

MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWS

MOC-Floyd Valley

December

2023

Special points of Interest:

- Student Engagement
- PBIS Update
- Leader in Me



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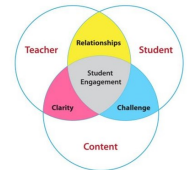
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STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Happy Holidays to all of you! I trust that you were able to enjoy a Happy Thanksgiving holiday and you are looking forward to Christmas!

The concept of *engagement*, and not the kind that involves a pending marriage, is directly tied to all of us reaching our full potential. In relationships, professions, and hobbies, we tend to excel when we are fully *engaged*. If engagement leads to our best, it follows suit why the concept of *student engagement* is so important to educators! The diagram to the right is from a book “Engagement by Design”. The key components in the classroom are the student, teacher (and support staff), and the content being taught. I would like to focus on the next inner-most overlap; relationships, clarity, and challenge. We desire for students to own their learning! To possess it like a most coveted possession! I would offer that the relationships that students build with teachers/staff and with their peers is a prerequisite for owning learning. We work hard to foster quality relationships through our interactions and through programs like Leader in Me at the Middle School. Likewise, we believe the highest levels of student engagement and learning occur when students collaborate with one another in their learning. Often the most innovative and creative thinking can occur when we “put our heads together” on something!



The clarity piece of the overlap of the diagram is the teacher commanding their craft of teaching. Sometimes clarity is arrived at by a teacher simply providing direction and facilitating student discussion and learning. Other times, that teaching craft shows up in lesson design and activities designed for learning. Yet, other times, the teachers needs to be the source of information or direct students to the information. The teacher, maturity of students, and content are just a few factors that feed the craftsmanship of teaching.

Last in the inner overlap is challenge. The author of the aforementioned book would suggest that increasing challenge, and thus positively contributing to student engagement, requires a blend of different approaches. Often this blend can occur within a single unit of a class. Thinking tasks (reading information) and Fluency tasks (daily practice tasks) add to increased challenge. The combination that is most desired to grow and stretch students and have them engaged, are those tasks that require stamina, concentration, collaboration, and creativity to solve problems.

As I share some of these thoughts from “Engagement by Design”, know that I am proud of the way our students and staff relate with one another to foster high levels of student engagement! Our students are growing their capacity each day to own their learning and they are learning how they learn. Our staff members seek to create learning episodes that require collaboration, concentration, and that open the door for students to be creative problem solvers.

We are grateful for the opportunities we have to engage in our profession for the purpose of engaging your child(ren) in their learning. Thank you for letting us work alongside you and your child(ren). We believe as educators that our best days are when we help others experience success!

6th Grade Reading . . . Read All About It!

By: Mrs. TeGrotenhuis

One of my goals for individual reading this quarter is for students to leave their reading comfort zone by trying a new genre. Students are expected to read at least three different genres by December 22. It's already been encouraging to see students who are finding new genres of books they will continue to read! Please continue to encourage your child to read daily and fill out his/her reading log. Thanks for all you do for our students to help them succeed.

During the month of December, the sixth-grade literature classes will complete a non-fiction unit about young heroes. We have been reading about one of the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winners, Malala Yousafzai. Malala is a young girl from Pakistan who was shot by a terrorist group for standing up for her belief in the right to be educated. Students have been introduced to vocabulary such as *oppressive*, *terrorist*, and *refugees*. In addition, we have been working on a variety of non-fiction reading and writing skills including finding the main idea and using text evidence. Students have learned that we often take our own education for granted when we learn about what Malala and her friends have been through simply to learn. Many of our students, in turn, share how thankful they are for a school like ours.

Additionally, students will also read short articles and view short videos about other young heroes right here in the United States. These young heroes made an impact in their community and prove that all of us can do things to positively influence others. Near the end of this unit, students will construct a piece of writing in response to what they have learned about these young heroes. This is always my favorite piece of writing to read!

