

# The Carson Courier

Volume 12, Issue 2

September 2009

*"Rediscovering... the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in."  
from Rachel Carson's "A Sense of Wonder"*

## INCLUDED IN THIS EDITION:

- "Clip & Save" page with frequently-needed school contact information (*next page*)
- Updates from administration

## Important Dates to Remember in

### OCTOBER

- 1 **Students dismissed @ 11:50 a.m.**
- 9 **Interims go home**
- 12 **Columbus Day Holiday School closed**
- 13 **PTA Meeting-7:00 p.m.**
- 22 **Hearing/Vision Screening**
- 30 **1<sup>st</sup> grading period ends**

## A LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL...

Dear Rachel Carson Families:

The start of a new school year is always exciting, filled with hope and promise. Rachel Carson is celebrating our twelfth year opening this September and our theme for the school year is "Greater by the Dozen."

I would like to begin this month's *Courier* article by thanking the countless number of parents and National Junior Honor Society students for assisting us in preparing the school for its 2009-2010 opening. The administration and staff appreciate all of the assistance in preparing packets, decorating the building, helping teachers prepare their classrooms, and preparing for the teacher workweek events. It is always heartwarming to see the school community come together to create a learning environment that is responsive to the needs of its students. Again, thank you to everyone who lent a hand in the preparation of the start of school.

By the time you receive this newsletter, we will already have held our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Back to School Nights. I hope you will continue to seek ways in which to become involved in the life of our school. We have always felt very fortunate to have such a supportive and involved parent community. Our students certainly are the beneficiaries of such a fruitful partnership.

At the beginning of each year, I always like to make a pitch for a strategy that makes a big difference in increasing academic achievement for middle school students – READ. Children who spend time reading above and beyond what is required for their school assignments score significantly better on standardized tests than students who neglect this activity. A study cited in the article "Growth in Reading and How Children Spend Their Time Outside of School" found that children who read an average of 40 minutes per day are exposed to 2,357,000 words per year and score in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized tests. In contrast, children who spend an average of 13 minutes per day are exposed to 601,000 words per year and score in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized tests. Unfortunately, students who only spend an average of 1.5 minutes per day reading are exposed to only 51,000 words per year and traditionally score in the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized tests. This study clearly illustrates that students who spend time reading outside of school have a distinct advantage.

Your children are already a delight - they greet us with smiles and good humor every morning, are polite and well-behaved. As I have visited classrooms and listened to your children, I am so impressed by their maturity and insight. You should be very proud!

We are looking forward to a wonderful year together.

Sincerely,  
Augie Frattali

*"No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted."  
- Aesop*



# Attention Rachel Carson Families



Rachel Carson Middle School will have an  
**Early Dismissal at 11:50 a.m.**

**on Thursday, October 1, 2009**

for the purpose of staff development.

This early release is **only** for Rachel Carson students. Please be sure to arrange appropriate supervision for your child.

**Under no circumstances are students to visit other school sites that are in session.**

Other schools are eligible to have similar opportunities on other dates.

**Buses will depart RCMS**

**at 12:00 p.m.**

**on October 1, 2009.**

## **NOTES FROM THE OFFICE OF STUDENT SERVICES**

Now that we have begun a new school year at Rachel Carson, we would like to share information regarding the functioning of the student services department. We have four counselors who are each assigned to teams. The counselors have been busy assisting students with their schedules and lockers, and helping them to get acquainted with policies and procedures in our school. Counselors have gone into the classrooms and met with the teams to “orient” students to the Student Services program here at Rachel Carson. Some of the topics discussed have included: how to see your counselor, groups and activities that are sponsored by the guidance counselors, importance of good study skills and keeping on task with assignments, respecting each other and some of the changes they may notice this year. They used the **Daily Assignment Book (DAB)**, which all students received, as a means to help students to be organized and successful in school. Ask your child to share how he/she uses the assignment book. The counselors will be working with their team teachers to identify needs of their team students and will develop their counseling group activities around these identified needs. In addition to the above tasks, they have been available to meet with students in need of assistance in transitioning to the middle school environment. Counselors may see students individually, in small groups, or in a classroom setting. Students may refer themselves to the counselors by filling out a request form to see their counselor. Parents may make an appointment with their child's counselor directly.

