the Team Segue students participated as we shared information about their progress and success so far at the middle school.

The rain and cold weather kept our team from walking to the Courthouse to view this year's Pumpkin Festival display as a reward to those students displaying positive behaviors. In spite of this, we still had a great time at our **first team positive point activity** watching movies and spending a relaxing afternoon with friends. We hope our students will continue to display positive behaviors as there will be more fun and exciting positive team activities planned.

On November 25, Pam Kitterman from **DeKalb County Hospice** spoke with our students about how hospice assists the terminally ill and their families in the county. **As part of our community**

**service, Team Segue created sun catchers** to attach to the B.U.N.S. (Baking Up Nice Surprises) bags that will be distributed to hospice patients and their families during the month of December. We hope these add a ray of sunshine into their lives. We are extremely proud to see our students helping out with this project as well as other school service projects such as the food and clothing drives. It is gratifying to be a part of such a caring community.

Congratulations to **Alyssa Feuerbach and Mitchell Hawkins**, our **Segue Students of the Month for September** and **Stephen Flaherty and Phoebe Regnery** our **October Students of the Month**. These individuals consistently display great attitudes and a strong work ethic. We are also proud of our students who made the **first quarter honor roll**. Keep up the excellent effort!

**Segue's student council representatives** for this year are **Alyssa Feuerbach, Mitchell Hawkins, Jennifer Kuo, and Elliott Pritchett**. We had many excellent candidates from which to choose. What a difficult voting decision Segue students had to make. We were honored to have Sycamore's mayor, Ken Mundy, join us when our students presented their student council speeches. He inspired our students to take part in community service projects and events, and we appreciate him taking time from his busy schedule to be a part of this team event.

During this year's Pumpkin Fest, Segue students became very involved in both school sponsored and community activities. We are proud to claim two of this year's **Kiwanis Club Pumpkin Fest Writing Contest** winners on Team Segue. **Kailey Mulligan** placed first and **Natilee Morey** received third place for their poetry entries. Our thanks go out to **Dylan Benson**, who volunteered his time during the **Pumpkin Fest Run** during this year's Pumpkin Fest celebration. Congratulations to **Kailey Mulligan and Elliott Pritchett** for earning prizes in the **Rotary Club Pumpkin Baking Contest**. Their baked goods were delicious!

We were very excited on our team to learn that **Olivia Lohse** received honorable mention in this year's **Water Conservation Poster Contest**. **Efrain Aguirre, Destani Maldonado, Myia Richards, Zach Dodson, Olivia Lohse, Nick Kresge, Jared Painter, Alona Glogovsky, Baylee Ricker, Seth Thompson, Kyra Nickelson, Jessica Luo, and Kailey Mulligan** will also display their artist abilities as part of the **Second Semester Art Club**.

We are very proud of our **SMS Builders Club** participants: **Chloe Bergmann, Madelyn Loellke, Isabel Dobbel, Kelsey Kolar, and Lindsay Martin!**

In addition, we are so pleased to have the following students involved in our **SMS Best Buddies** program: **Baylee Ricker, Alyssa Childress, Aidan Hickey, Alona Glogovsky, Bryce Hansen, Mitchell Hawkins, and Lindsay Martin.**

Congratulations to the **LIMO LUNCH** winners for their **outstanding** participation in our SMS magazine fundraiser: **Alona Glogovsky, Hayley Foord, Madeline Dinatale, and Kailey Mulligan!**

We're looking forward to a fabulous yearbook, and are excited these Segue students have been dedicating their time to the 2009-2010 yearbook staff: **Ryann Schopfer, Kailey Munro, Phoebe Regnery, Lauren Leifhiet, and Elliott Pritchett.**

We are also proud to have so many Segue students involved in the **SMS Cooking Club**: **Tabitha Kruis, Chloe Bergmann, Madeline Dinatale, Hayley Foord, Brian Huber, Kelsey Kolar, Isabel Pizano, Isabel Dobbel, Lauren Leifheit, Lauren Goff, and Isabel Odom.**

Finally, taking part in wrestling are: **Efrain Aguirre, Madilyn Fay, Bryce Hansen, Keith List, and Spencer Siebeck.** There is always something fun and exciting for our students to take part in at the middle school.

