

Shades of Grey January 2005

Project Wellness was created in response to the Emerson Hospital Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2002, which indicated that some Junior High students in Acton were engaging in risky behaviors. Students in 8th grade reported significantly higher participation in risky behaviors than 6th graders, so Project Wellness focuses on 7th graders at a time when they are most at risk to engage in these behaviors. (Survey results can be viewed at the Community Alliance For Youth website at www.cafy.net).

What is Project Wellness and Who attends?

Project Wellness is a day-long conference of workshops facilitated by professionals who specialize in adolescent development. All R.J. Grey 7th graders and an adult family member are expected to attend.

When, Where, and How do we get there?

Project Wellness takes place on Wednesday, March 9th, at Merrimack College in North Andover, MA. Registration begins at 8:00am and the program ends at 2:20pm. Children are transported to and from Project Wellness by their adult family member.

What are the workshops about?

Workshops address a wide variety of subjects including many designed to encourage and improve communication between children and adults. Others address academic pressures, gender-specific issues, health, and Internet safety. Some workshops are for adults only while others are designed for adult and students to attend together.

Do I stay with my child for the entire day?

Adults and children must register for one workshop together, but otherwise you are not required to attend the same workshops or lunch break as your child.

How does the day work?

After registration and opening remarks, students and adults disperse to various locations on the campus and attend three 55-minute workshops. There is a break for lunch, followed by a closing speaker and evaluations.

How is Project Wellness funded?

Funding for Project Wellness comes from a variety of gifts, grants, and donations from individuals, businesses, and community organizations. A registration fee of \$25.00 per adult/child pair is requested to offset some of the cost of lunch, speakers, and facility expenses.

Who runs the conference?

Project Wellness is successful due to the hard work of administrators, staff, faculty members, and parent volunteers who coordinate and organize the entire event.

If I need more information?

All families should have received a registration packet, which was mailed to homes on Jan. 7th, 2005. Please return the completed forms to your child's homeroom teacher by Friday, Jan. 14th. Families with questions should contact Dr. Carolyn Imperato, Assistant Principal, R.J. Grey (978-264-4700).

Principal's Message

When I was in college, I often met with friends from my classes to review our notes, especially before a test. We compared notes, helped each other unscramble points of confusion, and quizzed one another on the various facts and concepts. These study groups helped all of us improve our academic performance and were fun as well.

Similarly, many R.J. Grey students work together and should be commended for their academic dedication, especially at such a young age. It is important, however, for teachers, parents and guardians to clarify for their children that there is a difference between working together and misrepresenting the work of others as their own. Clearly all of our students recognize that leaning over in class and copying from a neighbors test is cheating and

unacceptable. Surprising as it may be, each year we have cases where the delineation between right and wrong, however, can become blurry for some students. For example, looking at a friend's homework to get a better understanding of the assignment occasionally leads to copying the entire document. Periodically students quote from the web but do not take the next step of adding the proper citation.

While each of these cases could be demonstrations of naiveté or oversight, such actions provide inaccurate data and interfere with a teacher's ability to assess student learning. They also lead to avoidable questions of trust and possible disciplinary actions. Parents, please talk to your children about this issue. Remind them of the value of asking for and offering help. It is a very positive experience when students are helping one another. At the same time, remind them that offering or accepting "too much" help is not.

Middle Years

Excerpt from 1/05 issue of *Middle Years*. The entire issue can be found on the R.J. Grey website.

Parent to Parent: Finding real friends

Our son Eli recently started hanging out with a new friend. They seemed to get along in the beginning, but after a while, Mark started ignoring Eli. One day Eli came home really upset. He told me Mark was spreading rumors about him at school. I asked Eli why he was friends with Mark. Turns out that Mark is a very popular kid. Eli admitted that he thought he'd be popular, too, if he hung around Mark. I explained to Eli that a good friend is someone he can trust and who respects and likes him for who he is. I suggested that he try to make friends with kids who share his interests. Eli has learned a valuable lesson about friendship. And he took my advice and made friends with several classmates in the school band.

Project pointers

At this time of year, middle graders are often busy with long-term assignments. Share these tips to help your child tackle projects.