As we get closer to Christmas, we will read a dramatic version of the story *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. The students enjoy reading this classic tale out loud in class while we discuss the literary elements of mood and theme as well as character development in Ebenezer Scrooge. Most students know the storyline of this classic tale, but we will also examine the historical period during which it was written to gain a better understanding of the author's intent. I am hoping for less snow days than last year so we can enjoy this wonderful story!



6th Grade Math

By: Mr. Boersma

The sixth graders (and Mr. Boersma) continue to work our way through the new IM curriculum. We have some great conversations in class and I believe that they are really making some great mathematical connections. There are some really helpful online resources for parents, students, and educators. If you'd like to have me show you some resources, please feel free to contact me and I can email them to you or meet with you to show you how to access them. These resources are a great way to reinforce what we are learning at school or to prepare for assessments with your child.

If your son/daughter ever mentions Study Island at home, I'd like you, as parents, to understand what that is. Study Island is an online resource designed to preview, review, remediate, or challenge students with a little math outside of class time. Each week one Study Island assignment is given to the students. As essentially all of our IM is done during class time, Study Island allows students a little bit extra. Students are allowed to work within the 5th, 6th, 7th, or even 8th grade curriculum depending upon the level of challenge each student wishes.

Thank you for your patience and support as we work our way through this new phase of math at MOC/FV.



Growing and Changing in 6th Grade English

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By: Mrs. Jacobsma

We are looking at multiple ways writing plays a part in the everyday world of adults. The students will explore some of those styles and purposes in their own writing. This unit takes my authors on a self-directed journey through writing in styles and manners they never considered before.

Following the real world writing unit, we will return to grammar and ramp up our writing skills. We will examine the basic structure of good sentences and then reconstruct our writing style with more complex and compound writing! Our next major writing assignment will be a hero essay where we look at what it means to be an everyday sort of hero. We'll choose someone who has made a significant impact on us and interview them. Then we'll create a tribute poem to honor them!



7th Grade Literature

By: Mrs. Vermeer

It's hard to believe it's December! What a fast start to the school year. The seventh graders are doing an amazing job learning new vocabulary, challenging themselves in their reading, and building their research skills this year. The seventh graders completed their infographics with their partners and what an amazing job they did. They presented creative and eye-catching infographics with well research information. We are wrapping up our research unit with recording our TEDTalks. They have done a great job researching their topic, preparing their argument, citing information, and presenting their claims. I look forward to watching their videos as I have seen a lot of creativity come out in their design and presentation process. Our goal is to complete all research and TEDTalks by the middle of December.

To wrap up the Second Quarter we will be reading a variety of texts about the holiday season. One activity that the seventh graders will be working on is a Christmas Tic Tac Toe board. To complete the board students simply make a Tic Tac Toe of their choosing on the board. The Tic Tac Toe board is comprised of fiction and nonfiction text all about Christmas related topics. Some stories deal with the history of holidays to the weather during December. Each story has different activities and questions to complete about each story. They will have a little over a week to complete the Tic Tac Toe board.

As a class we will spend comparing two different Christmas stories. *A Kidnapped Santa Claus* will be compared to *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Students will need to provide similarities and differences between the two stories. Then students will need to provide evidence and reasoning to determine if one of the stories copied the other. They will spend time reflecting and defending their thinking through a variety of activities.

As we wrap up the end of the quarter and semester, students will also be turning in their Quarter two Book logs, and many have already made the goal for reading back in November. Way to go seventh graders! I am excited to see what else they will accomplish this year!



7th Grade Math

By: Mr. Baker

What a fun start we have had to our year in math! I can't believe how fast it is going and all that is being learned. In math we are learning about equations and inequalities, or better known as pre-algebra concepts. While some people may view algebra and variables as a foreign language, I would like to encourage both students and parents to approach this chapter with a great attitude. Great effort will be necessary in this chapter as we learn new concepts, and I know that a great deal of learning will occur if everyone carries a growth mindset. This is one of the most difficult units we learn during seventh grade, but can also be a fun one. I want to encourage students to finish strong before the Christmas break!

