

SHADES OF GREY

News
From the
R.J. Grey Junior High School
December 2008

Polar Opposites.

Something about December makes one think of the North Pole. (And it's not just the balmy 17 degree temperature today.) (What's that about global warming?) But no matter what holiday you're looking forward to, December is a month full of give and take. Let's think of it as the yin and yang of our year-end month. That concept, referring to complimentary opposites, is really epitomized not only in December's short days and long nights, but also in other aspects such as gift giving and receiving, planning and partaking, gearing up and winding down. It's a jam packed month to be sure.

At RJ Grey, opposites are attracting too, and it's not just the romantic thing. Although the kids can feast on Spunkmeyers, (did I not say I work them into many articles?) they also know some kids aren't as lucky and so, with food in hand, a field trip to the food pantry takes place this week.

Similarly, RJ kids have the option of playing basketball, field hockey and soccer but they recognize that some kids might not even have a ball to play with. Enter the 8 Gold Toy Drive. The toys collected will be added to the Maynard Police Department's collection and will hopefully make some kids very happy.

Roam the halls at RJ for just a few minutes and you'll see enough Hollister and Abercrombie to make the retail giants rejoice. But 7 Green wants to make sure that whatever label you wear, a coat is part of your ensemble. In conjunction with Anton Cleaners, the coat drive will continue until the winter break, delivering warmth to those in need.

December can really be a month full of contrasts but maybe that's the best part. Our kids are well, still kids at this point, despite their attempts to be otherwise. But through these community service activities, we can glimpse the kind of caring young adults they can become.

So as we close out the year, let's wish for peace on earth from the North Pole to the South and everywhere in between.

Beth Farley, Editor
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From the Principal...

At RJG, building school-wide communities begins with teaming, where a safe, caring environment extends beyond individual classrooms, throughout the school and throughout the day. Supported by the teaming model, students are motivated to do their best, and teachers feel a shared sense of responsibility for their student's academic and social-emotional growth. In this way, I am proud to be part of a school that is infused with a sense of community and collaboration.

During this holiday season, I wanted to highlight our school's dedication to the Acton and Boxborough communities through wonderful examples of community outreach. These community-building ideas, generated within teams, enrich our student's academic and social learning. I think you'll be as impressed as I am with their contributions.

Within their team, many students sold A-B clothing items (sweatshirts, pajama bottoms, boxers), raising over \$3000 for a village in Kenya. The students are currently learning about the specific needs of this village and researching construction options to provide clean water for this village. Other teams actively participated in community service days where groups of students gardened and provided labor for the Acton and Boxborough preservation trails. Through the month of November, a team led an annual Coat Drive that provides many Massachusetts and New Hampshire families with practical assistance for the upcoming winter months.

Our participation in school-wide events is also noteworthy. The entire school is collecting food items and as a school, will walk to the Food Pantry to deliver collected items. Anticipating the holiday season, "Toys for Tots" will begin immediately after Thanksgiving. As we are always thinking about new ways to help and share with others, the school council is planning holiday fund raising efforts as well. A home goods drive, for example, is currently being considered.

The examples you are reading about in this edition of Shades have been submitted by the RJG faculty, but we would like to credit all individual students or groups of students who have contributed to their school or community. As we think about the spirit of giving, please be sure to let us know of any and all efforts we might have missed. We'd love to hear about them!

While it is difficult to translate the spirit of these activities into words, I hope these examples highlight some of the core values of our school; the importance of active citizenship, and creating on-going opportunities for sharing and optimal learning. Through these community service projects and activities, I am sure that all of us can agree what a difference each one of us makes when we give service to our community. Great job, RJG!!!!

Craig Hardimon, Principal

Learning Center Program Overview

Learning Center programs provide special education services to students who have diagnosed learning disabilities and require varying degree of skill development and academic support. The goal of the Learning Center is to assist students in becoming independent learners in the regular education setting. The great majority of students are fully enrolled in mainstream classes.

