

SHADES OF GREY

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

...NOTHING TO FEAR BUT FEAR ITSELF...

October is a month that calls up our fears, and we can't blame it all on the stock market. It's really the whole ghosts, goblins and ghouls thing. But thankfully we have made it through. And despite that, some fears may linger. As if to calm those fears, the Museum of Science is currently running an exhibit called "Goose Bumps! The Science of Fear". (And you don't have to fear missing it because it's running through January 4th.) The exhibit focuses on how people react to certain fears such as coulrophobia (fear of clowns) (you can't underestimate the creepiness factor...), aviophobia, the fear of flying and pyrophobia, the fear of fire.

But there are other fears and phobias that are unique to junior high and R. J. Grey in particular. For example, an average day for our 7th and 8th graders may start off with squishaphobia, the fear of having to sit 3 to a seat on the bus. Wrinkles are not really a fear of this age group as evidenced by their ability to take clothes off the floor and wear them proudly, so at least they have that going for them.

As the day goes on, especially after gym class, osmophobia may kick in. For the uninformed, that would be a fear of body odors. (The kids with the Axe must have that phobia...)

Nov. 7th marks the end of the first quarter. So chances are that a fair amount of kids just experienced ihopemyparentsdon'treadthemailaphobia, or fear of midterm reports. The good news with this phobia is that it may be nonrecurring as most kids improve their study habits during these years with the help of teachers, parents and resources such as the learning center.

And a fear that affects most of the RJ populace is cookieaphobia, a fear that the Spunkmeyers in the cafeteria will run out. (If you read this column long enough, you'll see that "Spunks" are a recurring theme.) (Yeah, they're THAT good...)

But rest assured, the Museum of Science reminds us that there is a fun side of fear. Some people really do like the adrenaline rush from horror movies and roller coasters. And let's face it, junior high can be much like a roller coaster. So with any luck, the adrenaline will kick in for us parents as well and prevent us from having whattimewaspickupaphobia. (Well, you can figure that one out...) ;-)

Beth Farley, Editor
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From the Music Department...

Our bands at the RJ Grey are gearing up for a big year! Presently we are getting ready for Blue and Gold Day, which has traditionally happened just before Thanksgiving. So get your hands ready for some serious clapping during the “Hey Song,” as we’ll need your help cheering on all of our teams and activities at RJ Grey! In addition to this we’ve been learning how to count sophisticated rhythms, identify key signatures and learn to play some very ambitious ensemble music. It has been exciting to see our band members work so hard to improve their musicianship!

Our concert bands, jazz band and choruses will be performing a number of concerts this year. They are:

RJ Grey Chorus Winter Concert
Tuesday, January 13, 2009
7:00pm, RJGJHS Auditorium

RJ Grey Band Winter Concert
Tuesday, January 20, 2009
7:00pm, RJGJHS Auditorium

RJ Grey Band Spring Concert
Tuesday, May 12, 2009
7:00pm, RJGJHS Auditorium

RJ Grey Chorus Spring Concert
Tuesday, May 19, 2009
7:00pm, RJGJHS Auditorium



In addition to these concerts our 8th grade band and chorus will be performing in the Great East Music Festival on Friday, May 22, 2009 out in Springfield, MA and then spending the afternoon at Six Flags amusement park. This is a real treat for these students who have spent so much time and energy learning to play their instruments, most since grade 5. So, wish us luck at the festival!

Knowing how hard our students work at everything they do, it is always a joy when we can see and hear the fruits of their labor. So, please come on out to our concerts, I’m sure you will enjoy the performances! I’m hoping to see all of you at the concerts.

Mark Hickey
R.J. Grey JHS Band Director

From the Art Department...

Welcome 8th Graders! As always, Art 2 promises to be another busy and exciting chapter in the 8th Grade Exploratory experience. Art 2 is a continuation of Art 1 and focuses on the mediums of Drawing, Painting, Sculpture and Computer Art. Students are responsible for keeping an up-to-date Sketch Book which contains, drawings, planning sketches, worksheets and technique sheets that will lead to final projects in each of the four mediums. As always, there will be a focus on the 'Principles of Art', creative problem solving and expression through artwork.

