



Whitman Connection

Whitman Middle School
2500 Parkers Lane
Alexandria, VA 22306

Volume 15, Issue 1
September 2009

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the 2009 - 2010 school year at Whitman Middle School. Our hope is that each student has a challenging and successful year filled with excitement and accomplishment. Students are navigating through the halls, meeting friends, opening lockers, locating buses, and negotiating lunch lines. Yes, school is well underway! We would like to express our thanks to all parents and staff members who worked tirelessly preparing for the opening of the new school year.

Thank you for attending Back-to-School Night Thursday, September 17, 2009. We hope that you enjoyed meeting your child's teachers and that you received a brief overview of curriculum objectives Standards of Learning information.

Although we are pleased with the steady progress made on last year's Standards of Learning tests, student achievement remains our top priority. Parental involvement is vital to the success of each student. With this in mind, we encourage parents to help the school and their child by:

- Reviewing your child's agenda book.
- Signing up with 24-7 Blackboard
- Participating in teacher/parent conferences.
- Monitoring student work and achievement.
- Reading newsletters and other forms of school communication.
- Ensuring that your child attends school daily.
- Reviewing and discussing the content of the Student's Responsibilities and Rights information booklet.
- Joining our terrific PTA for \$5.00.

With so many people working together, I look forward with great anticipation as we continue to address the needs of our students. Recognizing that the middle school years are extremely crucial, we welcome your support and cooperation.



WHITMAN WAY STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

Each month, team leaders nominate students for the "Whitman Way Student's of the Month." The students' names are announced over the PA system and students report to the library to receive individual certificates and other incentives from Mr. Davis. The criteria for nominations are varied and may include one or more of the following:

- Academic excellence
- Willingness to help others
- Perfect attendance
- Completion of all assignments
- Positive and cooperative attitude
- Desire to excel and or improved grades
- All students are eligible to be nominated

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Important Telephone Numbers

www.fcps.edu/WhitmanMS



Important telephone numbers at a glance.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Principal: Mr. Otha Davis

Admin. Asst.: Teresa Carpenter 703-660-2400

Asst. Principals:

Ms. Ruth Woods - 8th grade 703-660-2409

Mr. Michael Hammond - 7th grade 703-660-2408

Office Asst.: Ms. Denise Thomas 703-660-2400

STUDENT SERVICES OFFICE

Director of Student Services: Mrs. Nancy Berge 703-660-2412

Admin. Asst.: Ms. Alejandra Lopez 703-660-2428

Attendance Sec.: Ms. Majeda Alsabagh 703-660-2405

Office Asst.: Ms. Lori Peevy 703-660-2412

Attendance 703-660-2424

Counselors:

Mrs. Candace Anderson Teams 7-2, 8-5 & 703-660-2470

Team 8-8 Students' last name ending A - I

Mrs. Patricia Klenow Teams 7-4 & 8-6 703-660-2455

Mr. Richard Millett Team 7-1 703-660-2456

Ms. Danielle Srour Teams 7-3, 8-7 703-660-2457

Team 8-8 Students' last name ending J - Z

FINANCE OFFICE

Finance Officer: Mrs. Beverly Gowins 703-660-2415

PARENT LIAISON

Mrs. Mirna Benitez 703-660-2440

CHECKING STUDENTS OUT OF SCHOOL

To reduce the number of interruptions during the school day, we have implemented the following procedures and guidelines for parents that check students out of school:



- Send a note with your child the day you are picking him/her up and indicate what time you will pick up the student.
- The attendance office will give your student a pink card to show to the teacher indicating the time the student should be in the office for pick-up.
- Try to avoid checking your child out of school during dismissal (2:35 - 2:45 p.m.)
Frequently, students may miss hearing the announcements from the main office.

VISITORS

All visitors to the school must report to the main office to sign in and obtain a visitor's pass. Parents may visit a classroom with prior notification and approval of your child's teacher. Thank you for your cooperation.

ATTENTION PARENTS: AFTER SCHOOL PICK-UP

Frequently, many students remain after regular school hours for a long period of time waiting to be picked up by their parents. Students are left alone and unattended which poses a safety and security issue for everyone. Parents are reminded to please pick up their child between the 2:45 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. Your cooperation is requested.

WHITMAN ASSIGNMENT/AGENDA BOOKS

All Whitman students were issued assignment books the first day of school. Students are expected to carry their assignment books everyday. Parents are encouraged to check their child's book. Incentives will be provided for students who keep their books up-to-date and current.

Use your agenda book to stay organized.

The first assignment book was provided free of charge. A replacement copy is \$5.00.

BACKPACK POLICY

Just a few years ago, students used backpacks primarily to transport materials to and from school. Over the past few years, the trend with students has been to rely more and more on the use of backpacks throughout the school day, as students move from class to class. At Whitman, with the close proximity of lockers to core classes, this is not a necessity. Over the past several years, more and more middle schools have instituted a "no-backpack" policy during the school day. This is the policy at Whitman, as well. Students may still use backpacks to carry their materials to and from school, but between the beginning of first period through the close of seventh period, all backpacks must be stored in lockers.