The time spent in the Learning Center depends on the student's individual needs. Learning Center staff work cooperatively with regular education/Team teachers to individualize and/or supplement the curriculum in order to meet the academic learning needs of the students. In general, however, classroom materials are used to develop skills in reading comprehension, written expression, mathematics, and study skills. This specialized instruction may include, but is not limited to, teaching, demonstrating, practicing, providing, and assisting students with the following:

- using content material to help a student to comprehend classroom lessons
- teach strategies for reading required class material
- learning and applying various study strategies
- organization plans (graphic organizers) for written work
- time management skills for long-term projects
- test-taking methods
- teach specific memory strategies
- create/use visuals or verbal presentations to supplement class lessons
- breaking down and/or synthesizing tasks and information

Learning Centers frequently use the classroom texts and material; however, supplemental material and teacher generated worksheets are also utilized for individualized instruction.

From the Academic Support Center...

The Academic Support Center (ASC) is a regular education program with an enrollment of eighty-five students. Seventh and eighth grade students from nine teams come into the ASC for help with test review, study strategies, note-taking, long term projects and binder organization. The Title I component of our program also provides additional support in reading and math. ASC should not be considered a substitute for completing nightly homework nor individualized tutoring. Students are always encouraged to seek the help of their team teachers during extra help. It's hard to believe that we are only beginning Quarter 2 with the number of essays, book reports and projects that have found or lost their way into and out of the ASC. From helping students keep track of their Moon Observations and Stocks Project to explaining PEMDAS and editing essays, the ASC is designed to help. We are fortunate to have veteran Carol Brady, a gifted teaching assistant, work with us. Because of our increasing enrollment we are thrilled to have Allison Walsh-Sartini work with us as a part time teaching assistant. If your child attends the ASC, please email gatkings@ab.mec.edu to schedule a parent conference. I will send home a confirmed time slot with your child.

Gerri Atkins Carol Brady
ASC Teacher ASC Assistant

Study Skills

All students in seventh grade take study skills. Half of the students attend study skills during the first half of the year and the other half will attend during the second half of the year. Each semester, the focus begins with organization. We work on organization of binders, plan books, notes, lockers, assignments, and TIME. During each term, much of our time and effort is spent on the basics of daily organization as well as self identification of learning struggles and successes. Once a learning struggle has been identified, we work together to develop a plan of action that will turn that struggle into a success. The important elements of the first term were developing an appropriate place of study at home, time management and binder organization. Test-taking strategies, memorization tricks, textbook reading approaches, identifying key words/main ideas, and filtering out distractions are topics that will be addressed in the second term as students begin to use these new skills in their academic courses.

Currently, the students are busy applying Memorization Tricks to study for upcoming academic subject quizzes. They've used color coding, visual cues, acronyms, mnemonics, games, songs or rhythms, and categorizing. The songs are always a popular choice and uniquely creative as well as a joy to listen to.

I would like to take a moment to congratulate this seventh grade class for truly reflecting upon their personal time management and working to improve it by the motivation of personal rewards!



From the Physical Education Department...

Physical education classes have moved inside for the winter. Activities for 8th graders include a volleyball tournament. The winning team from each wing will play the PE teachers and a vice principal or two. Floor hockey, basketball, team handball and project adventure will be offered as well. 7th graders have started with Project Adventure group activities. They will cycle through floor hockey, basketball and a number of other activities this winter. All grades continue to work on their fitness.

The PE staff is recycling old cell phones, ink cartridges and laser cartridge. We get points from the recycling company and turn the points in to PE equipment. Students can drop off recycled equipment in the lobby.

From the Health Department...

Selected Facts about Flu Summarized by APS/AB School Nurses from the Massachusetts DPH website



What is the Flu? The flu is caused by the influenza virus, which infects the lungs, nose, and throat. The virus is easily passed from one person to another by coughing and sneezing. For

most people, the flu makes them feel very sick, but they gradually get better in about a week. In New England, flu season usually begins in December and lasts until April.

