

SHADES OF GREY

News From
R.J. Grey Junior High School
February 2009

From the Principal...

In October 2008, the Chinese Bible Church of Greater Lowell extended an invitation to Andrew Shen, our newest RJG Assistant Principal, to speak about the American educational experience. Liza Huber, Director of Pupil Services and I were delighted to join him.

We were delighted to have an opportunity to dialogue with members of the local Chinese community from our surrounding towns (Acton, Boxborough, Littleton, Westford, and Chelmsford) about the purpose and values of the American school system, how American schools operate and what we do and why. Of equal importance was to facilitate a conversation about the cultural similarities and differences regarding the essential elements of a meaningful educational experience. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the three of us learned a great deal regarding the perspectives of the parents who attended, most of whom had personally experienced a very different educational system and approach to promoting and measuring student achievement and success.

We hope our presentation promoted increased understanding about how American education works and provided concrete information regarding the trends that exist in academic, social-emotional and developmental areas. We also hope we achieved our goal to promote a conversation about how both the American schools and parents can try to work together to better understand the unique elements of a bicultural reality that many of their children, along with those from other immigrant families, so often experience.



As a vehicle for dialogue and to exchange ideas, fictional student-centered case studies provided an opportunity to share similar and differing perspectives in academic, social emotional and developmental areas. These scenarios offered an opportunity to discuss student stress, social and emotional health and growth, defining academic success, etc.

As a district, our commitment to global awareness, outreach and understanding of families from other countries and cultures helps us all to better understand differing expectations. A genuine desire to include families from other cultures and backgrounds, to explore core values, and to promote genuine understanding helps us manage the cultural shifts found within our schools today. This collaboration requires a common vocabulary, a common knowledge base, and a safe setting for conversation. We look forward to more opportunities to share and participate in such dialogues, anticipating that new ideas will emerge.

Happy New Year!
Craig Hardimon, Principal

Department News

From the nurses' office.....

Should I keep my child home with this illness?

Fevers are generally a sign of illness/infection. Your child should stay home if his/her temperature is 100 F or above. He/she should not return to school until their temperature has been normal (97-99 F) for at least 24 hours.

Cold, Cough, Sore Throat-Most children can attend school with cold symptoms as long as they do not have a fever. If your child has a cold with a fever over 100 F, he/she should be kept home. Your child should stay home if they have greenish nasal discharge or cough production. A sore throat with a fever, swollen glands, headache, stomachache, or rash may indicate strep. You should consult your child's doctor for evaluation. If strep is confirmed, your child may return to school after 24 hours of antibiotics, if they feel better.



Stomachache, Vomiting, Diarrhea-A child with vomiting and/or diarrhea should be kept at home until symptoms have resolved at least 12 hours. Your child also needs to be able to eat and drink normally before returning.

Red Eyes- Your child should stay home if he/she has red eyes that itch and/or have a crusty discharge. Consult your doctor for evaluation of possible conjunctivitis. Your child may return to school after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment.

Rash- A rash is usually a sign of a viral illness. It may also be a reaction to medication, plants, or chemicals such as soaps or detergents. If your child has an unusual rash or it is associated with a fever contact your doctor.

Remember, hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of infection!

Erin Livie, School Nurse

From the counseling office.....

In March, the 8th grade teachers, counselors, and administrators will begin the next step in the process of transitioning the 8th grade students to the 9th grade at the high school. High school course recommendations will be given, discussions of electives will occur, and questions about high school life will be answered. The 8th grade faculty, along with help from the high school counselors, will be explaining the entire course selection process, Add/Drop process, and concept of a balanced schedule for the students and parents.

Please be aware of the Parent Information Night at the high school on March 11. Please visit <http://ab.mec.edu/> and to view the course selection guide to help understand the leveling process, the flow of courses, and the requirements for graduation. The 2009-2010 Program of Studies is still under construction, but will be made available at the 8th Grade Parent Night in the HS Auditorium.

Here are some other dates to be aware of:

- 3/11 – 8th Grade parent night at the HS Auditorium – 7:00
- 3/12 – Snow date for 8th Grade Parents night
- 3/17 – HS visits Junior High – Distribute Program of Studies
- 3/18 – Junior High distributes PCR Forms

From the Physical Education Department.....