Our **Second Step Lessons** are now underway. These lessons focus on important social skills such as solving problems, listening actively, and showing empathy. Ask your child to explain some of the topics discussed during these lessons.

Now that we are into the second quarter, please check that your child has all of the necessary materials needed in class. Many students are in need of notebook paper, pens, and pencils. The Segue teachers are concerned with the number of students not completing homework or turning in incomplete homework. You can help at home by continuing to check your child's assignment

notebook and Homework Live and setting aside time daily to complete homework and to check your child's notebook. With all of us working together, your child should become a successful learner.

## Spirit

Thank you to all of the parents who attended parent teacher conferences. It was great to see all of you and to discuss our students. We appreciate all of the feedback that we have received. If you have any questions or concerns about anything, please contact us by email through the district website, [www.syc427.org](http://www.syc427.org)

Just a reminder, you can see your students' grades any time day or night on the parent portal, through the district website.

Homework assignments are available on [homeworklive.com](http://homeworklive.com)

A special "Thank You" goes out to all of our parent chaperones who helped out on the field trip to the Jonamac Apple Orchard. It was a blast! Next time we'll hope for drier conditions. Although it was muddy "to the core", (ha, ha), it made it one trip the students and parents will never forget. Thanks for helping.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO TEAM SPIRIT!** The students on Team Spirit were the winners of the SCHOOL-WIDE, MOYA, Month of the Young Adolescence Food Drive! Even though our team is the smallest team in the school, our students brought in the most cans per student to win the food drive. The students really stepped up and helped supply the local food pantries with much needed food this holiday season. Mrs. Bickley, our Assistant Principal, came in and presented the team with a Commemorative Plaque. WAY TO GO TEAM SPIRIT!

Congratulations to all of our SYFL Football players on their competition recently in Kentucky. Great job!

Congratulations to Israel Zarate who won first prize in a state-wide poster contest! Yes, Israel won the grand prize in the Plumbing and Mechanical Authority of Northern Illinois Water Conservation Poster Contest. Israel's poster was done in a colored pencil and marker medium. He won a \$500 savings bond for himself and the sponsor will be donating \$2000 in technology equipment to the Sycamore Middle School. Great job Israel!!!

Another huge contribution was made by our Team Spirit students this last month when they raised a whopping \$860.00 during our last read-a-thon. The money is going to be donated to Opportunity House of Sycamore. Another example of great students doing great things. We are so proud of all of you.

**Science** - We are finishing up our studies of simple machines. Next we will begin our study of space. Please remind your students, that by studying their notes and definitions each night for 10 minutes, they will be better prepared for the quizzes. Also morning help is available on Tuesday and Thursday at 7:45 a.m. if extra help is needed. Get your spacesuits out of your closets, we're going to space!

**Math** - In math we are finishing our learning in the "Shapes and Designs" book. We will begin a more in- depth look at operations of fractions in our next book, "Bits and Pieces II". I've been emphasizing to the students the need to slow down and read the questions, instead of rushing through their homework to get it completed quickly. We also have been discussing the importance of doing quality work, and having fully completed homework assignments. As I mentioned in parent teacher conferences, encourage your student to ask questions in class, I am here to help, but I'm not able to read their minds.

**Literature** - We are proud to announce successful performances of our class plays, "The Legend of Slappy Hooper" and "The Legend of Lightning Larry". The students worked hard and

did a great job performing these comedy plays. Next we will be working on some novel studies. The novels we've chosen are Flipped and A Single Shard. Be sure to ask your students about the novel they are studying.

**English** - We just finished up our study of the Friendly Letter Format by writing thank you letters to veterans or those currently serving in our military. Be on the watch for some holiday requests, as we are moving into our persuasive writing curriculum! Do you think they'll convince you?

**Social Studies** - We have finished the geography portion of our curriculum and are moving into early civilizations, beginning with hunter and gatherer groups to farming and the ideas, technology, and paradigm shifts this change has given to us today.

Students should be reminded to make sure that they are participating and completing their bellwork each day. These participation points really add up to affect their grades at the end of the quarter.



## Seventh Grade Teams

### Team Intrepid

The Team Intrepid teachers would like to thank the parents who were able to meet with us during our parent -teacher conference days. We hope that you found the information beneficial. Please feel free to contact us by phone or email if you have any questions or concerns that you would like to address.

