

"There was never a genius without a tincture of madness."

Aristotle

Grey Matters

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As I walk around the building and talk to the teachers, I am constantly learning about the amazing programs that are going on at RJG. For example, our PE department is running a fitness program often referred to as PACER. I asked Scott Biron, one of our PE teachers, to fill me in on the program and the following is his description:

The PACER Test is one component that makes up a fitness test call the Fitnessgram. It measures the students' Cardio (heart) Pulmonary (lungs) fitness levels. PACER = Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run. In a nutshell it works like this. Students have to run across a 20 meter distance in a specific amount of time. Every few minutes the time that is allotted for them to travel the 20 meters is shorted, therefore they must sprint faster. They travel back and forth as many times as they can as the pace of their runs picks up. The test ends once they can not make the 20 meter distance in the allotted time. The whole test is set to music, which helps students as they get fatigued. Many of the students at R J Grey get up to 70 on this test which is outstanding. The last few minutes are really intense as they basically are sprinting from one side of the gym to the other with no rest.

The students here have been impressive on this test. We see many students on the high end, meaning they are working very hard. In fact I am most impressed by the number of young girls that take this test to the end and out run many of the boys. They are so determined and have a high level of fitness. We take this test and re-run it throughout the year to see where the students are improving or not improving and adjust our curriculum based on this information.

As you can see, this program gives the PE staff the feedback to adjust their curriculum as necessary. More importantly, however, is the fact that it provides our students with direct feedback about their own progress, the goal of which is to put them on the right track for a lifetime of physical fitness.

Another remarkable activity at RJG is the Spanish classes' celebration of El Día de los Muertos. Robin Crown and Lillian Ramos, two of our World Language teachers, provided me with the following background for this cultural lesson:

Later this week, Spanish classes at R.J. Grey Junior High School will be celebrating an Ancient Mexican Festival which is known as El Día de los Muertos (The Day of the Dead). The Day of the Dead is the most important religious observance of the year for Mexicans. In the Mexican tradition there is no greater duty than to commemorate their departed loved ones. "It is a time to remember those whom we have lost. We remember them not in sorrow but in happiness." Preparations for this holiday begins weeks in advance and culminate on November 1 and 2 when families visit cemeteries. They bring

flowers, candles, incense, food and drinks to honor those relatives who have passed away. Some give parties that last all night at the gravesites. This is not a morbid occasion, but rather a festive time. To Mexicans death has been traditionally viewed not as an end of existence but as a getaway to other levels of existence.

Parents: here is an opportunity to have a great conversation with your child about the events described above. Ask them to explain what they are doing and what they have learned. Needless to say, there is a wealth of educational experiences available to our students which make my proud to be a member of this school!

This week marks the beginning of the holy fasting month of Ramadan. During this month, many Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. Parents: Please let us know if you and your family is celebrating Ramadan so that we can make any accommodations necessary to support your child. Teachers should keep this in mind when planning activities that may involve food or drinks. This information is especially key for PE teachers who should provide alternative activities for fasting students.