7th Grade English

Mrs. VR (Van Regenmorter)

Since the last newsletter, the seventh grade English students finished up their unit about writing emails. Writing emails is a real-world form of writing and communication, and today's students often need to write emails. Students learned how to write correctly structured emails that communicate effectively and reflect positively on them, the sender.

During this time between Thanksgiving and Christmas, students are writing personal narratives. A personal narrative is a true story about an experience that happened to the person who is writing it. We will learn the elements of a good narrative and look at examples of a personal narrative. We will work through the five steps of the writing process and focus on four traits of good writing, which are voice, content, organization, and conventions. My plan is to have students complete their rough drafts before Christmas break, and when we return from break, they will revise, edit, and produce the final draft. By the end of the unit, students will have a final personal narrative that I hope they are proud of writing and that I'll look forward to reading!

Once again, I thank you for taking the time to read the middle school newsletter. By reading our newsletter, you stay informed, and it also gives you opportunities to talk with your son or daughter about school and what they are learning.



7th Grade Science

By: Mrs. Vande Kieft

Why do I have blue eyes? Why do you have brown hair? Can you roll your tongue? The seventh graders will be investigating the answers to these questions in February along with our Big Question: "Why do offspring with the same parents look different?" during science class as part of the Genetics and Heredity Unit. Each Team will be exploring various traits that they have inherited from their parents and comparing those traits with their teammates. During this unit, we will be conducting investigations to isolate DNA from various fruits, determining the importance of DNA in expressing who we are, and predicting the probability of various genotypes and phenotypes for potential offspring. Within the unit on genetics, we will also be looking at the occurrence of mutations and its effects on different organisms. Students will gain a better understanding of the common mutations that they may have or find around them in nature while determining if those mutations pose a potential harmful, beneficial, or neutral effect. Finally, we will explore the new area of science, epigenetics, to see how much the environment plays a factor in the genetics and growth of various organisms. Happy Holidays!



PBIS Update

Hopefully, you have heard about some of the fun that PBIS brings to the Middle School to help celebrate a safe, positive, and welcoming learning environment for all students. When students are recognized for meeting the three expectations of the Middle School: Doing Your Best, Doing What's Right, and Treating Others How You Want to be Treated, they receive a Dutch ticket. Students then have the opportunity to turn their ticket into the Weekly, Monthly, or Activity drawing boxes outside of the Office where they have the chance to be drawn for various prizes. Each ticket is also counted toward a STAR and grade level total to be used for monthly ticket challenges. In the month of December, the PBIS ticket challenge is a Christmas Cookie Challenge which will run from Friday, Dec. 1st through Friday, Dec. 15th. During this challenge the STAR with the greatest number of tickets turned in for each grade level will earn the opportunity to have Christmas cookies during the final week of school prior to break. The Christmas Cookie Challenge was a huge hit last year, so best of luck to each STAR in the challenge! More importantly, keep up the great work as you positively impact others around you because kindness is one of the greatest gifts we can give to one another.

Our Corner of History

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By: Mrs. Phelan

In our latest unit for eighth grade History, we were fortunate to have the opportunity to commemorate Veterans Day. Each student was asked to interview a veteran and ask them questions about their service. Furthermore, they individually researched topics connected to the military, including various memorials (Korean War Memorial, Vietnam War Memorial, etc.), wars (World War II, The War in Afghanistan, etc.), and the stories of several Medal of Honor recipients (Desmond Doss, Sylvester Antolak, etc.). Following their research, eighth graders presented their findings to the rest of the class in a speech ranging from two to five minutes.

For some, it is a big challenge speaking publicly in front of their peers, and I am glad that they had the opportunity to work on this important life skill in a positive environment rooted in a growth mindset. It is also my hope that these students came to better appreciate the role of service in the armed forces and the cost of the freedoms we enjoy in the United States. If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to ask your student to share about their projects from this unit!

