

The Carson Courier

Volume 12, Issue 6

March 2010

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

A LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL...

Dear Rachel Carson Families:

I hope I will see many of you at our annual Showcase evening on April 8. This is always a special evening for us as we have an opportunity to showcase, in an interactive and entertaining way, all that our students are learning. Whether you try your hand at math games, participate in a science experiment, listen to a lovely concert, enjoy the art walk, or observe a poetry reading, you will certainly get a good sense of what middle schoolers can do. Their insights and abilities never cease to amaze me. We truly have a wonderful student body here and we thank you for sending us such delightful children.

I wanted to take a moment to thank each of you who responded so thoughtfully to the recent survey sent to a number of our families as part of the principal evaluation process. We certainly appreciated your kind words of praise. It was quite gratifying to hear from so many of you and to know, through your collective responses, that you feel your children are having such positive experiences at school. As importantly, we appreciated your suggestions on how to continue to grow and improve. Our staff and teacher leadership will be carefully reflecting upon your responses and exploring additional ways to provide the services you need as we all work together to "grow" your children.

Rachel Carson Middle School will be hosting a team of educators next week from the Schools to Watch Program. We were one of four schools identified in 2004 as a Virginia "School to Watch." Every three years, we go through a recertification audit to see if the school still meets the requirements to be a School to Watch.

The Schools to Watch Program is an initiative developed by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. The National Forum is composed of a group of educators, researchers, state and regional school leaders, and national education associations and foundations dedicated to improving education for middle-grades students across the country. Their mission statement reads, "Members of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform work together and mobilize others to improve academic and developmental outcomes for all students in the middle grades. To accomplish this goal, we identify and disseminate best practices, articulate and promote effective policies, recognize and develop enlightened leadership, and inform and engage the public."

The following areas will be the focus of the visit:

Academic Excellence - High-performing schools with middle grades are academically excellent. They challenge all students to use their minds well, providing them with the instruction, assessment, support, and time they need to meet rigorous academic standards.

Developmental Responsiveness - High-performing schools with middle grades are developmentally responsive. Such schools create small learning communities of adults and students in which stable, close, and mutually respectful relationships support all students' intellectual, ethical, and social growth.

Social Equity - High-performing schools with middle grades are socially equitable. They seek to keep their students' future options open. They have high expectations for all their students and are committed to helping each child produce work of high quality.

Organizational Structures and Processes - A shared vision of what a high-performing school is and does drives every facet of school change. Shared and sustained leadership propels the school forward and preserves its institutional memory and purpose.

This is such a high honor for the teachers, students, and parents in our school community. I am looking forward to showing off our school when the committee arrives on March 16th.

As the last days of winter wind down, please help us prepare for warmer weather and the demands on students' time and attention that accompany it. Along with warm weather comes spring fever! Please help us, as we work with your children, to keep school the primary focus it should be. As temperatures rise, and outdoor activities increase, there is always competition for homework time. Also, with warm weather comes a change in attire. We'd appreciate your help, too, in keeping the focus at Rachel Carson on learning, not on short shorts and tank tops!

Looking forward to warm weather and sunshine,

Augie Frattali



*Don't forget that Spring Vacation is Monday thru
Friday, March 29 – April 2, 2010.*

School resumes on Monday, April 5.

*Monday, April 12, is now a regular school day – not
a student holiday.*

Rachel Carson Administrative Office
Ph. 703.925.3600
Office Hours:
7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

August Frattali.....Principal
 Cheryl Weaver.....Director of Student Services
 Tamara Ballou.....Assistant Principal
 Shawn Brown.....Assistant Principal
 Pat Lee.....After-School Program Specialist
 Michele Ford.....Office Assistant
 Eileen Harrington..... Finance Technician
 Nancy Hofrichter.....Administrative Assistant
 Margie McCarthy.....Office Assistant



Carson MS Attendance Line
Ph. 703.925.3636

*Accessible 24 hours a day,
 7 days a week!*

**If you prefer, you may send
 an email to the office:**

CarsonMS.Attendance@fcps.edu



**This email address should not be used for early
 checkout notes for appointments, etc.** A note should
 be sent with your child on the day of the appointment.
 Your child should bring the note to the office upon arrival
 to receive a check-out pass.

