

ISD
#466

DASSEL - COKATO MIDDLE SCHOOL

March 2011 Newsletter

COMMITTED TO EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

FROM THE PRINCIPAL, GARY JOHNSON

Principal's Message

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It is amazing what warmer temperatures and melting snow can do to lift the spirits and improve the behavior of middle school students (and teachers!) after a long, challenging winter! When our students can spend time outdoors gaining a healthy dose of vitamin D from a little sunshine, they seem to engage more eagerly and learn more readily.

Middle School Relationships

One of the more heart rending experiences I observe in the middle school is when a student comes to the office in tears to relate a story to Mr. Franklin, Mrs. Jones or me about how another student or group of students has deeply hurt his or her feelings. The offending event can range all the way from a serious and deliberate exchange of words or even blows to a simple act of not including someone in a lunchroom conversation. Our standard response is to soothe emotions, stop the tears, ascertain the details and provide a healthy perspective and course of action. Much of our conversation centers on first helping offended students feel good about themselves and then trying to help them understand the actions of others. We always follow up by bringing in the offenders, hearing their side of the story, and providing corrective instruction and consequences, as needed. Unfortunately, middle school students are at an age where differences in body shapes, family structures, economic status, and even religious beliefs become more apparent and can be vulnerable targets for teasing. In addition, middle school friendships and alliances often shift frequent-

ly, leaving some students wondering why their friends from last year, or even yesterday, won't talk to them today. These situations are especially prevalent in grades 6 and 7. (Students in 5th grade are still young enough to be kind most of the time, and 8th grade students have often matured past the point of consistent teasing.) Parents and guardians can help students deal with these issues by:

- Teaching children to be kind to everyone. Kids (like adults) are obviously not going to like everyone they meet, but they can, at least, be kind.
- Helping children understand that not all friendships are long-lasting, and that developing new friendships is a necessary and exciting aspect of life.
- Helping children understand that all the circumstances of their lives, especially physical and intellectual characteristics, are unique and worthy. Self esteem needs to be taught and reinforced often.
- Helping children develop a "thick skin". While ignoring another student's taunts is not always easy, much teasing simply evaporates if there is no response to it.
- Teaching children to tell an adult about hurtful events. There are some issues that children are simply not capable of solving on their own.

If families and the school work together to address issues of adolescent relationships, we can help make the middle school years a positive experience for everyone.



TIGER AND HIS FRIENDS

~Logan Wendolek, 5th Grade

Once upon a time there was a tiger that was walking and walking. He suddenly fell into a hole. He tried to get out. He almost got out but then he kept on falling back down. He got so tired he quit. After awhile he fell asleep. In the morning he grew wings and flew out. Then the next day he grew a beak. His mother was scared of him but when he showed his dad, his dad ran away. Then the tiger landed on the ground. He landed by a pond. He looked at himself, he was a giant Toucan. He had a long beak and a short tail. "What happened to me?" asked the tiger. Just then he saw his dad behind a coconut tree. His dad ran away again. When the tiger looked across the pond, there was a golden note. The tiger thought that note was special. With his big wings he flew over the pond and got the note. The note said, "Go to the king's castle and ask the king for the golden lion." He thought, why not, so he started on his way to the castle.

As he was traveling, all of a sudden a rhino jumped out and asked, "Where are you going?" The tiger said, "To the castle to turn back into a tiger." The rhino said, "Can I go too? My head is shaped like a parrot's head." The tiger said that he could. They were walking to the castle when a cat came flying right in front of them. The tiger said, "What do you want?" The cat said, "Where are you going?" The tiger answered, "To the castle to turn back into a tiger." The cat said, "Can I go too?" The tiger said, "Yes, but why do you want to go to the castle?" The cat answered, "Because I want to turn into a jaguar." "Let's go," said the tiger.

They were walking when suddenly they saw the castle and started cheering. All of a sudden a gate came up from the ground around the castle. The tiger said, "How do we get over the gate? Can we go under it?" They all decided that they'd have to knock on the gate. Rhino knocked and a knight came to the door and said, "What do you want? The king is trying to sleep." "Well," said the tiger, "We came to ask for the golden lion. We want to be changed back to the things that we were before." "Ok, well come in and I will go get the king but he does not like it if he

gets disturbed," said the knight. "Just wait here," the knight said. The knight went and got the king. The king came out and said, "How are you today? I see you have some friends." He helped them turn back to normal. They all said, "Thank you." The king said, "You are welcome."

