

"I.S. INSIGHTS"

February 2019
Ms. Daskaris

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As Assistant Principal of the middle school, my goal is to provide all of our students with an educationally challenging, yet fun, experience. I am focused on improving the quality of our communication and believe that this will improve student outcomes, confidence, and happiness.

I encourage all parents to continue to support the school by ensuring communication lines remain open and positive. Additionally, I urge you to work with us by holding high expectations of your child in terms of their attitude towards their learning, both socially and academically. Every decision we make together should be in the best interests of your child.

In an effort to increase communication, I have highlighted some of the happenings at our middle school below!

5th Grade: Talent on Display!

- **5th Grade 'Digital Media' Presentations have been rescheduled for February 7th.**

5-302: Period 1: Please arrive at 8:20 a.m.

5-420: Period 3: Please arrive at 9:55 a.m.

5-422: Period 5: Please arrive at 11:50 a.m.

***All presentations will take place in Room 420 with Ms. Starace!**

Our resident artist, Ms. Donna, explains the program below:

The students began their exploration of stop motion animation by making two experimental videos, one using objects, and the other using paper shapes. For inspiration, they were introduced to the work of William Kentridge, a world-renowned artist who uses an "old-school" stop motion animation method to express his creative and political point of view. They learned basic features of the Stop Motion App for iPad, and principles of the animation process. Working in groups, they developed narratives, which they transferred to storyboard form. They used construction paper to create settings and characters, and they had three to four sessions to film and edit their videos. Because it was such a complex process, each member of the group was challenged to come up with creative ideas and solutions, work cooperatively and bring focus and organization to the table. At the end of the twelve weeks, the little gems they came up with were not their whole stories, but works in progress with the potential to grow.

- **Mr. Tergilene has been working hard with our 5th graders in Instrumental Music class. The 'Not So Pitch Perfect Yet...' Show Dates are:**

February 12th 5-302 @ 1:30 pm

February 14th 5-422 @ 9:00 am / 5-420 @ 1:30 pm

6th Grade: New Experiences Await!

- **Teachers & Writer's Program**

Our 6th graders are participating in the Teacher's & Writer's program with artist, David Surface, thanks to the funding of Friends of 187.

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Their first session was on January 11th. This program will continue through the end of March.

Last week, our 6th graders worked on:

"In our 6th Grade Teachers & Writers residency, we've been focusing on how you can learn a lot about people from other cultures and periods of history, not just by studying their architecture and the wars they fought, but by reading their poems and stories.

We've examined the poetry of ancient Egypt, and talked about how, for ancient Egyptians, words had power and were meant to have a real effect. We read and discussed the 4,000-year-old 'Hymn To the Nile' which praises the river for its good qualities, and entreats it to bestow its riches on those who love and respect it. We then "broke down" this ancient poem into a set of guidelines for students to use to create their own "poems of praise" dedicated to whatever they find wonderful and important (a place, a person, etc.). The results were amazing, and ran the gamut from playful to deeply moving.

We plan to continue to explore the poetic literature of Ancient Egypt to help students feel more connected to these people from the distant past, and to give them the tools to write expressively and genuinely about their own thoughts and feelings."

David Surface

Teachers & Writers Collaborative

- As a culminating activity, after reading **Homeless Bird**, our 6th graders will be walking over to Kismat Indian Restaurant on February 8th, 12th and 15th to explore some authentic Indian food!

7th Grade: Writing our History!

- **Teachers & Writer's Program**

Our 7th graders are also participating in the Teacher's & Writer's program with artist, David Surface. Their first session was on January 4th.

Last week, our 7th graders worked on:

"Today, the 7th Grade social studies classes used ekphrastic and narrative techniques to gain insights into the Quartering Act, in which American colonists were forced to house and feed British troops in their own homes as punishment for the Boston Tea Party. As always, we used questions to dig deeper, past generalizations and stereotypes, to find the real human experience behind the history lesson. Using a period drawing representing British abuses during the Quartering Act, we asked the students to select an individual in the drawing and write brief narratives from that person's perspective, making sure to enrich their writing with sensory and emotional detail. The results were powerful.

Next week we will continue to expand and improve these student narratives, while continuing to employ creative writing techniques to help deepen students' understanding of history."

David Surface

Teachers & Writers Collaborative

- Our 7th graders also visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art to look at how paintings and sculptures tell stories and used them as inspirations to write their narratives!

8th Grade: The Beat Goes On!

- Our 8th graders had the beat during their Drumming Show on January 16th. Each class performed a different African drumming song with the help of instructor, Eric Phinney, to a full auditorium!

- Our seniors received their jewelry on January 25th at their Ring Day Ceremony! Over the course of the ceremony, we reflected on where our seniors have been and look ahead to the moments to come in their last year here at 187.

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM:

➤ Student Government

Our student government is made up of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, as well as two representatives from each homeroom. Under the guidance of Ms. Manolas, these students meet frequently to discuss new ideas they want to implement in our middle school. The Student Government has been quite busy this year. In November and December, we held our annual Spelling Bees that showcased our brave and knowledgeable spellers. In January, we held our 2nd annual 'Bake Off' that highlighted some very talented bakers in our community. **Career Day** took place yesterday, February 4th, and our students were super impressed and inspired by all of our speakers! Thank you parents for making it so successful! Our first ever **"Got Talent?" Talent Competition** will take place on **February 28th**.