Start early. Projects almost always take longer than expected. The sooner your middle grader begins, the more smoothly everything will go.

Make a list. Encourage your child to create a checklist that includes every step for the project. Double-checking the list will help him complete the entire assignment.

Review. Projects are usually graded on presentation as well as ideas. Allow time to review spelling, grammar, and basic facts. _ Craig Hardimon, Principal

The Choral Music Program

Our year has gotten off to a terrific start! We have two huge choruses this year, with over 155 students involved between seventh and eighth grade. Both ensembles gave their first performances of the year at the annual R.J. Grey all-school Assembly before Thanksgiving Break and did an excellent job. Throughout the year, we will be learning repertoire from all cultures and idioms and in the spring, each chorus will have the opportunity to select and perform a song of their own choosing.

In addition to the two choruses that meet during the school day, we will be starting a select After-School Vocal Ensemble in late January. Auditions for this select ensemble will be open to any singer involved in either chorus and/or band and it will focus on contemporary & popular a cappella music. Look outside the chorus room for more details about auditions when we return from winter break. All of these ensembles will be preparing for a number of performances this school year. These concerts are Free and open to the public.

R.J. Grey Winter Chorus Concert

Featuring the 7th Grade & 8th Grade Choruses Tuesday, January 11th, 2005, 7:30pm R.J. Grey Auditorium

Pan Choral Concert

Featuring the Elementary Choruses from the Acton & Blanchard Memorial Schools, 7th Grade & 8th Grade Choruses & Select After-School Vocal Ensemble (S.A.V.E) & the Concert Choir, Women's Ensemble, & Madrigal Singers of ABRHS. Tuesday, March 1st, 2005, 7:00pm ABRHS Auditorium

R.J. Grey Spring Chorus Concert

Featuring the 7th Grade & 8th Grade Choruses & The Select After-School Vocal Ensemble Tuesday, May 24th, 2005, 7:30pm R.J. Grey Auditorium

In addition to these formal concerts, the 8th Grade Chorus & Band will be participating in the *Great East Music Festival* on Friday, May 27th, 2005. At this festival a panel of music adjudicators from around the state will critique their performances. Following the festival, they will spend the afternoon at Six Flags Amusement Park. We are fortunate to have so many students with such great enthusiasm and vocal talent involved in the Choral Program at R.J. Grey and we hope to see you at some of our performances! _ Jennifer Moss

Art Department

Students are hard at work in the Art 2 classroom. Nearly all 8th grade students will have a wide range of art making experiences this year which will include drawing, painting, sculpture and computer art. Students will also learn about the Elements and Principles of Art, a variety of artists that apply to specific units, Art aesthetics and assessment.

The R.J. Grey Art Club is up and running again. Club members will have an array of art opportunities this year. An open studio format will be offered where students can develop their artistic talents in a supportive environment. They will develop proposals for future school murals and create drawings that will be submitted to the AB Blueprint and R.J. Grey yearbook for possible publication. The Art Club will also assist in assembling what is hoped to be a school wide art endeavor of creating a 'quilt-like sculpture' that will hang in the R.J. Grey main lobby rotunda area.

We are also looking forward to the second annual R.J. Grey Virtual Art Show where students in both 7th and 8th grade will have the opportunity to submit artwork for a jury. If accepted, they will have their artwork featured in the Virtual Art Show which is viewable, world-wide, from the R.J. Grey website. To look at last year's Virtual Art Show go to <http://ab.mec.edu/rjweb/index.html>, click on the section labeled "Students" and then click on "R.J. Grey Virtual Art Show." _ Holly Vlajinac

The 8 Red/8 Orange Learning Center is staffed with one full time Special Educator and two full time Special Education Assistants. Our responsibility is to support a variety of classes, maintain communication with team teachers and parents as needed, provide accommodations as necessary, and teach the skills and strategies that students need to learn to be successful in the classroom. We focus on enhancing study and organization skills, promoting self advocacy skills, developing life-long independent learning skills, and assisting students in working towards their IEP goals and benchmarks. As we move through the 2004-2005 school year, the 8 Red/8 Orange Learning Center is preparing all students for the independence necessary to achieve success at the high school level. _ Cheryl Alfieri-Simmons, Special Educator

Counseling Center

Now that students have settled in to the junior high setting and have begun to network and build on social connections, they are increasingly more aware of pressures, both positive and negative, placed upon them by their peers. While the majority of their experiences will be positive, students may be subjected to verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual harassment from their peers at some point during their junior high school years. According to statistics, harassment appears to be most problematic during the middle school or junior high

years. Students may be bullied or harassed for a number of reasons, including divergent behavior, dress, or social connections.