Symptoms of the Flu include: sudden onset of a high fever (102-104F; 39-40C) lasting 3-5 days, headache, muscle and body aches, exhaustion which can last 2 weeks or more, and a dry cough. Some people may be unsure if they have a cold or the flu. Colds are usually milder and do not come on suddenly. Cold symptoms include a stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat, and cough.

Treatment of Flu symptoms: Rest in bed. Drink lots of fluids. Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Stay home for at least 3-5 days after you get sick so you don't pass the flu to others. Call your doctor for any of the following reasons: fever that does not get better after 3-5 days; difficulty breathing; chest pain; cough lasting more than 7-10 days and/or accompanied by mucus that is green, rust-colored or bloody; you are not able to drink enough fluids.

Reducing risk: Get a flu shot every year. Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Cover your mouth with a tissue or your arm when you cough or sneeze. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Avoid close contact with others who are sick.

For more information about the Flu, please go to www.mass.gov/dph/flu

PRIVATE SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

Students who are planning to apply to a private school need to pick up a packet of information from Mrs. Spalding in the Counseling Office well in advance of the application due date. The packet will outline the application procedures that students need to follow in order to ensure the timely processing of their applications. Students or parents/guardians with questions should contact the student's counselor at 978-264-4700 x3330.

TEAM NEWS

From 7 Blue...

On 7 Blue we have just begun the second term of the school year. Last term we watched *Skyhigh* and did small group activities to facilitate discussion about bullying and teasing. We focused on empathy, and how we can help others in school who are feeling marginalized. This term we will turn our focus outward to the community. Before Thanksgiving break we viewed a movie called *Affluenza* about materialism and consumer culture. Two weeks later, on December 9th, we will participate in our school's walk to the Acton Food Pantry.

Here is a look at what is going on in our classes:

In Mrs. Nichols' math classes we have finished Chapter 3. The Accelerated classes went on to an enriched study of solving equations with variables and the distributive property on both sides of

the equals sign. They have finished that work and are now joining the Standard classes in a study of Chapter 4: Factors and Fractions.

Chapter 4 will use their knowledge of exponents, factors, prime factorization, and Greatest Common factor to apply it to algebraic monomials. Don't know what a monomial is? Ask your 7th grader!

In Social Studies, we just began learning about the American Dream. We learned that the values that are the foundation of our country and that help constitute our national identity come from the Declaration of Independence. However, we also learned that certain groups were excluded from realizing the “dream”. Women, we learned, were one of those groups. We did skits reflecting the status of women in society during the 18th and 19th centuries and focused on one woman, Lucy Stone, who fought against society’s prejudices towards women. We are just about to begin our study of our government. In the next few weeks, we will be learning about the three branches of government and will spend quite a bit of time focusing on the Bill of Rights. We will end the unit by examining our geographic identity and will be doing a regions project.

In English we are finishing our first multi-paragraph essay in class. We are focusing on organization and writing effective leads. After Thanksgiving break we began reading Dickens’ A Christmas Carol in class. All students will have a part in reading this classic tale aloud.

Seven Blue science students have recently completed a unit on astronomy. In addition to their month long observations of the Moon’s phases, they have also learned about eclipses and how the interaction of the Earth, Moon, and Sun are responsible for the tides. Students have considered the formation of stars and the features of our star in particular – the Sun. With the help of Bernard Kisicki, an Acton member of the Museum of Science’s “Project Astro”, they discovered how the tilt of the Earth’s axis, angle of the Sun in the sky, and Earth’s changing distance from the Sun affect the seasons. They reluctantly left these heavenly areas to learn more about planet Earth. Be sure to ask your child about Pangaea and the theory of Plate Tectonics. They are very knowledgeable on the subject!

In Spanish we are learning to talk about what we want or need to do at home and at school. We are learning vocabulary for school supplies and bedroom items. Participation for our Day of the Dead celebration was excellent. Thank you to all parents who sent food in with their kids.

From 8 Green...