### **Team Conference Appointments**

If at any time you wish an appointment with your child's teachers, please call the team counselor and they will be happy to set up a conference for you with the team of teachers. The conferences will be held during the team common planning time and, therefore, will be during the school day. Appointments with individual teachers should be made directly with the teachers. The counselors and teachers are anxious to include parents as part of the team concept, and look forward to meeting with you or talking to you on the phone.

The counselors are:

Brenda Humphrey (Lead)	Teams D,Z,	703-925-3618
Jamie Mahoney	Teams B, X	703-925-3620
Rebecca Little	Teams C,Y	703-925-3619
Joni Fraundorfer	Teams A, W	703-925-3616

### **Back to School Nights**

Back to School nights were held earlier this year. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade Back to School Night was held on Thursday, September 10 at 7:00 PM and the 7<sup>th</sup> grade parents were here the evening of September 17. Both sessions were introduced by a video presentation and direct classroom visits by the parents instead of a gym presentation and later visits. Family Life Education screening took place at 6:30 in the Media Center both nights for interested parents. We hope those of you who could attend had an enjoyable evening.

### **Upcoming Events**

#### ***Sexual Harassment Lessons***

In October and November, the counselors will be visiting all classrooms to discuss a very important topic: Bullying and Sexual Harassment in Schools. FCPS has mandated that all guidance departments teach two lessons on sexual harassment to all students. Parents may opt their child out of these lessons by contacting the child's counselor.

#### ***Thomas Jefferson HS for Science and Technology***

Current eighth graders interested in applying to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) will have the opportunity to do so. Applications will be available through Brenda Humphrey in student services beginning Monday, September 28. Students will be told when applications are available during the morning announcements. Applications will be due back in student services by Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> – 3:00 p.m. There will be an **Open House** at Thomas Jefferson for general information about the TJHSST school program on October 10 from 8:30-11:30 a.m. The testing date is December 5, 2009. This year, as in the past, Rachel Carson MS will be one of the testing sites. All eighth graders have received a letter from the superintendent explaining the TJHSST opportunity in the opening day packet. A test preparation handbook is available to download on line by accessing the following website:  
**<http://information.TJHSST.edu/admissions>**.

#### **Johns Hopkins Talent Search**

The Johns Hopkins University Talent Search identifies, assesses, and recognizes students with exceptional mathematical and/or verbal reasoning abilities. Students are identified for participation in the talent search by scoring at or above the

97<sup>th</sup> percentile on a nationally normed, standardized aptitude or achievement test. These scores are obtained from previously taken tests. This opportunity is open to both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Applications and forms will be available from your child's counselor in Student Services. An informational evening will be held on September 30 at 3:00 in the Lecture Hall.

### **Recipe for Success**

As a school, we are encouraging our students to be more organized and we are providing helpful hints each Monday during Learning Seminar for just that purpose. In addition, here are some ideas that may help your child be more successful in school:

- Agree with your child on homework rules, such as when it must be done, where it should be done and what will happen if homework is not completed. Many parents insist that homework be finished before TV can be watched or other activities begun.
- Set up a place for your child to do homework, such as a desk or the kitchen table. Be sure that there is good light and that distractions are limited. Have necessary supplies including paper, pencils, and a dictionary.
- Expect your child to do homework each night. Ask about homework assignments and see what is written in your child's **DAB (Daily Assignment Book)**. If there is no formal homework, your child should read for thirty minutes.
- Try to schedule homework time for when you are at home, so that you can supervise. If this is not possible, be sure to check your child's homework each night. Ask him/her to make a note of any problems that will require assistance.
- Don't do your child's homework. Instead, encourage your child to complete it and stay after school for help if necessary. Late buses are available on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays starting Oct. 5.
- Be sure all homework is finished in proper form and in your child's backpack before he/she goes to bed. Nothing starts the day off worse than a mad scramble to complete a forgotten assignment or to hunt through the house for mislaid homework. Failing to complete homework or to take the finished product to school and turn it in will result in an unprepared student and will affect your child's grade.
- Don't forget to praise your child for a job well done when homework is completed and you see improvement.

### **Interim Progress Reports**

On Friday, October 9, teachers will electronically send home an interim report of students' academic progress. Please review this progress report carefully and discuss with your student. For those who do not have access to an e-mail account, we will send home a paper copy.