The Physical Education Department participated in a variety of indoor games. The 8th graders completed team games including quad ball and flicker ball. The 7th graders recently finished their unit on basketball. Up next.....the 8th graders are beginning their floor hockey tournament while the 7th graders have begun their team handball unit.



Please remember we continue to cycle the students through health class with Mrs. Rimpas. Student who are now done with health participate in PE.....Please remember to always have your sneakers and gym clothes.
Mr. Biron, Mr. Maver, and Mrs. Sikalis

From the Art Department.....

We've had a great year so far in 7th grade art. I came back from my maternity leave right before winter break and I am excited to be back at work. We just had our mid-year switch between Exploratories so it's a brand new group of students.



The students are just getting acclimated to art and we will be starting our first project on the Elements of Design. The students will be learning about Line, Shape, Value, Texture, Form, Color, & Space. They will also learn about how artists use the elements in their artwork. Then we will move onto our paper-cut portraits inspired partially by Henri Matisse's work. Our other projects will be our mini famous paintings, our clay plates and finally our cupcake drawings.

I am looking forward to getting to know this half of the 7th graders and having a wonderful time in art. Any questions or comments can be sent to Amanda Correia either at acorreia@mail.ab.mec.edu or at (978) 264-4700 ext. 3399.

From the Speech and Language Specialist.....

As part of Special Education, speech and language services are offered to students identified with a communication disability. These disorders can begin in infancy/childhood, or as a result of an accidental injury (e.g. traumatic brain injury) or illness (e.g. stroke). Speech and language disorders have serious

consequences, no matter the etiology. Communication disorders can impact academic achievement, social adjustment, and vocational aspirations.

Examples of speech and language disorders that both children and adults exhibit and which speech and language pathologists work with are 1. Stuttering, 2. Articulation problems that cause people to pronounce sounds incorrectly, which impacts speech intelligibility, 3. Language disorders that impact an individual's ability to understand or express language efficiently, 4. Voice disorders, and 5. Social/pragmatic disorders where individuals have difficulty interacting with others due to difficulty reading social cues.

Speech and language pathologists (SLPs) are professionals who treat a variety of speech, language and related disorders. Speech and language clinicians (pathologists/therapists/specialists) hold at least a master's degree and are certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). They are also licensed by the state. Speech and language pathologists work in a variety of settings: schools, private practice, clinics, and other health and education settings.

“Speech and language skills are the basic building blocks we use to construct satisfying school, social, and work lives. No matter who you are or what you do, you need to be able to communicate effectively.” according to ASHA. Every day in Acton and Boxborough schools, speech and language pathologists work with students from preschool through high school to improve communication skills within the academic and non-academic settings. Students identified as needing specific instruction to improve communication skills work with the speech and language pathologist in small group settings with similar peers. Communication with special education and regular education teachers is important so that specific strategies can be taught to students, which they then can generalize to the classroom setting.

TEAM NEWS

From 8 Red.....

English by Jake Yu, Arnav Roy, Mihir Manchiraju and Katherine Curran

For term 2 of the Eight Red English class, we have participated in a variety of assignments all the way from apartheid to vocabulary. Presently, we are reading *Waiting for the Rain*. Before beginning this novel we were divided into groups, and each group researched different events and leaders such as Nelson Mandela and the Soweto Riots. As for vocabulary, we now have total understanding of many new and difficult words such as contemplate, abominate, and blithe. Are you smarter than an eighth grader?

Social Studies by Patrick DiPalo, Troy Gilfix, Kathy Lu, and Nivedha Ram

Hello, and welcome to the world of China. This term, Mrs. Heartlein has been helping us explore this Asian country. After learning about the noble dynasties of China, and even a little Chinese, we were introduced to the wonders of modern China.

For the past two weeks we have been exploring our own city during the China city project. We were split into small groups and each group discovered the culture and history of one of the six cities, Shanghai, Xian, Chengdu, Tai' Pei, Beijing, and Hong Kong. We created colorful posters and presented what we learned to the entire class. Now we are ready to discover the wonders of India.