Team 8 Green moves into the late fall and early winter with new learning experiences and some notable special occasions. The Community Service Day field trip on Tuesday, September 23 was very successful. A beautiful day enabled our nine student groups to put in a lot of hard work beautifying public areas by planting, laying wood chips, clearing paths, raking and pruning at several locations in Acton and Boxborough. Mr. Warner, who organized our efforts, received a number of messages of thanks from persons in the community, like Cathy Fochtman



from Friends of the Acton Arboretum, who praised the diligence, responsibility, and good nature of the students who worked at that site. We are delighted to make these voluntary efforts to help care for places like the Arboretum that give pleasure to all in our community.

Congratulations to Ms. Vacca's 8 Green English students for successfully completing their This I Believe Essays. For this assignment, students carefully considered and defined the personal philosophies, values, and beliefs that are a vital part of their everyday lives. Ms. Vacca gave seven student volunteers the opportunity to read their essays to the whole school as part of morning announcements, in a format very much like the readings done on public radio, and the student readers were outstanding. Their thoughtful, even highly personal reflections reached all of us, and drew a very receptive and supportive student audience. It was a truly groundbreaking RJ Grey experience of depth and scope through student expression. Essays were read by Lexie Judd, Arun Ramachandran, Rachel Davidson, Alan Samanta, Rebecca Mullen, Suzanne Wang, and Kavitha Muralidharan.

Currently, students are reading the powerful Reginald Rose play, *Twelve Angry Men*, and considering issues of ethics and justice. Students viewed the classic 1958 version of this film, featuring Henry Fonda, on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving break.

For the second straight year, the team took part in a new activity in conjunction with the annual grade 8 field trip to Minuteman High School, which took place on Wednesday, October 22. On the day of the trip, all team time was devoted to surveys and reflective writing about careers, to provide special context for and educationally enhance the experiences students had at Minuteman as they toured the school learned about the various career directed programs offered there. Students answered self-assessment questions in which they identified their interests, skills, workplace preferences, and types of careers they may find fruitful, and the survey tool itself suggested categories of careers that might be suitable based on the particular responses. This was actually a Holland Code survey, used sometimes by employment placement organizations. It is fascinating and very gratifying to see the wide variety of potential work / career paths represented by our diverse young people, and their genuine interest in this.

As one of many exciting activities in Ms. Cence's Math class this year, and as a follow-up to the 8th grade Minuteman field trip, students in 8 Green Math classes have been working on the Career Project. After completing the survey to find out their interests, students had to choose a job that fit that area of interest. After researching that job and the educational requirements for it, students discovered the salary and figured out the amount of money deducted from taxes. The students are now working on buying a car and calculating the monthly payments. They will then put together a monthly budget spreadsheet and circle graph using Excel. The final product of the project will be presented on poster boards and hung up around school. This project is a great learning experience that connects mathematics to the real world!

Mr. Nolan's classes are currently in the midst of lessons and experiences of the India unit. They are in the process of completing individual page-length research and visual entries for our Atlas of Indian Culture and History project. Students chose or suggested their own individual topics, and have been researching with enthusiasm. Students have been learning about the beliefs and practices of Hinduism and Sikhism, and just completed a full viewing of the 2001 Mumbai ("Bollywood") film, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*. Many students enjoyed this compelling and

vibrant film and its dynamic music and dance numbers a great deal, as revealed in very observant comments in class and in written reflections.

In advance of the national election, Mr. Nolan also guided the students through the completion of a “Select A Candidate” issues survey, recommended by Ms. Carter of 7 Orange, in which students answered 16 multiple choice questions about a wide range of issues by choosing the position they most agree with and rating their own view of the importance of the issue. In class discussion and clarification of the various issues (including the current economic crisis and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan) and during the completion of the survey itself both on paper and online, and students were not aware which candidate supported which multiple choice response.

In the follow up exercise, students could immediately find out which candidate they in fact agreed most with (sometimes a surprise), and could think in broad and complex ways about how we assess issues, clarify our own personal opinions, acquire information, and make responsible voting decisions in our democratic society. The survey included views from Ralph Nader, Bob Barr, and of course John McCain and Barack Obama.