Back in October Team Intrepid students went on a "Community Connections" field trip. We had the opportunity to visit the courthouse and talk with Judge Klein. We learned about the judicial system and the history of the courthouse. We then met with Mayor Mundy and learned how a city council meeting runs. Our final stop was at the Sycamore School District administration building. We had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Riesen, school superintendent, Mrs. Countryman, assistant superintendent, Mr. Glowiak, assistant superintendent of financing, and Dr. Leifheit, director of curriculum. All in all, it was a very educational day!

Thank you to the families who were able to join us for our October family get-together at Johnson's farm. Those in attendance had a great time. Keep a watch out for a winter get-together; after the snow flies, we'd like to go sledding!

#### **Here are some important reminders:**

All students are expected to wear their student ID on a lanyard around their neck everyday at school. Many students have lost their ID, lanyard, or both. IDs can be replaced for a \$5 fee, and lanyards cost .50 cents. Feel free to have your student do chores to earn money to replace these necessary items.

We've noticed that many students are not filling in their assignment notebook regularly. The assignment notebook is your child's first resource for homework assignments. [www.homeworklive.com](http://www.homeworklive.com) is to be used as a back-up. There are times when the system may not be working properly, your computer may not be working properly, or a teacher had a sub, so this resource should not be relied upon. Please have a conversation with your child about his/her assignment notebook and how he/she uses it. If your child is one who struggles with homework completion, expect him/her to use it, and please check that he/she does.

Please check with your child to ensure that he/she has the proper supplies for school. Students are coming to class without the required writing/correcting utensils or loose leaf paper.

The school is still collecting Box Tops for Education, Swiss Valley milk caps, Nestle water labels, and A+ (Tyson product) labels. Don't forget there is also Market Day, ink jet recycling, and Target also pays back 1% of your purchases.

**Team Intrepid Science** - We are just finishing up, or have just finished up, our unit on Cells and Heredity. Students learned to identify the cell's role as the basic unit of structure and function of living things, how to relate the various cell processes to the survival of a cell, and to apply their knowledge of basic genetics to predict possible offspring. Our next adventure will be taking on the Physics unit of Waves, Light, and Sound. We will first delve into identifying waves as a means of transferring energy with measurable properties by doing several different types of hands-on activities. Students should be able to define and classify a wave, identify its properties, determine frequency, distinguish among reflection, refraction, and diffraction as they interact with barriers, and depict constructive and destructive interference as they interact with each other.

Throughout the unit students will be held accountable for keeping their science spirals in proper order with accurate information and detail. For many students, organization and success go hand-in hand.

Although written homework assignments are very rare in science class, students are to be studying EVERY night for 10 – 15 minutes. The repetition is a key to long-term memory, as well as learning and understanding the material.

**Team Intrepid English** - After completing a formal business letter writing unit in late November and early December, students will begin a persuasive writing unit before leaving for winter break. As the New Year kicks off, we will reconvene and finish our persuasive essay. Our public speaking unit will follow the persuasive essay in mid to late January.

**Flaherty Math** - We finished our unit about integers and are now moving to the book Data Distributions which will allow students to work with data in various ways. Please encourage your child to use the Success Net account at home. This is part of the CMP2 site that supports our program. You can get there by going to [www.phschool.com/cmp2](http://www.phschool.com/cmp2) and clicking on the Success Net link on the left side of the screen. EVERY student has activities on this site that they can complete as a way to reinforce skills from 6<sup>th</sup> grade which may have escaped them.

**Flaherty GaTES Math** - We are currently working out of the book Moving Straight Ahead which focuses on linear relationships and solving equations. This is a book from the Connected Math series. We will return to the purple books after this unit. The Connected Math website, [www.phschool.com/cmp2](http://www.phschool.com/cmp2), has many resources for students to access for extra practice as needed. Students were shown this information in class, so ask them about their log in and password. Parents can also view the parent resources.

**Flaherty Literature** - We have begun our Reader's Workshop. Students are expected to read outside of literature class for 30 minutes EVERY DAY. The best way to improve student reading abilities is for them to read books at their reading level. In class we discuss ways to make sure we are reading books at our own level, and discuss how to check for comprehension along the way. Other skills we will focus on are inferencing, characterization, and vocabulary. The power point which contains the expectations can be found on Homework Live.