We have a new 'Art Elective' that runs during the school's Grey Block time. This class is for students, 7th and 8th grade, who have signed up in advance and wish to have more art during their time at R.J. Grey. There is no prerequisite for this class but effort, risk taking and a willingness to work hard is essential. We will be making ATCs (Art Trading Cards, which are essentially mini works of art), exploring mask making and working with 'experimental' drawing.

Thank you and if you have any questions about Art 2 or Art Elective please contact me, Holly Vlajinac at 978-264-4700 x 3350 or hvlajinac@mail.ab.mec.edu

From the World Language Department...

Spanish students began the year with a review of basic foundations from 7th grade. They have now moved on to new material and are learning how to have a phone conversation and invite someone to go somewhere. Vocabulary building is an important part of what we do in 8th grade. They have had to suspend using current technology such as caller ID and personal cell phones to learn how to ask who is calling. The next topic will be learning how to talk about getting themselves ready to go somewhere. New verb structures have been presented.

*******COAT DRIVE*******

The 7 Green Team will be sponsoring the 13th Annual RJ Grey Coats for Families Drive in November. This worthy cause has become a Thanksgiving tradition at our school. Our annual goal is to collect 200 winter coats by Thanksgiving. These are delivered to Anton's Cleaners for cleaning and distribution to those less fortunate. Please take a moment to check your closets for coats for children or adults to donate. The collection boxes will be in the lobby beginning on November 3.



TEAM NEWS

From 7 Gold...

Last week, 7 Gold students enjoyed their mission to Mars! During the field trip, students also attended a planetarium show where they learned about the sun and the seasons.

On the day that students did not go on the field trip, we had a special schedule. Students viewed the video, *Sky High* and had thought provoking follow-up conversations about bullying and teasing in our school. These conversations will continue throughout the school year. Our goal as always is to create a safe and kinder environment for us all.

After researching and discussing many of the important issues of the presidential campaign in Social Studies class, students worked in small groups to create campaign posters for the candidates they support. Through words, pictures and quotes of the candidates, their task was to convince others of their views by presenting their candidate's stand on two to three important issues. Students were reminded to be respectful in their messages. We will hang these posters in the school hallway prior to our mock school election. Hopefully, students are having stimulating conversations with you at home too!

We are looking forward to other upcoming exciting events as well. Students will be learning about an ancient Mexican holiday, "El Día de los Muertos" in which the Mexican people honor their ancestors. It is one of the most important holidays for the Mexican people, and preparations begin weeks in advance. The final celebrations occur on November 1 and 2. As a culminating activity, we will celebrate the holiday in Spanish class on Monday, November 3.

Beginning this week in Science and English class, students will be examining the intersection of science, history, and drama in the play, *Galileo* by Bertolt Brecht. Students will explore the political, cultural, and scientific context of the play, perform selected scenes, and draw conclusions about observation and the way we see the world.



From 8 Gold...

Students and staff on 8 Gold have bonded well and become a real team during Term 1! In September, homeroom groups planned and provided lunch for an 8 Gold lunch, a team building activity. We picnicked outside on a beautiful day and then had time to play soccer and throw Frisbees and footballs. This was a perfect get-acquainted activity, and both staff and students enjoyed a longer lunch time and "recess." At the time of this writing, we are looking forward to our first field trip, a hike up Mt. Wachusett on Friday October 17. Let's hope the weather cooperates!

By now, students have learned the procedures and expectations in each class and are well into mastering the eighth grade curriculum. In science with Mr. Edmonds, the students are considering where the energy for life originates and how energy is passed from one organism to another. Next up, students will examine the many roles of water in our environment. Students now can answer the question, "Is a potato alive?"

Mrs. Keyworth's math classes have completed a review of pre-algebra concepts and a study of positive and negative numbers. Classes have begun solving equations, and students will soon gain experience applying the algebraic equations and formulas to spreadsheets. Once they set up a spreadsheet, they will use EXCEL's charting techniques to create a more visually effective representation of the data.