### **Credit Exam for World Languages**

If your student can speak and write in another foreign or world language, and is not presently enrolled in that language course for high school credit, he or she is eligible to take a language exam for high school credit. Please contact your counselor if you think your child may be eligible.

### **Emergency Care Changes**

If there are any changes or additions to the information given on your child's emergency care card, please inform us as soon as possible with a signed and dated note. Students should bring this note to the Student Services Office. If you have received the emergency care form from the school with the signature line or block high-lighted, please sign the form and return it immediately to Student Services.

### **Movers**

If there has been or will be a change of address, please contact Ms. Lloyd, Student Services Administrative Assistant. Registration update and documentation of new residences are required. Please call 703-925-3614 for more information.

### **Appointments**

If you would like to see your child's counselor, please call to make an appointment rather than walking in during the day. The counselors have many duties, responsibilities and meetings to attend and as a result they may not be able to afford you the time that you need if you arrive unexpectedly. Phone numbers and team assignments are listed earlier in this article.

### **Volunteer Opportunity**

We are establishing an Advisory Council this year for the Student Services Department which will meet once per semester. We would like some parent and student volunteers to participate so that we can have your perspective and input in order to better serve our student population and community. If you are interested, or your child indicates to you that he or she is interested, please let your team counselor know by October 10.

### **Reminder about on-line courses**

The only on-line courses that are recognized by FCPS are those offered by Fairfax County and in order to take those, approval has to be given by the principal **before** the course is taken. Prerequisites must be met as well.

## **ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' MESSAGE**

We're off to a great start with the 2009-2010 school year! By now students have met all of their teachers, managed to open their lockers, and said hello to old and new friends. As the assistant principals here at Rachel Carson, we are looking forward to welcoming everyone to RCMS and building relationships with our students.

As we kick-off another school year, we will do a number of things to make sure that everyone has a safe and productive learning experience. Organization and time management are vital tools for successful learning and for success in life. Therefore, each student has received a Daily Assignment Book (DAB) to use for recording assignments and important events. Please take time to review and discuss the DAB with your child. Developing the habit of completing all assignments on time will help ensure success, as will coming to class prepared and on time and asking for help when you need it. Teachers are always willing to stay after school to provide additional help. All you need to do is ask! After school late buses will begin on October 5; they will arrive at 4:00 p.m. on Monday and 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday. All students must pre-arrange any plans to stay with a teacher after school.

We will be practicing various safety drills over the next few weeks to make sure we are prepared in the event of an emergency. Students did an excellent job during our fire drills. They exited the building quickly and quietly and waited silently for the "all-clear" signal to return to the building. Such respectful and cooperative behavior will serve everyone well in the event of a real emergency. Just for day-to-day health and safety, students should walk in the halls, keep the restrooms clean, pick up trash in the cafeteria, and should **not** open any doors to visitors. All visitors should enter through the front door and report to the office.

Mr. Brown will be working with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students this year, and Mrs. Ballou will be working with the 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Students, please feel free to stop by our offices if you need anything or just to say "hello." We are both excited to be a part of each student's educational journey as we embark on Rachel Carson's 12<sup>th</sup> year with the graduating classes of 2014 and 2015!

We look forward to an exciting and learning-filled school year because together we are "Greater by the Dozen."

Sincerely,

*Tamara Ballou and Shawn D. Brown*

## **Career Exploration for Seventh Graders to take Place throughout the School Year**

Have you found a career that sparks your enthusiasm and is a great match for you? Are you able to relate well to middle school students? And would you be available for one school day to tell your story?

If the answer to these questions is yes, please contact school counselor Rebecca Little ([Rebecca.Little@fcps.edu](mailto:Rebecca.Little@fcps.edu)), within the next two weeks to relate your specific occupation as well as when you might be available to come in to talk to students about your career.

Certainly, our seventh graders could learn a great deal from your career experience, and thank you for considering this opportunity to interact with/direct students as they explore the wide array of career options available to them.

## **PTA NEWS**

Dear Parents,

It was great to see everyone at both Back to School nights. It's hard to believe that the first month of school is already behind us.

I am thrilled to announce that we have not only exceeded our projection for Friends of Carson donations but PTA membership as well. It is your overwhelming support of your children and their school that makes RCMS the great community that it is.