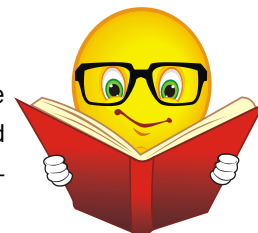
As they were going back home the tiger said, "I really miss my mom and dad. I bet they are looking for me." When he got home his parents asked where he had been. He said, "I was playing outside and suddenly I turned into a bird. I knew that I had to change back so I started to walk to the castle. On the way to the castle I met some friends that needed to be changed also. The king changed us all back to normal." His parents said, "Go to your room and play."

When he got to his room there was a peacock/parrot in his room. His mouth dropped to the floor. Then he yelled, "I always wanted one of these birds!" All of a sudden the bird said, "Hello," in English. "It can say anything," his mom said. The tiger said, "That is totally cool, thank you mom and dad." The tiger went to tell his friends, Jaguar and Rhino, that he got one of those peacock/parrot birds. His friends came to his house to see the bird. Rhino and Jaguar said that they wanted one of those birds too. The bird said, "Hello man kind people." They said, "Hello." "What is his name?" they asked. "His name is Bird," said the tiger. Then Jaguar and Rhino said, "Hello Birdy." Then all of sudden Birdy turned blue and then they all turned into blue people. They said, "We have to go back to the king's castle and get turned back to normal." They went to the castle and were turned back to normal.

Then the tiger and his friends went to the tiger's house and told Birdy to stop turning them blue. When they got in the tiger's room, his messy room was very clean. The tiger looked in the cage to see Birdy. He was not there. They went outside and yelled for Birdy. Then they went inside and yelled for Birdy. Birdy just popped up out of nowhere and said, "Hello," and they all lived happily ever after.

DCMS Collects \$1,128.90 from General Mills Box Tops

During this past year, the middle school collected over 11,000 Box Tops! These funds will be used to support the Reading Counts program. We wish to thank all parents, students and community members who support our school by saving and turning in these labels to the Media Center.



6TH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

Sixth graders will finish their study of Minnesota History by learning about Minnesota from the 1900s to present. This will include major changes and developments that have occurred in Minnesota's past. Students will also be completing their Minnesota booklet projects. This project is due on March 21, 2011.

6TH GRADE SCIENCE

Sixth graders continue exploring energy in March. Students will learn the basics of light wave and color. They will learn about heat and how heat travels. They will end the unit exploring electricity and magnetism, applying their knowledge to hands-on activities such as lighting bulbs and creating switches.

6TH GRADE HEALTH

Students will be covering two units. One unit is "Emergency and First Aid". Students will learn ways to respond to emergency situations and study first aid for common and life-threatening injuries. During the "Controlling Disease" unit, students will learn the difference between communicable and non-communicable diseases and ways to prevent and treat disease.

6TH GRADE MATH

We are currently in the middle of our geometry chapter (Chapter 7). In this chapter we are learning some of the fundamentals of plane geometry. This includes learning how to describe various figures in geometric terms, measure angles, and solve problems involving measurement of angles and lines. Unit 7 also involves learning about polygon relationships. This geometry unit can be applied to careers of aviation, navigation, design, and many others. We are also learning how to measure an angle using a protractor. By doing this we get to solve everyday problems by looking at the angle relationships.

After geometry we will get into ratios, proportions, and percents. Ratios are used to compare a part to a part, a part to a whole, or the whole to a part. We will also learn how to write and solve proportions. A proportion is an equation that shows two equivalent ratios. The last part of this unit deals with solving percent problems. Some of these problems involve discounts, tips, and sales tax.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about your child, please feel free to contact us. All of us here are interested in your child and want to be sure that this year's mathematics experiences are enjoyable and promote a firm understanding of mathematics. Thanks for all the support you give your child with homework and the basic facts.