Looking ahead, we are moving into our unit on the War for Independence which begins with an in-depth look at America's "break up letter," the Declaration of Independence. When teaching students about the major events and battles of this period, I allow students to "Choose their Own Adventure" in the shoes of an American soldier. As they see where their choices take them, students will journal about their "firsthand experiences" in the Revolutionary War.

At the end of this unit, we will be viewing a school-appropriate version of *The Patriot*, to see what the combat experiences of the time were like. The film has been edited from the original to omit R-Rated elements such as language and gore, yet there will still be intense moments depicting warfare. Before viewing the movie, we will spend some time preparing for these thematic elements. If you have any questions or concerns before viewing, please don't hesitate to get in touch.



8th Grade Literature

By: Mrs. Hoppe

The eighth grade Literature class is nearing the end of our unit on *The Outsiders*. We will be finishing our body biography projects this week, and next, we will begin writing a thematic essay. We have discussed how characters are vehicles of theme. We have learned that characters are complex and have troubles, which reveal motifs and how concepts expose themes. From our work together, we created a list of five big ideas in the book, which include divided communities, empathy, individual identity, self-sacrifice and honor, and preserving childhood innocence. In a thematic essay, each student will demonstrate their ability to identify a theme, write a thesis statement, and incorporate textual evidence by using direct quotes effectively.

Following *The Outsiders* unit, the eighth grade will begin with an introduction to the Holocaust. We will start a timeline activity, where students will study and analyze events before, during, and after the Holocaust. This activity builds background and incites enthusiasm for the other activities we'll complete in this unit.

Lastly, please continue to encourage your child to read independently each night. Now that we have concluded our class novel, we will continue our Take Time for Ten independent reading habit in class. Daily independent reading is crucial to your child's improvement and success as a reader. Thank you for encouraging and setting aside time for your child to read daily. If you are looking for Christmas gift ideas for your child, giving them books is always a great option!

December 22



The First Day of Winter

8th Grade English

By: Mrs. Oolman

As we are finishing up the Colors / Mindset / Grit / Personality / Learning Styles unit, students will be “tasked” to choose their own assignment. In other words, they will be asked to share what they learned in a way that works for them! Students will answer the question: “What is YOUR biggest take-away from learning more about yourself?”

I would encourage you to ask your own student the following questions:

1. What “color” they are and what that means.
2. HOW they are smart.
3. What their “circle of control” is.
4. What “grit” is.
5. What “productive struggle” is.
6. What “self-regulation strategies” they know.
7. What it means to “self-advocate”.
8. What “growth mindset” means.
9. What self-care is (how they are “sharpening the saw” physically, mentally, socially).
10. Finally, ask them what the sign on their locker states.

Following this unit, we will be reviewing some basic “language skills” we need to know. This is information that “scaffolds” or holds up our writing and speaking in English. We will start with the eight parts of speech (nouns, verbs, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections). Once those are mastered, we will tackle the ten punctuation marks (period, colon, semi-colon, question mark, exclamation mark, parentheses, quotation marks, hyphen, comma, and apostrophe). After some practice time, tests will be given. Tests need to be passed with a C or above, or retakes will be given.

Following the parts of speech and punctuation marks, we will review capitalization rules. There are twenty-five of them, and I am noticing the usage of these rules is missing in student writing. This review should improve our writing!



Leader in Me

During the months of November and December, the focus of the Leader in Me lessons have been based on **Learning to Lead Self** where students have discussed the importance of recognizing their emotions and how to use various self-regulation strategies to proactively respond to their circumstances. As a follow-up, students engaged in examining circumstances in their lives both inside and outside of their Circle of Control. Finally, students have been encouraged to reflect on their personal values, make long term goals, and create a Personal Mission Statement in order to guide them on the path towards being the person that they want to become in the future.

Focus: **Learning to Lead Self**

Importance of Self-Regulation

Circle of Control

Personal Values Based on Principle Centered Living

Personal Mission Statement

Establishing a Shared Vision



8th Grade Science

Page 7

By: Mrs. Hoogeveen

Here are a couple of questions we have attempted to answer in eight grade Science:

“How do we track the changes of organisms over time?”