There has never been a time when I have been at school and not seen parents giving of their time. We, as a PTA, cannot function without volunteer support. Not to sound like a broken record (now I am showing my age because I should have said CD) we still have many needs for volunteers to not only chair, but help out with certain committees whose chairperson moved on to high school with his/her child. Below is a list of the committees that are currently without volunteer support:

8<sup>th</sup> Grade Celebration: OPEN  
Panther Profits: OPEN

Spirit Dining Nights: OPEN  
T-Shirt Sales: OPEN

Currently, we only have one volunteer coordinator, Patty Chronister; a second coordinator would be very helpful on that committee. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend a very special thank you to Jeannine Dollard and Diana Tycker-Bice. Diana stepped in at the last minute to fill the position of treasurer, in addition to being new to the RCMS community, and she is doing an amazing job. Jeannine has single-handedly organized directory sales in past years, which is a tremendous undertaking. She has made it seem effortless which it absolutely is NOT. It was not her intention to continue in this capacity this year, but by default ended up there again this year. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge her graciousness and professionalism in seeing this task to completion. This, for me, is an example of what defines community.

As always, our PTA meetings are the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the library (media center). Please come. We look forward to seeing you and it's a great way to meet other parents. Please do not hesitate to call me at 703-742-6103 or email me [csclark721@verizon.net](mailto:csclark721@verizon.net) with any questions, comments or concerns.

Best Wishes,  
Chris Clark  
PTA President

## Why Buy a School Lunch?

- Lunches reflect the Dietary Guidelines for Americans which recommend no more than 30 percent calories from fat, 10 percent calories from saturated fats, and limited trans fats, sodium and sugar.
- Lunches provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, calcium, and calories.
- Age appropriate portions based on established federal lunch patterns
- Several choices, salad lunches and milk available daily
- Food is prepared and served under safe and sanitary conditions.
- Costs less than bringing an equally nutritious lunch from home

Compare the costs of a lunch brought from home with school lunch prices and you will see that the school lunch is a bargain.

### Cost of a Sample Lunch from Home Determined from prices at local grocery store 8/09

	Elementary	Middle/High
Bread (white), 2 slices	\$.28	\$.28
Turkey slices, 3 oz	\$1.50	\$1.50
Potato Chips, (small bag)	\$.33	\$.33
Baby Carrots (6-8)	\$.30	\$.30
Red Grapes (20)	\$.63	\$.63
Milk, 1/2 pint (at school)	\$.60	\$.60
Bag, napkin, etc.	\$.10	\$.10
Labor, 15 minutes	free	free
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$3.74</b>	<b>\$3.74</b>
Lunch purchased at school	\$2.65	\$2.75

**Savings**

**\$1.09**

**\$ .99**

The Carson ***Courier***  
will be “delivered” to you electronically  
beginning with the October 2009 edition.

Each edition of the *Courier* will be posted on the Rachel Carson MS website:  
[www.fcps.edu/RachelCarsonMS/](http://www.fcps.edu/RachelCarsonMS/).

A ***Keep in Touch*** (KIT) email will be sent to notify you that the latest edition has been posted. If you haven't already done so, please ensure that you have supplied a valid email address with your child's contact information, either by completing that section on your student's Emergency Care Form or by using Parent View. For more information on ***KIT***, please visit the FCPS website: <http://www.fcps.edu/kit/>



Accessing the newsletter online will consume less of our resources – both natural and financial – as well as allow our readers faster access to the latest news from RCMS.

**If you do not have email or Internet access, or for any reason need a paper copy of the *Courier* via US mail, please fill out this flyer and send it to Mrs. Hofrichter in the Carson Middle School office by October 1, 2009.**

**Please continue to mail me a copy of the RCMS Courier.**  
*(Please print legibly.)*

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# October 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 Early Dismissal @ 11:50 RCMS students only	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9 Interims Go Home	10
11	12 Columbus Day Holiday School Closed	13 PTA Meeting RCMS Media Center 7:00 p.m.	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Hearing & Vision Screening	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 First Grading Period Ends	31

# November 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 Student Holiday Teacher Workday	3 Student Holiday Teacher Workday	4	5	6 Report Cards Go Home	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 Cluster 8 Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting RCMS Media Center 7:00 p.m.	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 FCPS Schools close 2 hrs early: Carson students dismissed @ approx. 12:50 p.m.	26 School Closed Thanksgiving Holiday Break	27 School Closed Thanksgiving Holiday Break	28
29	30					