Pre-arranged absences must be done at least three (3)
 school days in advance and be approved by an
 administrator.

If you know your student will be absent, have him or her
bring a note to the front office giving the dates and
 reason for the absence. We will start the pre-arranged
 absence process which will notify the attendance
 secretary as well as the teachers, and the student will be
 given his or her assignments for the time he or she will
 be out. At that point the pre-arranged absence form is
 submitted to the administrator for approval.

FORGOTTEN ITEMS

*Parents are welcome to bring forgotten items to the
 front office.*

**Instructional time will not be interrupted to
 inform students when an item is dropped off.**

*It is the student's responsibility to check for
 forgotten items.*

**Please refrain from calling the Carson MS
 office asking that a message be delivered
 to your student. We cannot interrupt
 instructional time to give messages from
 home to students.**

RCMS Student Services
Ph. 703.925.3614
Office Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Cheryl Weaver.....Director of Student Services
 Brenda Humphrey.....Lead Counselor
 Joni Fraundorfer.....Counselor
 Rebecca Little.....Counselor
 Jamie Mahoney.....Counselor
 Lesa Lloyd.....Guidance Assistant
 Celeste Moore.....Clerical Assistant

Donna Winston.....Social Worker
 Stephanie Harris.....Psychologist
 Amy McLaughlin.....Test Coordinator
 Maria de Barrios.....Parent Liaison
 Ph. 703.925.3603
 Susan Tindall.....School Health Aide
 Ph. 703.925.3610

**Please visit our school website and bookmark it as a
 "Favorite." Check the website often for the latest
 news about RCMS, Couriers, curriculum, calendars,
 lunch menus, PTA news and links to FCPS 24/7,
 Keep in Touch, and emergency announcements.**



Rachel Carson MS Website:

<http://www.fcps.edu/RachelCarsonMS>

VISITING RCMS

All outside doors are locked. Our staff and students
 have been instructed not to open any locked doors for
 visitors. All visitors are directed to the main entrance
 marked **Door #1**. Press the doorbell located on the wall
 to the right of the right-hand set of doors, and when
 asked, display your photo ID and state the nature of your
 visit. When the door latch is released, pull the door open
 and proceed to the **Main Office** on your right.



**Remember that we ask for photo identification when
 you pick up your child or visit the school.**



Experience the pride of
Rachel Carson Middle School
at
Showcase Night!

“Rachel Carson 2010 – Greater By the Dozen”
Celebrating Our First 12 Years!

This is a wonderful opportunity for RCMS parents and students to have a firsthand view of the creativity and spirit of our school. Visit classrooms and experience the hard work of our students and staff in a fun atmosphere as we celebrate our 12th school year.

Thursday, April 8, 2010, from 6:30 until 8:00 p.m.

Events include music performances, displays of artwork and literature, student interactive presentations, and chances to see many other products from core and elective classes.

Mark your calendar!
Don't miss this wonderful event.

All students, including high school students, not under the direct supervision of a teacher, must be accompanied by a parent.

NOTES FROM THE OFFICE OF STUDENT SERVICES

As we look toward the end of the third quarter of school on Friday, April 9th, it hardly seems possible that the end of the school year is fast approaching. Report cards will be sent home after Spring break with the students on Friday, April 16th. Please take time to review your child's report card and discuss it with him or her. Please check the comments on your child's report card to determine if your child is at risk in this area. If you have questions regarding your child's status, please call his or her academic teacher or counselor. At this point in time, we do not know if there will be a summer program for struggling students due to the budget constraints. Therefore, it is especially important to work with our staff to help all of our children be successful. At the beginning of the fourth quarter, the Student Services Department will be mailing letters to the parents of those students who are in danger of failing for the year.

Registrations for 2010-2011 School Year

The Student Services staff has been very busy registering students for the 2010-2011 school year, and we are now using this information to determine staffing for next year. The high school counselors from Oakton, Westfield, South Lakes and Chantilly have given information to your rising 9th grade students. These course registration forms are due to the respective high schools by March 19th, and should now be with your child's counselor. Current 7th graders (or rising 8th graders) have already turned in their course selection sheets to their respective counselors. Should you wish to change a course for next year, please call your child's counselor. Changes in high school courses cannot be made after mid May. Deadlines for changes in middle school courses will be June 1.