**Miss Munch's Math** - Group A is working on problems that involve data. Students are answering questions about different types of graphs, and they have constructed the following: bar graphs, line graphs, pictographs, and stem-and-leaf plots. Group B is working on subtraction

skills, while Group C is working on a variety of skills that include numeration, money, difference, similar, and matching.

**Miss Munch's English** - Students continue to review previous learned skills and apply these skills to paragraph writing. Currently they are working on paragraphs about what changes they would like to see at Sycamore Middle School.

**Miss Munch's Literature/Reading class** - Students have been reading materials from their textbook and newspaper articles. As we read, we work on many skills such as: decoding, using context clues, vocabulary, and comprehension. In addition, students are taking weekly reading tests. They have to either read a passage fluently or read a list of words with 90-100% accuracy. Encourage your child to **read aloud** to you each night.

**Intrepid Social Science: Stambaugh** - In history we are studying European Exploration and will be discussing: 1) the changes in Europe that brought about exploration 2) How exploration impacted the people already living in the Americas, 3) Identify major American cultures that existed before the arrival of the Europeans, 4) How Columbus' discovery led to further exploration and settlement of the Americas, 5) How exploration impacted the Mayan and Aztec cultures, 6) Why the Spanish started settlements in North America, 7) Why other European nations began to challenge Spain's power, 8) England's' first attempts to settle in North America with Spain's first attempts to settle in North America, 9) Why other European nations began to challenge Spain's power.

**In geography** we will be focusing on the physical geography of the West Indies, Mexico, Central America, and South America.

**Character Education:** We will be focusing on the core value of CARING for the next few weeks. I will be having study sessions twice a week (Tuesday and Thursday) in my study hall. If your child is in my study hall he/she needs to be aware there will be no time to work on other assignments those two days. I will also hold a study session for acceleration and/or remediation on Wednesdays during A and B lunches.

## Triumph

Thanks for coming in for conferences. We learn a great deal from you about your students when we have these conferences. If you need any follow up from us, please let us know.

Triumph had a surprise going away party for Mrs. Thorstenson on her last day. We know she will miss your children. She has asked us to keep her in mind when we have any get togethers in the future. She would like to come back and visit.

Thank you for sending in soap for the soap drive. Ms. Wilkinson's room collected the most and had donuts and juice for the breakfast. The soap was donated to pantries and shelters to help people that are in need. It was a great way for us to show the core value of Caring.

We would like to congratulate our Students of the month so far this year. They include: J.T Ward, Elizabeth Bles, Nick Piloni, and Raelyn Erickson. Keep up the good work and demonstrating good student behavior!

Honor Roll lunch was held on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Triumph is very proud of our students that distinguish themselves by this achievement.

**Ms. Wilkinson's math** classes are finishing Integers! We still have more practice to go, but we know how to add, subtract, multiply and divide positive and negative numbers. This was a harder thing than we thought when we started. However, students did very well with these new concepts. Now we are on to Data!(I feel more graphs are in our future.)

**Social Studies** is moving into the colonies. We finished exploring the New World by recreating Jamestown. If your student was a John or Jane Smith... they worked hard to get their colonists to work together. Unfortunately not all of the groups survived the Starving Time. Congratulations to everyone one that participated in this hands on project, you all did very well.

**Mrs. Kleiser's classes** - I have been teaching your child since mid-November and it has been a pleasure to meet each and every student. Literature class has been focused on engaging students in Readers Workshop. One of the requirements for participating in Readers Workshop is a free reading book. Please remind your student to have a book with them at all times. In addition, students are required to read outside of their literature class (for example; at home or at REACH) for 30 minutes each day. Please ensure that your child is doing this.

**In science** we are delving into the world of cells and heredity. We will be examining the basic unit of structure within all organisms as well as examining what makes each organism unique. In social studies, we will be focusing on the colonies.

## Spartan Seven

**Spartan 7** teachers would like to **thank all parents who donated treats** for our field trip days to Russell Woods in October. On the field trip, students were able to utilize their navigational skills using GPS units by following a GEO cache set up in the woods. We also were able to hike the woods and enjoy the beauty of nature.