Math by Clark Jacobsohn, Saketh Jayanthi, and Spencer Hearne

As things start to calm down from the excitement of the midyear, the three levels of math begin new chapters, but not before having a fun round of bowling and making it count, too. This keeps the class from going stale while giving us a good opportunity to actively participate in making graphs instead of just reading pre-made ones. Never before has a math teacher made graphing so much fun.

Science by Maddie Cuddy, Brian McDonagh, Jason Mandel, and Erin Pengeroth

In science we are learning about states of matter, solids, liquids, and gases. Particles of solids have too much attraction to each other to move around more than vibrating, unlike liquids which can slide past each other, and gases, which have almost no attraction between particles and move freely. Solids have a definite shape and volume, while liquids can take the shape of their container, and gas can take any volume or shape. Also, temperature and pressure can change the volume of an object. For example, if you take a hot air balloon up into the sky, the pressure of the balloon can build up because the particles in it move faster and hit the side of the balloon harder. We might even have a quiz on all of this in the next several days.

Spanish by Collin Russel, Aditya Katragadda, Eliza Clymer, and Sophia Suarez-Friedman

Hola! Spanish is an interesting class because we get to learn a whole new language and culture from the Spanish-speaking countries. Currently, we are "in" Texas. We are learning Spanish prepositions, stores in Spanish, and how to give and receive gifts. We will learn to comment on clothes, to make comparisons, to express preferences, and to ask about prices for something. In class we do activities that help us memorize and understand Spanish. Hasta luego!

From 7 Red.....

The 7-Red team has enthusiastically embraced the school's Mission Statement that “We are an educational community learning to participate in a global society.”

This commitment was clearly evidenced on Thursday, December 4, when the team began its day with a visit from Josh Bycel, the founder and executive director of **One Kid One World**, and culminated with a team dinner that evening to raise awareness of, and funds for, work they began together in September. Since the start of the school year, the 7 Red team has partnered with Bycel’s organization in its efforts to support the Lolkuniyani Primary School in the Samburu Region of Kenya, a beautiful but extremely poor and very rural area populated by the Samburu tribe.



In September, students watched a video about a group of high school students who traveled to Kenya in order to build a school. “Our hope,” explained Mr. Lewis “was for our students to internalize our guiding belief that they could make a difference and that young people can, in fact, change the world.” “When we returned to our classrooms,” continued Mrs. Mohn, “the students’ energy erupted. They immediately began to brainstorm ways they could raise funds, both individually and together as a team, to do similar work.”

This is what led the team to Bycel’s organization and brought him to RJ Grey this month. Bycel, who had just returned from Kenya, shared with students, pictures and information about the work currently being done, and needing to be done, in and around the school.

As importantly, he shared his experience in starting a non-profit organization and how he turned his interest and passion into action, encouraging students to “start small” and build on their successes. For nearly two hours, students peppered him with questions about everything from the practical - How long does it take people to collect water? - To the philosophical, wondering how difficult it is for him to transition back to his life in Los Angeles after being surrounded by such poverty.

“We [the teachers] sat there in awe,” Miss Goulet commented, “never thinking that a group of 12- and 13-year-olds would stay engaged for so long. They were just mesmerized by Josh and his stories.” The appreciation was clearly mutual. “I was amazed by these students,” Bycel explained. “They just blew me away. It was clear how much they have been learning, and their questions showed that they were taking their thinking to the next level.”

Student Susannah Johnson reflected that, “There’s so much that we take for granted. We just walk three feet to a sink or refrigerator to get fresh water. They need to walk three miles just to get something to drink, and even then it’s from a muddy and unclean source.”

In preparation for Bycel's visit, students, in small groups, researched several aspects of Kenyan life: the people, geography, natural resources and the environment, holidays and traditions, the government, Kenyan cities, and the Samburu people. They shared their research with their classmates that morning, and their posters decorated the junior high school cafeteria for the evening's family potluck dinner.

