



MS 6th Grade Dean Update



Dear 6th Grade Parents and Guardians,

When we gathered at the fall parent forum, some folks shared that their children were excited by a recent assembly: an interactive visit from the Ballet Hispanico dance troupe as part of our celebration of Hispanic Heritage month. Other parents were surprised -- they had heard nothing about it, although their children had been there too! Middle school students were quite engaged and excited during this, and many other, interesting assemblies that are part of the regular schedule. However, the flavor of the experience may not always make it home. Anyone who has ever asked their child, “How was your day?” and has heard back, “Fine” without elaboration, can probably relate. We had a chuckle about middle school students’ sometimes sparse way of communicating, but I heard that folks might like a

heads up about upcoming assembly topics in addition to my usual dates, etc. here. So I've included a list of some of our upcoming assemblies in the "Around the Dinner Table" section below. Hopefully this may generate conversation that can lend more colors to students' tales of their day.

Another question we discussed was the schedule for formal feedback to parents about how students are doing in their individual classes. The first formal reporting to parents will be the in-person parent/teacher conferences November 14th and 15th. Since sixth graders do not receive cumulative letter grades, you will not see letter grades posted on myD-E in November as they are for students in 7th and 8th grade. Instead, subject specific "checklists" that describe student skills, content mastery, and approach to work will be posted on myDE in early December. Starting this year, those checklists (and later, narrative comments and grades) are released to students' portals a day or two before they post to parents' portals. When these kinds of reports are released to students, the students spend time in advisory reflecting on their successes, goals, and questions, and they and meet with their advisors to make plans for the term ahead. This process is a way of putting students "in the driver's seat." We hope it also will help them to spark thoughtful conversation with you about their efforts.

Similarly, students receive feedback on regular projects, papers, quizzes and other assessments directly from teachers. And they are asked to deliberately share some of these with you as part of their celebration of and reflection upon their work. See the "What's Up in Classes" section below for some examples to look for this month.

Dates of Interest

- **October 31st** -- Students may dress in costume on Halloween, although no masks, weapons, large props or cultural commentary or appropriation are permitted. (Please do **not** send bags of candy to school with students for health and food-safety reasons!)
- **November 1st** -- School Closed for Diwali and Day of the Dead
- **Select Dates/Times October & November -- Dean's Optional Check-in Meetings:** If you would like to check in with me to let me know how your child's experience is going so far, or if you were unable to make the Parent Forum and have questions, please feel free to sign up for a googlemet chat [here](#). I will be on campus during parent conferences so folks also can drop in when you already are here for teacher meetings.
- **November 14** -- **Early Dismissal 1:30** (See Mr. Davis' upcoming email for details about signing up for your conference on "PickATime")
- **November 15** -- **No School for Parent/Teacher Conferences**
- **November 18** -- **Winter Sports and Clubs Start**
- **November 26-29** -- **School Closed for Thanksgiving**
- **December 6** -- **No Classes (Teachers' Professional Day)**

Around the Dinner Table...

- **Assemblies** -- Recently, during our Thursday assembly time, MS students heard from upper school teachers "guest speakers" about how United States' elections work and the role of the electoral college. Tomorrow we will attend and support the Lower School Halloween Parade. Other upcoming assemblies will include presentations about "Banned Books" and by affinity groups, participation in the "Hour of Code" and poetry readings, and attendance at a MS performance of the Upper School Jazz Rock fall concert.
- **What's Up in Classes...**

- Science -- We just returned from a day at the Meadowlands Science Center where students learned about sustainable building methods and materials as part of their study of human impact on the environment. Students are wrapping up the unit with a quiz on Wednesday, October 30th. You should be expecting an end of the unit reflection sheet the week of November 4th along with all of their work from this unit. Soon after, students will begin their next unit learning about the science of weather, specifically the instruments used, fronts, air masses, and much more!
- English: Students wrapped up our first unit on Monday, 10/28. This Roundtable unit focused on building foundational skills for reading, annotating, and analytical writing. Students will be bringing home their second parent letter the week of November 4, which will include follow up revision and reflection work. On Tuesday, 10/29, students will begin a two week personal narrative unit focused on an important moment in their lives.
- History: In History class, students have just wrapped up their first Unit on the Agricultural Revolution. Keep an eye out for a parent letter with the unit's major materials being sent home soon! For the final week of October, students will be learning about the electoral process as part of the History Department's curriculum on Civics for the upcoming Election. After that, students will start their next major unit on Ancient Egypt.
- Math CP: Students are finishing up the ratio and proportion unit and continuing with weekly ALEKS.
- Math Advanced: Students are finishing the integer unit where they learned to add, subtract, multiply, and divide integers. They are starting problem set 6.2, and continuing with weekly ALEKS.
- Math Hyper: In math, Hyper 6 students are working on problems sets - we are up to PS#8 - and some of the main topics we have looked deeper at so far are linear functions, their slope and y-intercept; arithmetic, geometric, and quadratic sequences; recursive vs. explicit definition of a sequence; binomial expansion FOIL using "box method"; factoring trinomials; distance-rate-time word problems; and multi-step and literal equations. Students have had two major assessments and a number of smaller informal assessments. They are also beginning work on a DESMOS project, where they will learn to use primarily linear functions to write their name and "draw" a basic shape such as a car or home, and to restrict the domain of functions to create such designs. This will give them the opportunity to explore other types of functions using Desmos. Project due: week after Thanksgiving break.

Reminders

- **Sign up for Parent Conferences on PickATime** -- See Mr. Davis' upcoming email for details.
- **Let Me Know about Any Planned Absences around Holidays** -- These are excused without extensions, so your child is responsible for making up missed classwork and homework on time. If you give me a week's notice of any planned absence, teachers are better able to help the student learn to plan ahead! We will give them a planned absence form and guide them in using TAGs to make plans so that the catch up feels less overwhelming.

Have a happy, celebratory weekend!

Tasha Urbanowski