Congratulations to our **October Students of the Month, Baylie Petit and Justin Otte!!!**

Spartan 7 students were "treated" to a **positive point activity** on November 25<sup>th</sup> with social time with friends and a can of soda pop.

Just a reminder that we offer **morning help** on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings from 7:40-8:00. If your student needs help in any subject, please encourage them to come in.

Team Spartan Seven will be **collecting greeting cards** after the holidays to donate to the St. Jude's' Ranch for Children Card Recycling Program. Please send in any holiday cards that you received and are ready to recycle. See [stjudesranch.org](http://stjudesranch.org) for further information.

**Math** classes finished up the book *Variables and Patterns* and will be moving on to *Data and Distributions* to study variability and comparisons. Homework is an important part of the learning that takes place in math class. The problems that are assigned are either completion of a problem started in class that needs to be completed to do the next day's activity or it is practice on the topic that was taught that day in class. Practice is helpful so I can see if the student is comprehending the material we are currently learning or if there are areas of concern. If your student is having difficulty, please encourage them to come in the morning or come see me in study hall.

**GaTES math** classes are working their way through *Moving Straight Ahead*, a book that studies linear relationships, slope of a line, x and y-intercepts of a line and how they are all related. We have learned some helpful tricks about the point of intersection of two lines and the slope of parallel and perpendicular lines.

**Mrs. Jordan's Literature** class spent November reading and discussing the novel "Hoot". We used the book to study literary terms we learned such as plot, character, theme, and setting. We also used it to enhance our study of environmental issues. We wrapped up the unit watching the movie and comparing the events of the book to the movie.

**Mrs. Holly's Literature** - Students have been reading selections from our literature anthology and have done research on Langston Hughes and Neil Simon. They continue to read their own novels as well.

**Science** - We continue our study of cells by discovering cell transfer, cellular respiration, photosynthesis, and cell division. Students have done many activities and investigations to increase their understanding of the concepts. Individual study in the evenings would be helpful.



## **Eighth Grade Teams**

### **Great Expectations**

Thank you to the parents who volunteered to help with our agriculture field trip on October 16<sup>th</sup>. They are Mrs. Sulaver (Riley's mom), Mrs. Stinnett (Michaels's mom), Mrs. Umbach (Zac's mom), and Mrs. Vidales (Becca's mom). We had a good day and learned a lot about our connection to agriculture.

On October 26<sup>th</sup>, several students helped cook a meal for Hope Haven, while others donated food for the meal. We appreciate everyone's help with our community service project and will be doing this again in February.

On October 29<sup>th</sup>, we surprised our students who have August, September, and October birthdays with a cupcake and card. Thank you to our parents who sent cupcakes.

We had a great turn out for parent-teacher conferences and appreciate the time and effort our parents made on behalf of their children. Please feel free to contact us via email or phone if you were unable to make conferences and would like one.

Congratulations to all Great Expectations students who made honor roll 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. A pizza lunch will be held in their honor on November 25<sup>th</sup>. Also, we will be watching movies and having treats on December 18<sup>th</sup> for a team positive point activity. Thank you to our parents who donate food for these activities. We really appreciate it.

### **High Five**

High Five will be having a community service activity beginning on November 23 going until December 11. We will be having a HIGH FIVE CHANGE DRIVE. We will be collecting change in our homerooms to use to help buy items for some deserving person/ people in our community this holiday season.

### **Destiny**

In honor of our August, September, and October birthdays, we gave out cupcakes which were provided by, Mr. and Mrs. Rivera. Our next birthday recognition will be honoring November, December, and January birthdays.

The clothing drive produced dozens of bags of clothes, which were given to charity. Thank you for cleaning out your closets and sharing with those less fortunate!

We had a wonderful turn out for parent-teacher conferences. We appreciate the time and effort parents made on behalf of their children.

On the afternoon of November 23, Tom Oestreicher (McKinzie Spence's grandfather), came and shared his expertise on the Civil War with us.

On Wednesday, November 25, we had a movie and fundraiser in support of Heifer International Project. The organization provides farm animals for the well-being of people throughout parts of the developing world. Our goal was to make enough to purchase a cow. Thanks to all the parents who sent in donations of food, money, and time to come work concessions. Also, thanks to our students, who were very generous.