➤ Science Celebrations

Science projects are a perfect way for middle school students to have fun exploring science and our students have been working hard on their projects! Science Celebration Week begins on February 11th. Each class has a specific date/time. Please see flyer/parent bulletin/student calendar for specific dates!

➤ College Awareness Day

College Awareness day will be on Friday, March 8th. Our 7th graders have been working closely with representatives from the 'College Access for All' program during their Advisory classes and even visited Queens College in December. During assembly, ALL students will hear from guest speakers, watch a Step Team performance, and there will also be raffles and giveaway prizes!

➤ Spirit Days

'Spirit Days' serve as a way to get our students enthused, involved and supportive of the school, throughout the year! Our next spirit day is **February 15th: Pajama Day!**

➤ PTO Events

In January, the PTO sponsored an 'Open Gym Night' for our 5th and 6th graders from 6 – 8 pm. This idea came about from wanting to give our students a safe and warm space to spend time with their friends and play sports during the winter months. Mr. Tergilene & Ms. Crespo supervised this fun & successful event! On February 8th, our 7th and 8th graders will have

their 'Open Gym Night' as well. We are ⁴hoping to have a third session sometime in March.

February 1st: 5th and 6th Grade Dance

March 1st: 7th and 8th Grade Dance

➤ **Upcoming Trips**

March 1st: 6th Grade Flushing Hall Trip

March 21st: 8th Grade 'To Kill a Mockingbird' play

➤ **Play Study Win**

Our free 6th- 8th grade after school program began on January 2nd! If you would like more information, please contact Shaleca White, the Program Director at swhyte.psw@gmail.com

➤ **BOX TOPS CONTEST**

In an effort to increase student participation in Box Tops collections, all students were given a Box Tops sheet where they glued or taped 10 Box Tops that they collected. I placed a collection bin by my office where students submitted their sheet(s) and entered a raffle/contest. Each month, I will be picking a sheet from the box and the lucky winner will be receiving a Homework Pass as well as a gift certificate to one of the local food vendors in the neighborhood for a free lunch! *This month, one of our 6th graders won the prize!*

➤ **Our 5th - 8th grade after school Math Olympiad program** is still going strong! Our students have been competing in monthly math contests with students in their age groups across the world!

➤ **Additional After School Programs**

In the Fall, we were able to offer a wide variety of after school programs, thanks to PTO funding: *Chess, Basketball, Book Clubs, Soccer, Art Club, Instrumental Music, Choir, Math Olympiad, Track & United Band!*

In the Winter/Spring, we are continuing to offer *Track, Choir & United Band*. This month, we are kicking off *Saturday Academy, After School Instruction in Math and Literacy, Volleyball, Musical Rehearsal, Set-Design, Talent Show & Yearbook Club!*

Save the Date:

- **Middle School Talent Show: March 14th**
- **Beauty & the Beast Musical: May 4th**

Other Ways to be 'In The Know':

A 5th & 6th grade Newsletter goes out monthly. The newsletter offers some insight into the wonderful things students are working on in their subject

area classes! Students receive paper copies of this newsletter, and they are also sent out through PupilPath and posted on our website.

Student Calendars: Each student receives a monthly calendar that contains upcoming events! Students are encouraged to glue them into their homework notebook or transfer them to a planner.

PupilPath: In the middle school, it is crucial that all students have an active PupilPath account as it provides a detailed snapshot to your child's progress in each of their classes. It also allows parents, teachers and students the ability to message each other.

In January, Ms. Elton, our Parent Coordinator, visited most Advisory classes in the middle school to ensure that all students were registered and have the information needed to log into the site, on their own. Parents, we need you to register as well! If you need help doing so, please see the 'F.A.Q. on PupilPath' on our website or contact Ms. Elton.

School Website: We are working hard on updating our website! Visit us at: <https://www.187hudsoncliffs.org/>

'Til Next Time:

There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to communication, but we can offer different avenues for you to be informed about all the wonderful things happening in our middle school! I am open to implementing new ideas and hope this is one of those new ideas that stick!

We appreciate your support and we will continue to work hard to ensure your child's middle school experience is rewarding and successful.

I encourage you to speak to your child's subject teachers, or myself, about any questions or concerns you may have!

Food for Thought:

Middle School can be such a socially challenging experience. I recently read an article on "Psychology Today" that I wanted to share because I think it is worth reading. Here is a section from the article that stuck out to me:

"At this awkward age, common school experiences can be magnified by insecurity and emotional vulnerability so that even small slights can cause a lot of suffering. So parents: when your middle school adolescent comes home expressing in mood or words that it has been a hard day, first allow them some space and time to recover; then offer to give an empathetic listen if they would like to talk. In the words of one young person: "The hardest part of middle school isn't what you have to study, but what you have to watch out for." Making and keeping friends can take a lot of work."

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/surviving-your-childs-adolescence/201701/social-challenges-middle-school>