It is important that students and parents understand the reasons for this policy. First, backpacks create safety concerns in the halls and in classroom. The often bulky bags are flung over shoulders as students are packing up, sometimes hitting other students. As students hurry and maneuver through our hallways, backpacks are unintentionally slammed into other students. In classrooms, the bags usually won't fit under or inside the desks, and students and teachers often trip and fall over bags placed in the aisles.

Secondly, we are concerned about student health. Many students carry all of their textbooks, notebooks and other materials strapped over the same shoulder all day long - a burden often exceeding thirty pounds.

Carrying texts and notebooks for all seven classes all day long; stuffing handouts and other papers blindly into that dark void; cramming assignments they have worked hard to complete into a backpack, never to be seen again - these are not characteristics of being organized!

Students have access to their lockers before school, between every period, and after school. Because the lockers are grouped by teams in the vicinity of the core classrooms, students will have ready access to materials that are used most often.

The safety and security of our students will always be a primary consideration in the policies and procedures we institute. The backpack policy is a perfect case in point!



BUS SAFETY



To ensure safe transportation to and from school, appropriate student behavior on the bus is essential. Students are to remain in their seats at all times until they depart from the vehicle. They may read a book or talk quietly to their friends and should not distract the drivers while they are operating the bus. If the bus driver submits a discipline referral on a student to an administrator, the parents will receive a **Warning Letter** outlining the infraction. If, through the course of the school year, the student receives another bus referral, loss of bus privileges will occur. The length of time of the bus removal will depend on the seriousness of the violation. Some incidents, such as throwing objects out the bus window, fighting, vandalism, etc., warrant immediate loss of bus privileges as well as school consequences. It is our hope that our students will understand the importance of bus safety and how its neglect jeopardizes the safety of everyone.

Students must ride the bus to which they are assigned. If a parent wants their child to ride a different bus, an "Exception to Ride the Bus" form must be completed and permission from both parents to ride home with another student on a one-time basis and they should verify that there is space on the bus prior to making plans.

Please see Mrs. Thomas in the main office.

Bus rules:

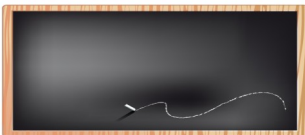
1. Sit and face front
2. Talk quietly
3. Remember 1 and 2



SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

Once again, Whitman is indeed fortunate to have the services of a School Resource Officer. Officer Robert Miller, who is assigned to the Mt. Vernon Police Station, works proactively and counsels students on law enforcement procedures. Officer Miller's presence helps to maintain a safe climate conducive to learning. He has developed a special and positive relationship with our student body. Feel free to contact Officer Miller, or Mr. Scarboro, Safety and Security Specialist, should you have any problems or concerns.

FCPS 24-7



FCPS 24-7 is an online resource that allows students, parents and teachers to access homework, and class work seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. Parents are encouraged to utilize FCPS 24-7 to monitor students' classroom learning activities on a regular basis. FCPS 24-7 is accessed by using the web address <http://fcps.blackboard.com/> or the FCPS 24-7 link on the FCPS home page <http://www.fcps.edu/>; or the FCPS 24-7 link on the Whitman home page <http://www.fcps.edu/WhitmanMS/>

COUNTY OPT-OUT FORMS

All students received a first day packet full of school information. Important documents in this packet are the county Opt-out booklet which contains the opt-out information for counseling services and media images. The Family Life Education (FLE) opt-out information for parents/guardians can be found on the following Fairfax County web-site: <http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OMSI/fle/index.htm>

Complete the forms and return them with your child to his/her fifth period teacher. Additional information regarding the Family Life Education program will be shared through the Physical Education Department. If you have questions, feel free to contact the student services department.

SCHOOLWIDE FUNDRAISER

Our schoolwide fundraiser kickoff started Friday, September 18, 2009. This will be Whitman's major fund raising activity for the school year. Students received fundraiser packets containing brochures and other information. Funds will be used to purchase supplementary materials and equipment to support the instructional program. Additionally, funds will be used to support extracurricular activities and field trips. If you have further questions, please contact Mr. Hammond, Fundraiser Administrator. We are hoping to have a successful fundraiser this year. Thanks for your support.

CELL PHONE USAGE

Middle school students will be allowed to possess a cell phone on school property; however, cell phone use is prohibited during the school day and on school buses. Violation will result in disciplinary action at the discretion of the principal. As stated in the SR&R, page 18, section M, "In the event of a violation of this provision, the student shall be subject to disciplinary action hereunder, and the portable communication device used or possessed by such student **shall be subject to confiscation by school officials. Principals may elect to return the phone to the student's parent or guardian or to return the phone to the student and contact the parent or guardian.**" We appreciate your support and cooperation in this matter.