Address Changes

If you will be moving prior to the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, it is extremely important that you inform the Student Services Department of your new address and provide proof of residency. We need to verify that you will be in our school boundaries, and we need to add your new address to our summer mailing lists. It is also important if your child is a rising 9th grader that you confirm which high school your child will attend. You must then fill out the course registration sheet for the 9th grade with this high school in order to ensure that your child will be able to have the courses he/she needs.

SOL Testing Information

We have concluded the language arts writing SOL assessments that were scheduled in March. The next SOL testing dates will be May 24 to June 11. During this period of time, all 8th grade students will be taking SOL tests in reading and literature, math, science, and social studies. All 7th grade students will be taking the reading, history and math SOL tests online and practice SOL tests in science during this time. Any student enrolled in algebra or geometry will be taking the end-of-course SOL test online as well. ***Please avoid making appointments during this time that would necessitate taking your 7th or 8th grader from school.*** It is extremely important that all students be tested under as normal conditions as possible. Each child will need at least two #2 pencils. Please help prepare your children for these important tests by encouraging them to do their very best. *It is also important that during this time children are well rested, have a nutritious breakfast, and arrive to school on time.*

On-Line Courses

This is just a reminder that anyone seeking to take an on-line course through Fairfax County must have it approved by the principal **prior** to taking the course.

Cancelled Rising 8th Grade Parent Orientation

Due to the abundance of snow this past February, the Rising 8th Grade Parent Orientation scheduled for February 11 was cancelled. Because of the uncertainty of the weather at that time, we decided not to reschedule the orientation, but to provide another venue for the information. As usual, detailed questions should be directed to your child's counselor. However, math and world language questions have been addressed through our website. Information regarding math placement and levels and world language can be accessed by going to: <http://www.fcps.edu/RachelCarsonMS/>. Algebra, geometry and world language courses are addressed separately as they are high school credit courses and affect your child's high school GPA.

Just as in the 7th grade, your student has a choice of a combination of electives totaling two full years of courses. This can be accomplished by taking either 2 full year electives, such as music or language courses, 1 full year and 2 semester courses, or 4 semester courses. Counselors have been in the classrooms to explain this and have given the students the registration sheets, many of which have already been returned to the counselors through the science classes. If your child or you wish to change an elective class for any reason, please put your new request in writing before the end of the school year and send it in to your child's counselor.

Summer Activities

For those of you seeking information on summer camps and activities, please feel free to come to the Student Services office and browse through our collection of brochures and camp applications that we have collected.

Counselor Recommendations

Due to the many responsibilities of the counselors and teachers, please allow at least two weeks for recommendations to be returned to you. We request that the student or parent talk to the counselor or teacher about the recommendation, rather than drop it off at the main office, as quite often more information is needed in order to complete the application.

CALENDAR OF IMPORTANT DATES

Mar 25 & 26	Elementary Feeder School Orientations- 9:30-11:00 a.m. Lecture Hall
April 9	End of Third Grading Period
April 14	Student Services Advisory Council Meeting- 10:00 a.m.
April 16	Report Cards Go Home
April 22	8 th graders Out-to-Work Day
May 6	All A Honor Roll Celebration - 3:15- location TBD
May 24-June 11	SOL Testing - extended

STUDENT SERVICES JANUARY PARENT COFFEE/ADVISORY COUNCIL

Thanks to everyone who attended the parent coffee in January. It was wonderful seeing parents as well as hearing their concerns. Many parents had questions about texting and Facebook lingo. A resource that we found extremely helpful is a website called www.noslang.com. It provides lists of the most common slang terms, a slang translator, and sexting terms and information. Another helpful resource was an article that explains social networking sites and what parents should know about them. It is called "What Parents Need to Know About Social Networks" and can be found at www.freeparentalcontrols.org/what-parents-should-know-about-social-networks. Our next Parent Advisory Council meeting will be April 14, at 10:00 in room B127.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' MESSAGE

Spring is nearly upon us! Let us remember not to get "Spring Fever" as the weather begins to change. Keep up the hard work, set new goals for improvement, and enjoy learning as we welcome the warmer days ahead. Good-bye snow, hello flowers!