The dinner was a great example of a meaningful school-home partnership. "It was 7-Red parents who took on the leadership for this event," explained Mrs. Dragone. "The dinner was a success because of them." In mid-November students brought home a letter enlisting help for a dinner the team was interested in having in conjunction with Josh's visit.

"Two days later," Ms. Kondracki said, "ten parents came to an after school meeting and dozens of others indicated they were interested in helping." Parents formed themselves into committees and took on the task of coordinating the food, decorations, set-up, and clean-up for the event.

Mr. Lewis continued, "We knew that we [teachers] could educate the students and prepare the program for the evening, but we lacked the capacity to coordinate all of the additional logistics. That's where our students' parents and guardians stepped in. We cannot thank them enough."

At the end of the night, Mrs. Mohn reflected that she most valued seeing students "expanding their sense of selves, service, and place in the world. We are thrilled to watch this happening along with their energy and commitment."

More information about the organization and Lolkuniyani Primary School project can be found at the One Kid One World web site, www.onekidoneworld.org.

From 8 Gold.....

8 Gold teachers enjoyed meeting so many parents and guardians during conferences in December and January. Please stay in touch if you have additional questions or concerns about your children. Thanks to all who donated toys to our successful Toys for Tots drive. You helped to put smiles on the faces of many children during the holiday season. Most of the toys were delivered to local families.

Students worked diligently in Mrs. the units for the first half of the school preparing for the mid-year exam which



Currently in science, Mr. Edmond's of the film *The Day the Earth Stood* create a movie poster illustrating the may include peaceful and violent uses of science, difficulties that humans have cooperating during times of great crisis, and people's tendencies to fear the unknown. Completed posters will be displayed throughout the school. Students are encouraged to see the current version of the movie and to make comparisons between the two films.

Keyworth's math classes to complete year. In January, classes spent time took place on January 22 and 23.

students are viewing the 1951 version *Still*. Working in groups, students will lessons of the movie. These lessons

Ms. Berberian's social studies classes ended their trip to the Middle East with a Middle Eastern banquet on December 18. Each student provided a dish or food from the Middle East, and then the entire team enjoyed an extended lunch to feast on a wide variety of food. Many students had the opportunity to sample dishes that were new to them. Thank you to those families who helped with the shopping and cooking. Your enthusiasm helped to make this a fun, successful learning event.

Students in English class recently wrote "This I Believe" essays, modeled after the program on National Public Radio. Many students then submitted their work to NPR for consideration for publication on their website. In January students will read Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Men* to complete the Justice unit and then focus on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Mrs. Reeves' French students have recently completed their unit *En Ville*. Students practiced describing their town, public buildings and places of interest. They also learned how to ask and give directions, to talk about the various places they go on weekends, and to describe their home or apartment. Grammatically, students mastered the use of the immediate future, possessive adjectives, stress pronouns, and ordinal numbers. They are now in the process of researching a monument in Paris that they will present to the class after our break. Spanish classes with Mrs. Reeves completed the unit *¿Qué te gustaría hacer?* In this unit, students practiced extending, accepting, and turning down invitations politely. They also practiced making plans and talking about getting ready to do something. We are currently working on our unit *¿Qué vas a pedir?* This is a popular unit as we are talking about meals and food. When we are finished, students will be able to make polite requests, order dinner in a restaurant, and ask for and pay the bill.

From 7 Gold....

In English class... We have been reading *The Misfits* by James Howe and have been examining characters and how we learn about them in a novel. We will be continuing our study in the New Year by connecting our study of character with topics in Social Studies through a group project.

In social studies class... We have been looking at the birth of our nation; students read and analyzed the complete Declaration of Independence as the beginning of the *American Dream*. We discussed how our nation's identity changed as we went from thirteen colonies to the United States. To help us understand and appreciate the government the Founding Fathers created, students first read about the Articles of Confederation and why it failed. We then reviewed the Constitution and studied the rights guaranteed us in the Bill of Rights. After reading the short story, *Harrison Bergeron*, we talked about the importance of active citizenship and identified specific ways we can be active citizens. By the end of the unit, it is hoped that students will conclude that active citizenship is critical to protecting our democratic society. In our study, we have been looking at both primary and secondary sources to help us make many of our inferences. As critical thinkers, we have included in our discussion, the advantages and disadvantages of these different types of sources. A few weeks after the winter holiday, we will begin Unit 2, *A Nation of Change*.