8 Green Science is moving out of the physics book into the chemistry book to start a unit on Chemistry after Thanksgiving. Mr. Warner’s students will study the composition of matter and examine the structure of atoms. Look for a project assignment that will have the student make a T-shirt of a compound or an element. The project will allow your child to learn about an element or molecule in detail. The project will be due before the winter holiday break.

In Mme. Gilfix’s French class, students finished a thorough review of seventh grade vocabulary and grammar and have begun covering new material. We studied differences between French and American cities and houses, and students learned to describe a city, ask and give directions, and talk about future events. A segment on French families is next and, after expanding their ability to talk about family relatives, students will be introduced to the beautiful city of Paris.

From 8 Red...

Math by Andrew Sweet, Dan Katebi, and Jacob Johnson

The first few months of the math year have kicked off with a great start as the 8 Red students have been fortunate to have Mr. Stameris and the student teacher, Ms. Gettys. Even though Mr. Stameris is a well known commodity when it comes to math, 8 Red has definitely welcomed Ms. Gettys. In the standard class, students continue to master math concepts from last year, including greatest common factor, factor trees, and the Distributive Property. In A/E Math, students have begun to branch off from the 7th grade concepts and have begun to learn about the slope of a line and rate of change. Finally in Honors Math, students are trying to grasp more complicated concepts, including point-slope form, advanced word problems, and many many equations. 8 Red students have certainly had a blast in math this year, no matter what level or what teacher.

Social Studies by Ariel Tian, Sophia Suarez, Ryan Naraghi, and Jay Sathe

In social studies, Mrs. Heartlein plunged us into the deep, vast Chinese history from the coming and falling of dynasties to the discoveries of language and religion. We were welcomed into the world where paper and compasses were first invented, and where there was trade on the Silk

Road. We have learned how these historical events have propelled China to be one of the most sophisticated countries in the world.

Science by Haechan Cho, Delaney Carroll, Lucy Chai, and Elise Capodilupo

Have you ever heard of the superior vena cava, the aorta, alveoli, or epiglottis? If you haven't, you know exactly how we felt when we first started science. However, Mrs. Shoemaker encouraged us to become experts on a certain body system by dividing us into small groups to research and create a presentation for the class. As each group shares its research with the class, we gain more knowledge about how our body functions to keep us running and healthy.

Spanish by Amanda Sidwell, Colin Shanley, and Jeremy Abreu

Bienvenidos a la clase de Español Ocho Rojo! (Welcome to 8 Red Spanish). The sound of food is present in the Spanish class this term. Yes, sound, not smell. We are learning about breakfast and lunch foods in the Spanish speaking countries. We will learn to comment on food; to make polite requests; to order dinner in a restaurant; to ask for and pay the bill in a restaurant. Ecuador is also a central theme. So far this year we have learned about getting ready, making invitations, accepting an invitation or turning down an invitation and having telephone conversations. ¡ Bueno, tenemos que irnos. Adiós.

English by Brian Pierce, Chris Post, Erin Pengeroth, and Jess Penney

In 8 Red, we like to look back at our past. That is why we are currently writing a series of recollections based on old photos we have found. These pictures bring back many memories and help us learn more about each other and ourselves.

We are also learning how to make ourselves better writers. Whether it is through our weekly vocabulary quizzes, peer editing, or grammar lessons, our writing is continually improving.

Who knows what we'll be able to do by the end of the year?

R. J. Grey Calendar

December 22	Mid-Term Reports Mailed
December 24-January 2	NO SCHOOL; Winter Break
January 5	School Resumes
January 7	Student Council; 12:22
January 8	Early Dismissal; 10:40
January 8	Parent Conferences; 11:30-2:30
January 13	Principal's Drop in Hour; 6-7:00 PM

Shades of Grey

Shades of Grey is produced monthly by a team of teachers, students, and parent volunteers. We welcome any input or feedback.

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