We are now in SOL season and we need to work together as a school community to ensure that our students are prepared for the testing challenges that await them. Please encourage your students to take advantage of the online practice opportunities as well as the support offered during the school day. These will reinforce the learning that they have been doing all year so that they feel confident they can demonstrate their learning when the time comes.

All of the students have recently received a refresher course on the Student Responsibilities and Rights to remind them of the expectations they must meet. It is important that we follow these procedures for the safety of everyone involved. Please take a few moments to go over with your student what they learned or were reminded of during these sessions. Of particular interest in the spring are the guidelines for appropriate dress. These are outlined on page nine of the DAB, although some judgment about what works in an educational environment is also in order, as it is not possible to list every possibility when it comes to dress!

The parent orientation for our rising 7th graders was very well attended and the "incoming" parents were informed of many of the programs that Rachel Carson MS has to offer. We are now looking forward to

welcoming next year's seventh grade students when they come to visit for their orientation sessions on March 25th and 26th. We know all of our current Rachel Carson students will make them welcome.

We were extremely pleased and proud to see so many of our students recognized for academic achievement on the all A and A/B honor rolls. Our students are challenged academically each day and it is a joy to see that they rise to meet these challenges. We will all continue to work together to make Rachel Carson MS a great place for kids to grow, take risks and succeed.

Thanks,

Tamara Ballou and Shawn D. Brown

SCHOOL HEALTH ROOM

Don't let down your guard. Flu and strep season is still lurking, so please continue good hand washing. Students with fevers, vomiting or diarrhea should remain home until they are "24 hours symptom-free". Let's keep our students AND staff well this spring!

PARENTS – CALLING ALL VISION AND HEARING RESULTS: If you received a letter in the mail regarding your child's vision and/or hearing test and the need for further evaluation, we need the health provider documentation returned to the health room (Clinic) as soon as possible. Please call our School Health Aide, Susan Tindall, if you have any questions, concerns or special circumstances. She can be reached at 703-925-3610.

REMINDER – MEDICATION POLICY: Students are NOT allowed to transport medication to school. The FCPS policy is discussed on the RCMS and FCPS websites. A parent/guardian must bring the medication to the school health room, with the appropriate paperwork. Now that spring is in the air, students will be running outside during PE classes when weather permits. Please contact the Health Room at 703.925.3610, if your child's asthma and/or allergies require an inhaler.

Cough drops/throat lozenges, contact lens solution, and lip balm are ALLOWED to be carried by students for their own use only. Please feel free to call Mrs. Tindall in the Health Room at 703.925.3610 or via email: sgtindall@fcps.edu with any questions or to clarify.

DRAMA DEPARTMENT

Thank you to the Franklin Farm Crest Cleaners for its continued support of the Rachel Carson Theatre Arts Department. Over the last 12 years, they have provided the Drama Department with free dry-cleaning services for our main-stage productions. We are grateful for their generosity!

PTA

Dear Parents,

I don't know about anyone else, but it will be a long time before you hear me say "I really hope it snows" ...and I am originally from Syracuse, NY! I hope that everyone braved our many snow days with only a mild case of stir crazy. Believe it or not, March is upon us and with that comes a short (or maybe not so short) three months left of the school year.

This is the time of the year when we look ahead to next year for those ambitious souls who are looking to get involved with the PTA and its respective committees. I will be ending my second year as PTA president and it is time to pass the torch to someone else. I have THOROUGHLY enjoyed being part of the RCMS community and I am sad to see it end. Part of what makes Rachel Carson so spectacular is the energy and fresh ideas that come with each incoming seventh grade class. We are also looking for individuals to serve on the PTA board and as committee chairs. When I accepted the position as president, the outgoing president very graciously made the transition seamless. I would like to continue that tradition for the next incoming president. If you are interested in volunteering or have any questions about any of the available positions, please do not hesitate to call or email me at csclark721@verizon.net.

Planning is also underway for the much anticipated Eighth Grade Celebration. If you are interested in volunteering for what may be considered (at least by the 8th graders) the social event of the season, please contact Denae Judd at denae@denaejudd.com. A BIG thank you to her for chairing this event.

I hope everyone has a relaxing...and warm, spring break. We look forward to seeing you at the next PTA meeting on Tuesday April 13, 2010 at 7pm in the media center (library). As always, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me at 703-742-6103 or email me at csclark721@verizon.net. I want to thank ALL of you for all of the volunteer spirit that is shown each and every day and I feel very fortunate to have served in this position. I look forward to what the 2010-2011 school year will bring.