Testing Season

In March and April our students take two important assessments, NWEA and MCA, that are used to determine their math and reading proficiency levels. Locally, we use the results of the both tests to diagnose students' individual learning needs in order to provide appropriate targeted instruction. The Minnesota Department of Education uses the results of the MCA's (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments) to assess our school's instructional performance as compared to other schools in the state. (If you are interested in seeing how we compare to state schools, you can check our school report card at: <http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/index.do>)

We appreciate when you emphasize to your children the importance of investing their best efforts when taking these tests. At the recent parent conferences you should have received an information sheet containing your child's scores on previous MCA's. On that same sheet is an area that gives you and your child an opportunity to discuss and set goals for this year's tests. A few minutes of goal setting could be very beneficial to your child's results. (The NWEA tests are used primarily with students in grades 5 & 6, and the results are only used locally.)

8th Grade Career Speakers



In January, the 8th graders had the opportunity to listen to a variety of individuals speak about their specific careers.

Thank you to all the volunteers. We appreciate your willingness to come and speak to our students.



PTA

At the February meeting we had Mr. Brian Stoll from Wright County Probation Services tell us about some of the things we as parents should be aware of with our children and their cell phone use. The presentation was insightful and had important information. If you were unable to attend but are interested in receiving the presentation information, please contact Melissa at 275-3394.

Our next regular meeting will be held Thursday, April, 7th. We will be discussing high school courses, Advanced Placement classes, Post Secondary classes, and scheduling at the high school in general. Mr. Jennissen, the high school Principal and Mr. Tool, the high school Guidance Counselor will join us to talk about these important years of our children's education. We will meet at 6:30 in the high school media center. We hope to see you there!

CHARGER CAFÉ

To cure after school hunger, students can now purchase a frozen peanut butter and jelly sandwich for \$1. The sandwich must be purchased at lunch and will come out of their lunch account.

Thank you for supporting the school lunch program.

Just a reminder: For those that have free and/or reduced lunch, breakfast is offered for free.

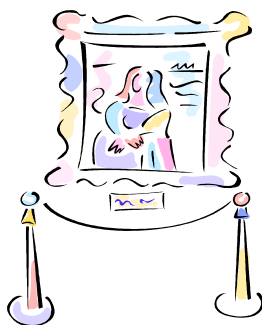
~Barb Quast, Kitchen Manager

ART DEPARTMENT NEWS

Middle School 2nd Trimester Art Show

The art department is proud to present the annual exhibit of art created by students in grades five through eight! Artwork will be displayed from Tuesday, February 22 through Friday, March 4 in the hallway near the PAC which means it will be viewable during the middle school band and choir concerts.

The trimester is well underway with students hard at work using their creativity to complete art projects! Pieces on display will be from all students who are currently in art class during the second trimester of school. Please take the opportunity to view the display of artwork from students in this community!



My Weird Dream

~Lucas Wendolek, 5th Grade

Once upon a time I saw a tame alligator in my bathroom when I was brushing my teeth. When I saw it, I literally jumped and broke the door of the bathroom. I had to call the pound. The pound said, "What do you have?" "I have an alligator in my bathroom," I said. They said, "We can not take that, that's too big. We only can take cats and dogs." "Then what should I do with it?" I asked. "We have no clue what you should do, just leave it alone," they said. I thought and thought, then I got an idea. I called the alligator pound and said, "I have an alligator in my bathroom." They said that they were full. I had to get it out of my bathroom. It took a long time, then I got it out. I got it outside, then I went to bed.

In the morning I went to go brush my teeth. I saw the alligator in my bathroom again. I thought and thought and remembered I had a pond in my backyard. I brought it out to the pond and the alligator just sat there. "We could call the exterminator," my dad said. Then I said, "No, we can call the exterminator to move the alligator into the pond." We went to the pond to check it out and saw a snake. Now we have a snake and an alligator. What were we supposed to do now? It got dark so I went to bed.

The next morning the animals were gone. I went to my dad. "Dad, why did you do that?" I asked. "Do what?" he asked. I said, "You know what I mean."

The next morning I slowly opened up the door to the bathroom and a huge bat was on the sink. I screamed so loud it woke up my brother Ollie. My dad came running and my mom went and got Ollie. My big brother went and took my twin sisters downstairs. My mom said, "It's just a bat. We can call the pound, they can come get it in no time." As soon as the pound got it out of the bathroom, I brushed my teeth and went to school.

I was late, I got a tardy and I didn't even deserve it! Then I told my teacher that there was a bat in the bathroom. The teacher said, "I'll call the janitor," so she did. The janitor said not to go in the bathroom until he got it out of there. "OK," the teacher said to the janitor. Then my alarm clock went off. It had just been a dream, that was really weird!

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