In science class... We have been learning about the reasons for the seasons and working on moon journals. We will be learning more about stars' life cycles and the planets in our solar system before we are finished with our astronomy unit. Next term, we will be studying geology, focusing on plate tectonics and the rock cycle.

In math class... Students in Mrs. MacDonald's math class are in the process of completing Unit 2: *Algebra and Rational Numbers*. After the winter break, students will begin preparing for their first experience with mid-year exams scheduled for the end of January. The first review packets will be distributed the week before the exam. Students will prepare for the exam by modeling active learning strategies. Review of specific concepts and practice standardized tests are also available at the following web site: <http://mail.ab.mec.edu/~jmacdonald/> Students just need to click on the *On-line Study Tools* to access the tests or practice questions. Students are also continuing to monitor the ups and downs of their stock portfolios at the *StocksQuest* website @ <http://investsmart.coe.uga.edu/10326/test/StocksQuest/login.htm>. This site offers information to help students learn the dynamics of investing in the stock market.

In Spanish class... Students have been talking about what they "need" and "want" to do. In addition, they have been describing items they have in their bedrooms. The students will learn about the tradition of "Las Posadas" in Mexico before vacation. They are starting Chapter 3 in which they will learn how to describe their classes and tell time. In the last section of the chapter, the students will learn how to describe the personality and physical characteristics of themselves and others. Chapter 3 begins our study

of Mexican culture; students will view the corresponding video which takes place in Cuernavaca and Taxco, Mexico.

From 8 Green.....

Students in Mr. Nolan's Social Studies classes welcomed the historic inauguration of President Barack Obama with an activity which looked back to themes from the just completed India unit. After studying the development of modern India and Pakistan and the role of Mohandas K. Gandhi in the independence movement, Mr. Nolan had the students turn attention to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and read his influential protest statement, *Letter from Birmingham City Jail, 1963*. From this, students identified and explained a number of connections between the ideas and activities of Dr. King and those of a man he idolized: Mahatma Gandhi. Students made many perceptive observations during this exercise, and in so doing learned quite a lot about a famous American whose spiritual inspiration, like Gandhi's, continues to matter a great deal in our world. Finally, to take this to a conclusion, students closely watched and read the text of the entire inauguration speech of President Obama, which in itself, as students clearly came to realize, represents a culmination of the hard work and sacrifice of Gandhi and King. It was a week of sublime ideas and inspiration. Students are now commencing studies of China, just as Chinese New Year celebrations are upon us.

English and Social Studies classes recently combined on a joint project to honor the influential Indian poet, scholar, and revolutionary, Rabindranath Tagore. Ms. Vacca and Mr. Nolan developed the project, called "A Celebration of Tagore" and read a number of Tagore's poems to their classes. From these, students selected lines of personal meaning and significance and created visual interpretations of these lines using watercolors and colored pencil. The student artwork was outstanding and is on display in the hallway of the team area and on the back wall of Mr. Nolan's room, 325. Ms. Vacca's English classes are now reading Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and will soon begin projects based on the play.

8 Green will join with 7 Orange to take advantage of the abundance of snow to have a team activity building snow sculptures on the football field. The activity allows the students to use their creativity to design a sculpture that represents any concept, scene, character, structure or object they have studied in their classes this year to date. We are asking the students to make their sculptures large enough that they can be recognized from the Junior High School. The students will only be allowed to use plastic toys used at the beach for building sand castles. Other than snow, the students will have the option of bringing spray bottles of colored water from home to provide color and contrast in their sculpture. Barring weather or snow quality concerns, the event is scheduled to take place Friday, February 6th.

Science has finished the Physical Science portion of the curriculum and is moving on to Life Sciences. Mr. Warner's students will be studying plant and animal cells and then learning about the processes of Photosynthesis and Cellular Respiration. The term will conclude with study of the various systems that help the human body function and how they are interdependent.

