

“People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy...”

Oliver Goldsmith

Grey Matters

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Just in case you ever wondered, finding cheese cloth on Thanksgiving Day is not an easy feat. Somehow, and I still suspect my children were “inadvertently” involved, the package of cheese cloth went missing on Thursday morning. The local convenience stores had nothing of value, and the extra large package of medical gauze from CVS was starting to look like a viable option. Luckily, we found a “real” grocery store still open and everything got back on track, if not necessarily on time, for a wonderful day. I hope you, too, had a great Thanksgiving.

Last Wednesday, RJG held its Thanksgiving Assembly. It was our first opportunity to bring the entire school together in one place. It was wonderful to be able to bring to light the talents of our students and to share in the spirit of Thanksgiving. Under the direction of Mr. Mark Hickey, the combined 7th and 8th grade bands played a great rendition of “Zoot Suit Riot,” as well as the perennial “Hey” song. In addition, Ms. Jennifer Moss led the 7th and 8th grade chorus’ through a number of wonderful songs. The highlights of the event were two student speeches by Claire Wright and Evan Hutton on the spirit of Thanksgiving. The maturity, intellect, and school spirit of RJG students continues to astound me. It was an outstanding day.

Over the last two weeks, Assistant Principals Carolyn Imperato, Larry Fliegelman, and I lead a series of Town Meetings, one with each team, as I described in the November issue of *Shades of Grey*. As I said, the goal of these meetings was to provide a forum for the adults to listen to students and ask questions to help us better understand what the junior high is like for them. We asked the students questions such as, “What makes RJG a great school?”, “If you could pick one thing to make RJG better, what would it be?”, and “How do you balance school work with the time commitment of clubs and athletics?” Each of these meetings provided a wealth of information and insight for the adults and a lesson in active citizenship for the students.

While some suggestions were unrealistic (no homework, recess; a nap period, and a breakfast cart that is brought around the hallways each morning), many great ideas were generated. One theme that was consistent throughout each of the meetings was a desire to interact with students on other teams. When the students were pressed to suggest realistic ways this goal could be achieved, they suggested a number of “Mix It Up” activities, including changing the lunch schedule occasionally so that they could eat with students on different teams. As this was indeed a viable suggestion, we will schedule one in December and see how it works.

Other areas of student concern included: the length of the lunch and passing periods, crowding in the hallways, more healthy food choices, and a need for more interactions between the 7th and 8th graders so that they get to know each other better, thus reducing tension and negative interactions.

Kudos to the parents and teachers of the current RJG student body. This level of maturity, caring, and intelligent thought could not have occurred without you.