Last month we uncovered information about fossils. We compared ancient fossils to modern animals which helps us track changes over time.

Earlier in November, the students explored how organisms in a short time can change quickly when their environment changes. Four examples were given. First, bird beaks in the Galapagos Islands changed when their food source changed because of a drought then a few years later a flood. Second, pocket mice of the Sonoran Desert (Arizona) changed color from white to black when volcanic basalt invaded the area. Next, dark peppered moths began to occur more often when pollution from burning coal affected the environment in Europe. Lastly, the black squirrels found in Alton were brought to our attention as new residents.

How are humans changing genetics and what impact is this having?

Currently, the 8th grade science classes are synthesizing information about how technologies have influenced the inheritance of desired traits in organisms. The first step was to understand the history behind biotechnology and why we continue to practice different forms of this. Next, we focused on different forms of selective breeding, their desired outcomes, and the possible pros and cons associated with them. The new gene-editing technology where some of the DNA parts were removed which is being done to keep some pigs small was the third topic of discussion. Cloning was successful in 1996 with sheep. Recently, the Chinese have cloned monkeys in hopes of doing research to cure Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Disease. We talked about some pros and cons of cloning a pet. Did you know that most of the bananas we eat are cloned? We investigated what selective breeding was and how that relates to some of the different foods we enjoy such as Clementine oranges and Honeycrisp apples. Our last topic of discussion was the reality of editing the human genome for medical purposes and possibly creating enhancements for babies.

Next up—Waves. We will be delving into sound waves in December with many different hands-on activities to learn about waves and how sound waves work for us.



December 25



Winter Break December 23 , 2023 - January 3, 2024

School Resumes January 4, 2024

DECEMBER 12 ~ MIDDLE SCHOOL CONCERT

HIGH SCHOOL NEW GYM

7:00 P.M.

December 2023

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---------------|---|---|-----------|--|---|-----|
| | | | | | 1:12pm Early Dismissal | |
| 3 | 4:15pm BBB vs Sheldon 7 th (H) 8 th (A) | 5 | 6 | 4:15pm BBB vs Rock Valley 7 th (A) 8 th (H) | 1:12pm Early Dismissal | |
| Makerspace | | | | | | |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| | | 4:15pm Girls Wrestling @ Rock Valley 7:00pm MS Holiday Concert @ High School | | 4:00pm BBB vs Sergeant Bluff 7 th (H) 8 th (A) | 1:12pm Early Dismissal | |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| | 4:15pm JH Girls Wrestling @ Spirit Lake | | | | Winter Begins End 2 nd Qrt. /1 st Semester 1:12pm Early Dismissal | |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| Christmas Eve | Christmas Day | No School | No School | No School | No School | |
| 31 | | | | | | |

January 2024

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|----------------|--|---|---|--|---|---------------|
| New Year's Eve | New Year's Day ¹ No School | No School ² | No School - Professional Development ³ | Begin 2 nd Semester ⁴ | ⁵ | ⁶ |
| ⁷ | ⁸ | ⁹ | ¹⁰ | 4:15pm GBB vs Sioux Center 7 th (H) 8 th (A) ¹¹ | 1:12pm Early Dismissal ¹² | ¹³ |
| ¹⁴ | Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day ¹⁵ 4:15pm GBB vs Sergeant Bluff-Luton 7 th (H) 8 th (A) | 4:15pm GBB vs Spencer 7 th (A) 8 th (H) ¹⁶ | ¹⁷ | ¹⁸ | 1:12pm Early Dismissal ¹⁹ | ²⁰ |
| ²¹ | 4:15pm GBB vs LeMars 7 th (H) 8 th (A) ²² | ²³ | ²⁴ | NWIA Honor Orchestra Festival @ NWC ²⁵ 4:15pm MS Boys Wrestling @ Hinton | 1:12pm Early Dismissal ²⁶ | ²⁷ |
| ²⁸ | ²⁹ | ³⁰ | ³¹ | | | |