In French class, Mme. Gilfix's students learned about some of the many beautiful sites across Paris. They researched and wrote about a favorite monument or museum, and created posters which they presented to the class. More recently, students engaged themselves in the tasks of choosing and buying clothes and accessories. After all, while visiting Paris, why not be an educated consumer? The students have learned to ask for information from sales personnel, comment on the look of an item of clothing, and express preferences by comparing quality and price. The unit will culminate in the eagerly awaited fashion show!

Ms. Cence's Math classes completed some excellent Career Projects, many of which are also on display in the hall of the team area. These were developed as a follow up to a focused learning activity in conjunction with the grade 8 field trip to Minuteman High School, which asked students to consider their

skills, interests, and possible career directions. Ms. Cence then asked each student to choose a particular career and work through a number of statistical scenarios connected with it, including projected lifestyle, income living costs, and bill payments. With pictures, charts, and graphs students made colorful poster projects. In the past weeks, Ms. Cence's classes have prepared for and completed Math midyears, always a watershed hurdle in the unfolding of the academic year for our young students.

From 7 green.....

It's hard to believe that we are already half way through the school year! In our little corner of the school, 7 Green has been working hard during this snowy winter season. Here is an update:

The Math Midyear Exams are over! Our students did a superb job practicing, studying, and taking their first big exam. Grades were very good! The Midyear Exam counted as a test in Term 2. Now, as Term 3 begins, math classes are continuing in the textbook in Chapter 6 which covers Rates, Ratios, Proportions, and Percents. In addition we have just worked with Pascal's Triangle, coloring it in different ways and examining it for its many patterns. I'll be decorating the classroom with the colored triangles next week. It will be a nice change for Term 3!

In English, we are currently embroiled in grammar. Soon, though, we will begin an exploration of poetry. We will start by experimenting with the rhythms and "flow" of a poem, and play some games with words to get the feel of it. We will then refine our skills, by learning and incorporating such poetic devices as metaphor and personification, and using sensory details. Through this process, we will also begin to "meet" and learn about the lives and works of a number of well known poets, such as Robert Frost, Edgar Allan Poe, and Emily Dickinson, among others.

In science, we have been studying evolution by natural selection. Charles Darwin and his amazing discoveries on the Galapagos Islands have been big topics of discussion. Our students got a chance to experience for themselves the frustration that can result when the "beak" doesn't fit the "food" in an activity. We wrapped up the Diversity of Life unit by studying classification. The classes learned to construct intricate classification diagrams for buttons, aliens, and even their science classmates. We will be studying astronomy during term 3.

The Spanish classes have been learning how to tell time and talk about classes and the school schedule. They have started learning about Mexico and aspects of Mexican culture. French classes have been learning how to order snack foods and beverages in a cafe and about French currency. They had a delicious *dégustation de fromages* in which different French cheese and juices were sampled.

Much to the students' delight, the social studies class just finished the unit on "Understanding Ourselves". We examined the birth of our nation and how our identity changed from being British citizens to being independent American citizens with the Declaration of Independence. Further, we studied the foundation for our society and its system of government and law through an examination of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. As a culminating activity for this unit, we looked at the relationship between citizens and the society in which they live. We debated the question "Do citizens have a responsibility to participate in their society?". We asked what it means to be an active citizen. We read oral histories of individuals who chose to participate in the fight for civil rights and the rights of the disabled. In our next unit, "A Nation of Change", students will examine some of immigration-related laws as well as the experiences of our immigrants from the mid-1800s through today. Through our study of the immigrant experience throughout our history, students will develop a greater understanding and appreciation of the struggle newcomers to our nation continue to go through as they strive to make their own American Dream become reality.

From 8 Orange.....

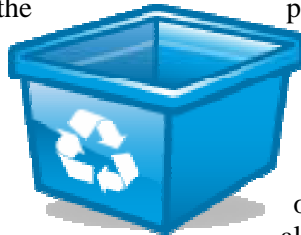
Social Studies 8 Orange social studies just wrapped up a lengthy and fascinating unit on China. We began with Chinese geography and culture, and finished with an exploration of history from the time of the dynasties to the Cultural Revolution and on to current events. We also had the opportunity to write a joint essay with 8 Orange English comparing Napoleon's regime in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* with Mao's communist regime in China during the 20th century. We are now starting a new unit on the Middle East, with the hopes of unraveling the complexities of the Arab-Israeli conflict!