It will be mid-term time again soon. We only mail home mid-terms for D's or F's. They should arrive the first week of December.

**Mrs. Bowden's Science Classes** - We have finished Earth science with a realistic (?) look at Hollywood's portrayal of a Composite Volcano. The Life science unit is next. We will be working with live cultures of Daphnia and Hydra under the microscope. After swabbing surfaces around the school, we will be growing bacteria cultures. By learning about viruses, we might understand how the H1N1 virus can infect someone. The excitement of science can be so contagious! Watch for some Caminalcule creatures when we start learning about classification. After invertebrates and plants the students will be teaching about vertebrates.

**Social Studies** - It was good to see so many parents during our conference time this month. Thanks for checking in!

Destiny's social studies classes have begun their look at the Civil War era. The distinct differences between the North and South, particularly the story of slavery, along with the other momentous events of the time period, will be discussed. Segments of Roots, Ken Burns' The Civil War, PowerPoint presentations from many Civil War sites and many additional resources will be used in class as we learn about this important part of America's story.

Please ask your child about the History Master Project. Every student is to do at least one item from the project and we hope that many students will do at least five or more of the challenges to receive an award at our 8<sup>th</sup> grade recognition night.



## GO SYCAMORE SPARTANS!

We want to hear you yelling this at the upcoming Castle Bank Challenge! January 29th, the Sycamore High School Boys' and Girls' Basketball teams will be playing DeKalb! We'd like to see everyone out at the game! Many fun events are planned for that week: An assembly, a Black and Gold day, learning the Sycamore fight song, and other activities yet to be planned! Mark your calendar! Tickets will be available in advance and at the door (at the NIU convocation center!) It's going to be a great event!



## Health and PE

Our first 12 week rotation for physical education and health has just been completed. Students will be returning to the original rotation, and beginning our second 12 week session (9 weeks in PE and 3 weeks in health). Our 6<sup>th</sup> grade health focus will be on physical health and the body changes during adolescence and puberty. Our 7<sup>th</sup> grade health focus will be on mental health, self-esteem, self-concept, stress, decision making, and refusal skills. Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade health focus will be on communicable and non-communicable diseases, prevention, and treatment.

Our physical education classes continue to participate in fitness activities that emphasize cardiovascular endurance and resistance training. Ask your student what they have been learning about their physical health and life-long activities. Students are also participating in team and individual games during various physical education units.

**Please check that your child is bringing home their PE uniform to wash on a weekly basis. We encourage all students to bring their uniforms (shirt, shorts, socks & sweats) home on Friday and bring back on Monday (or the beginning and ending day of the week). Personal hygiene is very critical and an important responsibility of all middle school students.** As a reminder, appropriate uniform should be worn in physical education (gold shirt, black shorts, cotton athletic socks, athletic shoes, sweats are optional). As always please contact your child's teacher with any questions or concerns.

## IMPORTANT DATES

December 2	Department Meeting – No early admittance
December 2	Sports Booster Meeting 7 PM – Cabana Charley's
December 8	Board of Education Meeting 7 PM
December 9	Early Dismissal 1:00 PM
December 9	Market Day Pick-up 3:45 – 4:45 pm
December 21-31 & Jan 1 -3	No School – Winter Break
January 4	School Resumes
January 6	Faculty Meeting – No early admittance
January 6	Market Day pick-up 3:45 – 5:00 PM
January 6	Sports Boosters Meeting 7 PM – Cabana Charley's
January 15	Teacher Institute Day End of 2nd Quarter
January 18	No School – Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday
January 20	Department Meeting – No early admittance

January 22	Report Card Mailed
January 25	Young Author's Entries Due
January 27	PTO Meeting 7 PM
January 29	Newsletter Posted Online
January 29	Castle Bank Challenge @ NIU Convo Center
February 2	Early Dismissal 1:00 PM
February 3	Faculty Meeting – No early admittance
February 3	Market Day pick-up 3:45 – 5:00 PM
February 4	Science Olympiad 6 – 8:00 PM
February 5	PTO Dance 7 – 9 PM
February 5	All School Positive Point Activity