During the months of January and February, members of the Counseling Department will be working with each 7th grade team in running classroom sessions focusing on sexual harassment as part of the respect and harassment curriculum that we will continue throughout the year. During this 1st session, students will be presented with social vignettes from the video “Real People Talking About Sexual Harassment.” In this video, real middle school students talk in their classroom about sexual harassment as it affects their everyday school life. Interweaving the class discussion, a series of scenarios dramatize typical ways middle school students sexually harass one another. Students will be taught how to recognize and identify sexual harassment, understand its effects, and strategize ways to deal with it. Students will be taught that ignoring harassment of any kind does not make it stop.

One of the strategies for dealing with harassment of any kind is to approach a trusted adult (parent, teacher, counselor, etc.) to talk about what is going on. The focus is on helping all members of the R. J. Grey community feel safe and comfortable within the school environment. We encourage parents to have a dialogue with their children about appropriate behavior and respect toward all. We also ask that parents speak with their children about both what they need in order to feel safe in the school environment and what they can do to stop harassment when they either experience it themselves or witness it toward others. _ Caroline O'Brien

World Languages

Students in grade 8 Spanish are presently studying Ecuador and foods. They are enjoying learning about another culture and the foods associated with that culture. Grade 8 French students have been reading the tales of the vegetables who live in the town named “Salad.” These adventures include the birth of twin tomatoes, the murder of a tomato (pierced by a fork!) and signs of racism between the Onions and the Tomatoes.

French students are beginning their tour of Paris; they will learn of the sites and geography of Paris and become familiar with the Paris Metro. Fifty-three of these students will travel to Quebec City in April. _ Mme Lazdowski

Team News

8 Gold

We welcome Mrs. Holly Vlajinac to 8 Gold! At the beginning of the second term, students switched Exploratories and are now taking Art. In this daily class, students will focus on drawing, painting, sculpture, and computer art, as well as learn about featured artists from each medium.

The entire team enjoyed the field trip to the Acton Bowladrome in early December. Each student bowled two frames and then used this data to produce a poster for math class, which included a graph of scatter points and a best fit line of direct variation to determine his/her bowling average. This was a fun way to learn about graphing equations. Students will be spending time in math class preparing for the mid-year exam which will take place on January 25 and 26.

In Science students are currently studying the atom and all of its properties. Each student has selected a compound to research and will complete and present a project on this compound and its chemical reactions. Ms. Berberian's Social Studies classes recently completed a unit on the Middle East with presentations of cultural experiences. Room 203 was a lively place in December with singing, dancing, eating, and playing games from different cultures. Students in English class finished a literature unit on justice. Activities included reading the play *Twelve Angry Men* together in class and writing a fiction piece tied in to the choice book each student read. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the literature focus for January and February.

8 Gold teachers enjoyed meeting so many parents and guardians during conferences in December. We encourage you to stay in touch with us if you have questions or concerns about your children. Thanks to all who donated toys to our successful Toys for Tots program. You helped to put smiles on the faces of many children during the holiday season.

8 Orange

The 8 Orange team can already look back on many highlights. The first term featured two enjoyable team building activities: Team Lunch and the Mt. Wachusett Field Trip. Team Lunch was held on Friday, September 24. Groups of four and five students collaborated beforehand on planning a lunch by assigning responsibilities for various food items. The team went out onto the hillside by the front circle, relaxed, and enjoyed a picnic lunch. The small groups dined together, then the team mixed informally and had a chance to get to know one another as the year began.