8 Orange Spanish students finished their food unit with a tasting of an assortment of dishes including Manchego cheese, gazpacho, aji, a spicy condiment eaten with bread, tropical fruits and flan. They have just started a new chapter dealing with clothes and shopping. Students will learn to talk about clothes, their cost, how they look, what they are made of, how they fit and their fashion status.

Mrs. Weeks' class has just finished their reading of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. During this unit students created a political campaign for a select group of animals. Students had to employ the various propaganda techniques studied in class and create a campaign poster, slogan, speech and presentation in the hopes of persuading Mrs. Weeks to vote for their animal group. Students also created political cartoons and wrote an accompanying thesis essay comparing the leadership of the two preeminent pigs on the farm. Students are now in the process of writing a second thesis essay in which they compare Napoleon, the leader of *Animal Farm* and Mao Zedong, former leader of China. This essay is part of a larger interdisciplinary unit created by Mr. Balulescu and Mrs. Weeks of 8 Orange. Students will soon begin their study of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

From 7 Orange.....

Secret Someone, Modern Millie, Hoops, Recycling ... 7 Orange's Social Committee and Green Committee have been busy these past few months. The Green Committee has started a bottle and can recycling program for our team. They have placed containers in each homeroom for students to deposit their empty cans and bottles. Parents help with the pick-up of the cans and bottles. Money raised by returning cans with deposits is being donated to the Junior High "Money Wars" which raises money for the Jimmy Fund. The efforts of our Green Committee are being recognized by the R.J. Grey Student Council who will soon look into expanding this recycling program throughout the school!



The Social Committee has been know their teammates better and class.

For one week in December, students received several small gifts from their "Secret Someone". How do you choose a gift for someone you might not know very well? Our Social Committee had the answer to that tough question. They designed a survey for each student to complete that detailed their likes, interests, and hobbies. "Secret Someones" were encouraged to choose inexpensive gifts that recognized the uniqueness of their recipient. The Committee has also planned 7 Orange group outings to events that include participants from our team. We have planned outings to the Acton Teen Repertory Theatre's production of *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and to the 7th grade girls and boys basketball games, which also feature the R.J. Grey cheerleading squad.

organizing activities that help students get to allow them to spend time together outside of

In Science, we are just completing our Life Science units. We have studied the diversity of living organisms as animals adapt to their environment (as explained by natural selection) and we have studied how scientists classify living organisms. As we conclude this unit, we will be studying the adaptations of the polar bears to the Arctic environment. This provides us with a great opportunity to study climate

change and the impact this is having on the polar bears. After a short unit on climate change, we will begin our astronomy unit.

By the time you read this, students on 7 Orange will have already taken the math midyear exam at the end of term 2. Most students worked diligently to review all the material we had covered so far this year. This review gave students a chance to solidify their mastery of the concepts and skills presented to date. Often students were surprised that they initially found the material difficult. This is a great indicator of growth. Sometimes the true understanding of a new concept does not come with the initial exposure but by using that concept in future chapters. The final exam in June will cover the material presented in the second half of the year. Congratulations to the students on 7 Orange who showed a solid mastery of the 7th grade math curriculum!

In English, we have finished our reading of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, as students adapted parts of the book for the stage. The students did a great job capturing the spirit of the characters, set in the Deep South in the 1930s, as they grappled their way through the thorns of racism. We took a little break from literature and did some work with prepositions and idioms. We practiced identifying prepositions and their phrases and worked to understand idioms through art and the stage. Students have made their speech and writing more interesting by incorporating some idioms into their language. We are now beginning a unit on poetry and have looked at a variety of poetry from EA Poe to Billy Collins. We've listened to some rap and Queen's famous *Bohemian Rhapsody*, to better understand how poetry is all around us. Students will be writing and reading poetry and we will end our unit with a poetry slam in late February.