KEEP IN TOUCH PROGRAM

DID YOU KNOW that if you go to the Fairfax County Public Schools website (www.fcps.edu), you can **KEEP IN TOUCH?**

Fairfax County would like to help provide you with the information you need! By going to the Fairfax County Website and clicking the "Keep in Touch" box, you can register to receive messages on school closings and much more! You must also select "Walt Whitman" to receive information pertinent to our school as well. Once you submit your information you will automatically receive messages based upon your personal profile and the interests you indicate. Be sure to sign up so that you receive all of Whitman's information in a timely manner.

BREAKFAST IS BEING SERVED

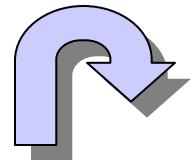
For those students interested in eating breakfast at school, please report to the cafeteria as soon as you get off of the bus. Breakfast is served between 7:35 - 7:55 a.m. The cost is \$.30 for qualifying students. The regular price is \$1.50. While the breakfast program is in session, students are expected to follow all rules in the cafeteria.



U TURNS MAY BE DANGEROUS

Since Whitman is located on a busy street, many parents continue to make u turns in front of the school. This poses a safety hazard and traffic congestion. Parents are encouraged to use the following directions that will allow you to drop-off/pick-up students on Parker's Lane:

- Turn right on Holland Road before the fire station
- Travel less than a mile (Past INOVA Mt. Vernon Hospital)
- Turn left on Hinson Farm Road
- Turn left on Parker's Lane and you will end at Whitman's Kiss and Ride area on Parker's Lane



ABSENCE AND TARDY POLICY

It is important to have your child in school learning each and every day. The following is Whitman Middle School's tardy and absence policy, in conjunction with Fairfax County Public Schools' policies and procedures:

Unexcused Tardy:

The following reasons are examples of an unexcused tardy:

- Missed bus
- Overslept
- Traffic
- Car trouble
- Sick (without parental note)
- Doctor's Appointment (without parental note)

If your child is tardy, it is important that you send a note to the student services office excusing your child's tardiness. Three or more unexcused tardies in a month will result in your child being assigned Saturday Detention the following month. A letter is sent to you notifying you that your child will need to stay for Saturday Detention.

Unexcused/Unverified Absence:

The following reasons are examples of an unexcused absence:

- Missed bus
- Overslept
- No ride to school
- Sick (without parent phone call or note)
- Appointment (without parent phone call or note)
- Babysitting
- Translating for parent(s) at an appointment
- Staying home on a 2 hour delayed opening

Fairfax County Regulation 2234.6 states that school attendance is required by law, as outlined in the Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-254. Each day you will be notified of your child's absence through Keep-In-Touch's e-mail and phone system. If your child is absent from school, it is important that you call the attendance office at 703 660-2424 to inform the school of your child's absence. If you cannot call the school, please write a note explaining your child's absence within two days of your child's return to school.

On the fifth unverified absence, your child will be referred to the Attendance Officer, who will contact you to notify you of your child's absences and the consequences of continued absences. If further unexcused absences occur, the attendance office will file a complaint with Juvenile and Domestic Relations.

THREE HOUR DELAYED OPENING

Whitman Middle School will open three hours late on Thursday, October 15, 2009. School will open at 10:55 a.m. in order to provide time for parents to visit the school and "Touch Base" with their child's teachers regarding student progress. Parents may visit with teachers between 7:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

- 7th grade parents will meet in the cafeteria;
- 8th grade parents will meet in the 8th grade gymnasium

DRESSING FOR SCHOOL...A FEW TIPS

Students are expected to dress appropriately for the learning environment. Hats, bandanas, or headwear are not allowed to be worn in the building, except for religious reasons. All shirts should have sleeves and should be long enough to be tucked in if needed. Spaghetti strap shirts must have a T-shirt underneath. No bare middles! Shorts and/or skirts should be of an appropriate length not to distract others. To check the length of clothing, extend the arms down the side of the body. The hem of the garment should reach the index and/or middle fingers. Sunglasses may only be worn outside the building. Baggy slacks are to be secured with a belt. T-shirts should be checked for inappropriate messages. Shoes should be sturdy to protect your feet from injury. Also, pajamas are not allowed.

Thank you for your cooperation.

NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY

The National Junior Honor Society had its formal inductions for the 2009 - 2010 school year last June and there were 84 students inducted. These students are now 8th graders and will be participating in a variety of activities which may include: a team building field trip to Camp Hemlock, a dinner theater or comedy club trip, a school lock-in and countless community service projects!

7th graders who would like to join for the next year MUST keep up their grades so that their cumulative average is a 3.5 by the end of the 3rd quarter. At that point, they will be invited to apply for membership and their induction will be in the Spring of 2010.

If you have and questions or concerns or if you recently moved to Whitman Middle School and believe that your 8th grader would qualify for membership, please notify the sponsors Peggy White and Danielle Srour at 703-660-2400.



FOLLOW THE WHITMAN WAY

Follow the Whitman Way, Take the Pathway to Success...

Be Productive, Be Prepared, Be Prompt, Be Polite, and Be Safe