The Mt. Wachusett hike, which took place on Friday, October 22, was a much bigger event, involving about 20 parent chaperones and more extensive small group planning. Again, students made pre-arrangements in groups of four or five, with each student taking on a special roles and responsibilities, including pathfinder, statistician, and photographer. Parent and teacher chaperones accompanied each group during the hike, and the groups climbed the mountain from six different starting points. Students paused to sketch and do reflective writing pieces during the ascent, and the entire team gathered at the summit area for lunch. The day was overcast, cold, drizzly, and very windy at the summit, making the *warm* fire at the ranger station that much more satisfying at the conclusion of the hike. The student groups later compiled portfolios of their Mt. Wachusett experience, culminating another successful and memorable 8 Orange event.

Mrs. Warren joined 8 Orange during the first term, teaching her new Study Skills and Technology exploratory. She collaborated with the team teachers and made much of her course work supplement the curriculum of the other team subjects. The team sends congratulations to Mrs. Warren on the birth of her daughter, Zora, on November 24! The team now welcomes Ms. Viscardi and the Life Skills exploratory for the second term.

8 Orange and four other teams took part in the Walk to the Food Pantry on Friday, November 19. Together, the students made a large donation of non-perishable food items to this vital community resource. Several 8 Orange students assisted the pantry workers in sorting and storing the donated food items, and the team and much of the school took part in a productive day of community service. Ms. Viscardi filmed an excellent videotape segment documenting this experience. The video features narration and commentary from a number of R.J. Grey students, and several students from 8 Orange assisted Ms. Viscardi in these areas as well as behind the scenes production.

Mr. Nolan's Social Studies classes have just completed a newly expanded unit on China, and are beginning a unit on Japan. The students took great interest in many topics from the China unit, and collaborated in small groups on projects exploring the major Chinese dynasties. Mr. Nolan is presently arranging a late January field trip to the Peabody-Essex Museum in Salem, where students will have the opportunity to view and appreciate the museum's first rate East Asian collections. Ms. Vacca's English classes have completed the introductory unit on self-awareness, and students are currently writing personal memoirs. The students will begin reading Shizuko's Daughter, in conjunction with the Social Studies unit on Japan. Ms. Vacca and Mr. Nolan will soon be piloting a current events portfolio, for which students will read international news articles in both print and electronic form, and write brief summaries that will be graded in both English and Social Studies classes.

7 Gold

In Spanish, Chapter 2, we learned to talk about what we have, need, or want for school and in our rooms at home. We learned to count to 199 and how to say how much something costs up to \$199. Our favorite expression was "Genial!" and "Que horrible!" We will conclude the unit with the dramatic photos/visual/video

essays that students created on “Mi cuarto” (My room) or “Mi cuarto ideal” (my ideal room).

In French, Unité 2, we learned to talk about our friends and families, talk about their birth dates, and tell how old everyone is. We made beautiful photo albums of our families or imagined families and shared them with our classmates. We learned to count to 100 and to say the date in French. Our favorite phrase was “Tu es vraiment trop curieux!” (You are really too curious!).

In Science we are finishing our study of astronomy. Students recently completed a project on myths and the moon. We are currently completing “Mission Extraterrestrial.” Students are working in small groups to study a planet or moon in our solar system, and determine if it is hospitable to life. We will be hearing each group’s findings in a conference in early January. Our next unit of study will be geology.

In Social Studies, we have wrapped up our first unit, *Understanding Ourselves*. Through our election project and school election, students learned the importance of active citizenship and had opportunities to explore their own developing political identities. We recently began our second unit, *A Nation of Immigrants*. In this unit, students will study the experiences of many different immigrants of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Students will identify the contributions that ethnic groups make to our country and celebrate the diversity in our own classroom.

In English, we are reading The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain. We have been listening to chapters on audiotape so that we can better appreciate the dialect and the colloquialisms used. We will practice creative writing as we try to come up with excuses as colorful as Tom Sawyer’s. We will be discussing the issue of censorship and why the novel has remained a classic in American literature. Students will also write a multi-paragraph composition on a topic of choice when we finish the novel.