In social studies, students have been looking at our government and how it came to be. Ask them which amendment protects their right to a speedy trial! Now that we have an understanding of our government, and the rights and freedoms it offers, we are turning to the beginnings of American society and those groups and individuals who sacrificed, worked, fought and persevered to gain "a place at the table", such as American Indians, African Americans and women. We will also focus on the waves of immigrants who have come here, beginning with the Irish, through the Chinese, Italians, Eastern European Jews and modern day Latino and Middle Eastern. We will see that some of the struggles are repeated with each new wave. We will study how the US government and society responded to the different groups and how they, in turn, have used the Bill of Rights to guarantee their own rights here in their new country. Some of the activities we will be doing will be to simulate an assembly line, to have a Union Hall debate at the turn of the last century, as well as to create a virtual museum exhibit. Lots of writing will be going on in both classes: historical fiction, analysis, persuasive writing, etc.

Outside of the classroom, we have also participated or have plans to participate in activities with other 7th grade team and 8th grade teams. We met with 7 Gold in the cafeteria, in mixed 7 Orange-7 Gold groups, and had teams working on assorted Thanksgiving-themed puzzles. Students were busy figuring out logic puzzles, searching for words and finding escape routes through mazes. We will be repeating this type of activity, but with a February theme, the day before February vacation, with 7 Blue. On February 6th, 8 Green has invited us to join them in a snow sculpture activity; with the hopes that this wintry weather continues for a little while longer! Students will work in groups to create life-sized sculptures on school-related themes. Look for gigantic animals, Founding Fathers, etc., to adorn the football field soon!

From Around Our Halls

Coats for Kids! The Coats for Kids Drive at RJ Grey had one of its best years. We collected 654 coats which were bagged and delivered to Anton's Cleaners. This could not have been accomplished without the support of the entire AB community. Thanks for making a difference!

Student Council: Student Council Officers Jake Yu, Suzanne Wang, Ryan Barrett, and Chris Walsh, along with the homeroom representatives, have had a busy year. In addition to planning student council meetings and relaying student suggestions to the administration, student council has planned and organized two dances, a bake sale to benefit the Acton Food Pantry, a “penny wars” fundraiser to benefit the Museum of Science and the Jimmy Fund, and a Box Tops for Education drive whose goal is to raise enough money for a digital projector in the auditorium. Homeroom representatives and officers also stay busy keeping recycle boxes emptied and planning and advertising assemblies. We are presently looking forward to the Blue and Gold Assembly, which celebrates R. J. Grey sports teams, clubs, and other activities in which R. J. Grey students are involved.

The End-of-the-Year Slideshow club members continue to photograph school events. Back at the club, members are busy organizing photos and preparing them for photo collages.

Project Wellness- Coming soon!!! On March 18th, 2009, all seventh grade students and their parents will be traveling to Merrimack College to take place in our exciting one-day wellness conference. Thank you to all the seventh grade parents for completing and sending in the registration forms. We are working hard to make this a great day for all attendees.

To raise money for this important event, we are having our **First Annual Student VS. Faculty Basketball Tournament**. Mark your calendars for Friday, February 27th, from 2:30-4:30 here at RJ Grey. The student basketball teams will get to go head to head with their teachers in a game of hoops. The cost for all non-players will be \$5.00 and there will also be pizza, drinks and snacks available for purchase. Please come, cheer on your fellow students, watch your teachers (and Principal Hardimon!) try to get some points and hang out with your friends for a fun afternoon. If you have questions or want to get involved in any of our Project Wellness activities, please contact Kate Murray at ext. 3287

**** “Shades of Grey” is now posted on line. If you wish to receive a paper copy in the mail please contact Marcia Charter at mcharter@mail.ab.mec.edu ****

R. J. Grey Calendar

2/12	Blue + Gold Day	3/10	School Council; 7-8:30 PM
2/16-20	NO SCHOOL; Winter Break	3/13	Mid-Term Reports Mailed
3/5	Student Council; 12:22	3/13	7 th Grade Social; 2:30-4:30 PM
3/10	Principal’s Drop in Hour; 6-7:00 PM	3/18	Project Wellness; Merrimack College