Ms. Berberian's social studies classes have completed the Prepare to Travel unit and are now visiting the Middle East. They've explored the region's geography and will be learning about various religions and the history of the region soon. Students will immerse themselves in the culture, including experiences in singing, dancing, and tasting foods. We will also be celebrating Deepavali ("festival of lights") on October 28, with dancing, food, and language lessons organized and presented by the Indian students on our team. We've been preparing for the upcoming election and are looking forward to participating in the school wide mock election on Monday, November 3.

English classes with Mrs. Higgins began the year with a study of poetry and figurative language. Students wrote and illustrated Naming Poems which are on display in room 201. Students also wrote book reviews on their first term Independent Reading books. A binder of these reviews will be placed in the R. J. Grey library for perusal by other students. Students reviewed the parts of speech and learned about kinds of sentences in the first grammar unit. In literature, students will read non-fiction pieces about the Presidential candidates to focus on reading for information. A novel study will begin in late October.

French and Spanish students with Mrs. Reeves recently completed the review of the vocabulary and grammar concepts practiced in seventh grade. Using maps of and information about the cities of Tours and Paris, French students are learning how to ask for and give directions as well as identify and describe places, streets, and buildings within cities and neighborhoods. In addition, students will practice using the immediate future tense. Spanish students are practicing talking on the telephone, extending and accepting invitations, making plans, talking about getting ready and turning down an invitation with an explanation. Our cultural focus is on the historically rich country of Ecuador.

From 7 Orange...

7 Orange is off to a great start this year! We opened the year with several team activities designed to help everyone meet new people and find common areas of interest. Sharing food is often an important part of social events and we celebrated our new beginning as the 7 Orange team with cantaloupe, goldfish crackers, and various blends of juice (all blends containing orange juice, of course!!). As a team, we have developed and ratified a 7 Orange Constitution to ensure a safe and positive learning environment for all students. We have been impressed by the academic and personal engagement of our students with each other and with the 7 Orange teachers, Ms. Carter and Ms. Kelly. This bodes well for lots of interesting and fun times together as a team.

In addition to our team events, we also plan to participate in activities with other 7th grade teams throughout the school year. Our first "Mix-It-Up" event was the completion of a personal time capsule. On a Friday afternoon, we met with students from 7 Green in the cafeteria. Working with students from both teams, each person recorded various body measurements and made predictions for the coming year. While students worked on this, we enjoyed music from a "mix tape" made by 7 Orange students, Tristen

Litterio and Dani Walters. We will all meet again in June to open the time capsules and note the changes that have occurred during seventh grade. Plans for our next “Mix-It Up” event are under way – a “Metric Olympics”!!

Students in Ms. Kelly’s Science class have just finished an introductory unit covering important basic science information: the scientific method and measuring and estimating using the metric system. During the unit test, students had to design and carry out an experiment using a paper helicopter. It was not your usual testing scenario as students throughout the room were timing the descent of their helicopter as they changed one variable (the independent variable) and measuring its effect on another variable (the dependent variable). By the time you read this, that test should be in your child’s notebook so be sure to take a look at the results! We are all looking forward to our field trip to the Christa McAuliffe Challenger Center where we will participate in a simulation of a mission to Mars. Every year, all seventh grade teams take part in this exciting field trip. Jobs have been assigned and we are looking forward to the journey!



All seventh grade students study Pre-Algebra in math class. 7 Orange students have mastered algebraic expressions and operations with integers. We are currently working on solving algebraic equations. All tests and quizzes can be found in your child’s notebook so be sure to ask your child to share these results with you; a lot of learning can take place from the problems that are done incorrectly! Ms. Kelly hopes that throughout the year, students will develop effective and efficient study strategies for math. You don’t have to spend as much time studying if you can identify the areas where you need additional help or practice. Students can identify these areas using their homework assignments as a diagnostic tool. It is important that students re-do (not just review) the problems that they get wrong in their homework. Extra help is available regularly from Ms. Kelly. Encourage your child to take advantage of this if needed.