Best Wishes,
Chris Clark
PTA President

Attention RCMS Volunteers!

*The staff of
Rachel Carson Middle School
invites you to a very special*

Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

*Tuesday, April 27, 2010,
from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
in the Media Center
to celebrate you and
to thank you for all you do for RCMS!*

*Please let us know
that you plan to attend by
calling Nancy Hofrichter at 703-925-3604
or via email: nhofrichter@fcps.edu
no later than Tuesday, April 13, 2010.*



We hope you'll join us!



STUDENT'S INTENTION FOR THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR

ATTENTION PARENTS:

If you are **not** planning to send your child to Rachel Carson Middle School or to the public high school that serves your residence, please complete the following form and return or fax (703-925-3697) it to RCMS Guidance Office as soon as possible. Thank you.

Student Name: Last	First	MI	Current Grade
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PLEASE CHECK AND COMPLETE THE APPROPRIATE STATEMENTS FOR YOUR STUDENT.

		School Use Only
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am transferring to another FCPS school. Name of school:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am transferring to a nonpublic school. Name of school:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am transferring to another public school division in Virginia. Name of city:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am transferring to another public school division in the United States. Name of state:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not intend to enroll in any public or nonpublic school next year.	

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____



National Nutrition Month® 2010
American Dietetic Association

MARCH IS NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

In partnership with the American Dietetics Association, the Energy Zone is celebrating National Nutrition Month.

Energy Zone's Top 3 Nutrition Facts:

1. Use MyPyramid.gov as a reference for healthy eating habits. Lifestyle changes are more effective than “quick fixes”
2. There are many diet myths. Make sure the nutrition information you are getting is from a credible source – a registered dietitian or science-based articles.
3. Evaluate a food by reading nutrition labels. Basic understanding of a food label can help you make smart food choice.

EAT WHOLE GRAINS EVERY DAY

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid recommend six serving of grains daily. The Guidelines continue to advise that we eat 3 or more of those servings as whole grains. Whole grains are an important source of fiber and reduce risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Today, many Americans only eat one serving per day and over 30 percent do not eat whole grains at all.

The Whole Grain Council, a non profit group has developed a consumer- friendly stamp for whole grain products. The stamp identifies whole grain products as “good, excellent, and 100% excellent source.”



If a product does not have the stamp, read the label. When the first ingredient is whole wheat, whole grain, oatmeal, brown rice, bulgur, popcorn, or wild rice, the product is most likely a whole grain food.

Daily whole grain menu suggestions:

Breakfast	Lunch and Dinner	Snacks
Whole grain cereal	Whole grain bread	Whole grain crackers
Oatmeal	Tortillas or wraps	Popcorn
Whole grain bagel	Whole grain pasta	Whole grain pretzels
	Brown rice	Whole grain chips

School meals include several whole grain products such as pasta, cold cereals, rolls, and pizza crust.

March 2010

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 PTA Meeting Media Center 7:00 p.m.	10	11 Rising 7 th Grade Parent Orientation Spec. Ed & GT Center: 6:15 General Meeting: 7:00 p.m.	12	13
14	15 PTA Book Fair Media Center 8:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	16 PTA Book Fair Media Center 8:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	17 PTA Book Fair Media Center 8:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	18 PTA Book Fair Media Center 8:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Spring Photos	19 PTA Book Fair Media Center 8:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	20
21	22	23 Music In Our Schools Concert 7:00 p.m. Gym	24	25 Elementary Orientations	26 Elementary Orientations	27
28	29 Spring Vacation	30 Spring Vacation	31 Spring Vacation			

April 2010

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 Spring Vacation	2 Spring Vacation RCMS Office Closed	3
4	5 School Resumes	6	7	8 RCMS Showcase 6:30-8:00 p.m.	9 3 rd Grading Period Ends	10
11	12	13 PTA Meeting Media Center 7:00 p.m.	14 Parent Advisory Council Meeting 10:00 B127	15	16 Report Cards Go Home	17
18	19	20	21	22 Out to Work Day for 8 th graders	23	24
25	26	27 Volunteer Luncheon 12:00-1:00 Media Center	28	29	30	