In Math, students are doing a wonderful job and continue to work hard. All sections are currently working on a unit about fractions and decimals. As the second term continues to fly by, we look ahead to the midyear exam which will take place at the end of second term. We will review for the midyear, but of course the best way to prepare is for each student to continue to work hard on their class work and homework every day. The students know at the beginning of each week when I will provide extra help, and they should come in if they have any questions on the homework or if they want to practice more for a test or quiz.

7 Orange

Over the past few weeks, 7 Orange Science students have journeyed from the heavens to the Earth. They finished the Astronomy unit with a look at the evolution of stars. Now they are thoroughly grounded in discussions of plate tectonics. Students have spent several days reconstructing Pangaea using glacier, fossil, and mountain chain information to place the early land masses as Alfred Wegener predicted they would be located. They have experienced the frustrations involved in developing a scientific theory as well as the satisfaction of realizing their thoughts are accurate. Drawing from this foundation, the students will be studying earthquakes, volcanoes, and the rock cycle. They will be designing a project related to a topic from one of these units, which will involve library time, visual and written material, and a visual or oral presentation. Expect to see some interesting ideas emerging in the coming weeks!

The students in Mrs. Clark’s Social Studies classes have been learning about immigration as they explore the unit, “A Nation of Immigrants.” In class students experienced some of what an industrial worker in the 19th century had to deal with when they acted out a simulation involving an assembly line. In addition students read about the Mills of Manchester and The Lowell Mill Girls which helped them understand the oppressive conditions in the factories. They have explored the relationship between immigration to the United States and industrialization. Later on in the unit they will use this information to debate whether unions were necessary for

labor and immigrants to begin to “have a place at the table.” Students continue to examine and investigate issues involving immigration in the 19th century and will finish this unit by comparing and contrasting immigration issues today with those of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In Spanish the students have been talking about what they “need” and “want” to do along with describing items in a bedroom. They learned about the tradition of “Las Posadas” in Mexico before vacation. After vacation, the students started Chapter 3 in which they 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 the study of Mexican culture, and the corresponding video takes place in Cuernavaca and Taxco, Mexico.

Outside factors often influence the stock market. Students in 7 Orange Math classes are collecting newspaper articles in five categories to observe the impact of economic events on the price of stock. Students also compared major national security events from 1898 to 2003 and the effects these events had on the Dow Jones Industrial Average for the day of the event; 6 months after the event; and one year after the event. Term 2 will end with a mid-year exam on the concepts taught during the first half of the year. Students will spend a week reviewing to prepare for the exam.

Guided by the question, “What is the human spirit and how does it triumph?” students in English have been involved in reading and writing about the parts of “human spirits” that have been challenged by the conflicts of war and persecution. We tracked the conflicts in novels (Island on Birdstreet, Journey to America, The Upstairs Room, So Far From the Bamboo Grove, Year of Impossible Goodbyes, and Friedrich) which were read in small groups. Each of these novels centers on events of World War II, so before we began reading them, we went to the library to discover some key events of the war. Finally, students worked together to create a poster that stated the main conflict of the novel and supported that idea with specific events from the novel. In addition to reading these novels, we have all been reading parts of Diary of a Young Girl. While reading her diary, we examined the character traits that demonstrate Anne Frank’s “spirit.” They have had a virtual tour of the “Secret Annexe,” and have acted out scenes from the play version of Anne’s diary. Students concluded their study of Anne Frank by creating and giving presentations that honored her spirit. When writing back to the many young people who wrote to him about Anne, Otto Frank often ended his letters by saying, “I hope that Anne’s book will have an effect on the rest of your life so that insofar as it is possible in your circumstances, you will work for unity and peace.”

R. J. Grey Junior High School
School Calendar
December- January 2005

January 11	School Council Meeting, 6-7:30 PM
January 11	Winter Choral Concert, 7:30 PM
January 12	Winter Band Concert, 7:30 PM
January 17	No School - Martin Luther King Day
January 19	Spelling Bee, 7:00 PM
January 21	Grade 7 Social, 2:30-4:30 PM
January 26	Spelling Bee Snow Date
January 28	End of Term 2