In Ms. Carter’s English class, students have been reading a book of their own choosing out of class, the Independent Reading Project (IRP). During the last week of October, students will have a “gallery tour” of the projects other students have created to represent their IRP book. This will give students great exposure to a variety of books they may consider for their second term choice, a resource for whom to go to if they are confused while reading the book, as well as another way for the students to feel connected with one another. As a class, students have begun reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor. This book is about an African-American family living in Mississippi in 1933. Students are tracking characters and themes throughout the book and adopting the role of their character as they consider some big questions about equality, justice and what it means to be a person of conviction. Along with reading, students have been writing; informative, creative, narrative and analytical. Look for further “Copernicus Craft” writings, where students are asked to look at a subject/topic from a different angle.

In social studies, students have been looking at who they are, both as individuals and as part of a larger group; a school, a class, a nation. Do they hold stereotypes and where do their stereotypes come from? How do they **want** people to view them? How have they been affected by where they live? All these questions are being explored as students try and answer them as best they can for themselves. They have also been working hard to get ready for our Mock Election, on Monday, November 3rd. They have been reading about the issues, acquainting themselves with the candidates, tracking the changing Electoral College map and prioritizing the challenges the next president faces. Students will go to their “polling” place in the library and cast their ballot for president. The Mock Election tries to simulate the voting

experience as closely as it can, asking students to “check in” with “poll workers”, take their ballot to the “voting booth”, vote in secret and the cast their ballot. Results will be reported at the end of the school day and students will be able to compare RJ Grey’s results with that of the state and the rest of the country on Tuesday.

From 8 Orange...

8 Orange recently completed our first team field trip, a hike up Mt. Wachusett in Princeton, MA. The team would like to thank all of the parent chaperones who accompanied us and helped make the trip a success! Along the way to the summit, students completed a "photographic scavenger hunt," and they will be making photo collages chronicling their hike.

In science, students are starting off the year with a study of physics. As an optional activity, a number of our students took part in the Octoberfest 5K (formerly the Sarah Hughes Memorial 5K) in West Acton on October 4, and analyzed their speed and acceleration data during the fun run. Congratulations to all who completed the race! So far we have considered motion and forces, including Newton's three Laws of Motion. As our study of physics continues, we will also consider work, simple machines, and energy.

The beginning of the year is always exciting in social studies, because there is so much to learn and discuss before we’re ready to start our first curriculum unit. We started the first few weeks of school establishing classroom expectations and discussing the nature of culture and society; in particular, we did several exciting lessons on culture and perspective that cannot be discussed here in order to preserve the surprise and secrecy for future 8 Orange students!

After some review of latitude and longitude, we then spent time in the computer lab learning about internet research and practicing our skills of critical evaluation. Because the internet is so easy and accessible to junior high school students, it is vital that students learn how to be objective and scholarly when evaluating the reliability (or unreliability) of internet resources.



Finally, we wrapped up our introductory unit with a postcard project that required the students to make a postcard using the Five Themes of Geography and mail it to Mr. B, using the real postal service. Mr. B was thrilled to get so much mail from “around the world” and was delighted to see such clever and sophisticated research manifesting itself in newsy postcard prose.

We have already started our curriculum unit on China, and 8 Orange looks forward to learning about the world’s most populated country over the coming months!

Students in Mrs. Weeks’ class have been reading vignettes and discussing personal writing. Over the last two weeks students have been prewriting and organizing their own vignettes and will focus next week on revising their writing. Students will soon be reading George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* while continuing to study China in social studies class. Communism, leadership and propaganda are areas on which students will be focusing. Through a group project, students will also be taking an active role in running “animal farm” through a group project.

R. J. Grey Calendar

November 4	NO SCHOOL- Professional Day
November 6	Student Council, 12:22
November 7	Quarter 1 Ends
November 11	NO SCHOOL
November 18	Principal's Drop in Hour, 6-7:00 PM
November 18	School Council, 7-8:30 PM
November 26	Early Dismissal, 11:06
November 27-28	NO SCHOOL- Thanksgiving Break
December 3	Student Council, 12:22
December 4	Early Dismissal, 10:40
December 4	Parent Conferences, 11:30-2:30
December 9	Principal's Drop in Hour, 6-7:00 PM
December 9	School Council, 7-8:30 PM
December 11	Early Dismissal, 10:40

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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