



FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK—Mr. Lekkas

PARCC Testing

This is a reminder to all parents that your student will be participating in the PARCC test. PARCC testing is the measure for school ranking within the state.

The testing window opens April 9th. Students perform best following a good night sleep and a healthy breakfast. As testing occurs primarily in the morning, please help ensure students are present by scheduling all appointments in the afternoon or after school hours. We thank you for doing all you can to help ensure your student's success.

Spring Sports

A reminder that any student participating in Spring Track needs to have a Sports Physical on file. Track is open to 6th grade students as well.

PTO

We thank **PTO** for affording our students some great opportunities. 7th grade students earned their PBIS incentive and attended an Ice Hogs game. The entire 6th grade class will be attending STEM Read at NIU in April. We thank PTO for sponsoring these events and so much more.

Thanks to our student PBIS reps!



From the Principal's Desk Cont.....

GKMS 8th grade students will join other students from all over DeKalb County at the **KEC Career Conference** held at Kishwaukee College Thursday, March 15. This annual event affords students an excellent opportunity to learn about various career paths and is an integral part of our Career Education. Thanks go out to Mr. Corey Jenkins and Ms. Jennifer Franz for coordinating our school efforts.

Casting is set for the **GKMS Drama** presentation *Night at the Wax Museum* directed by 6th grade teacher Ms. Andrea Laben. Performances are slated for the evenings of Friday, April 6 and Saturday, April 7 both at 7PM. Admission is free. We welcome all families to the performance.

From the Assistant Principal

The students are continuing to do a superb job of following the PBIS expectations here at GKMS (Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe). Currently, 86% of students have received 0 or 1 detentions or referrals; we are doing 3% higher than at the same time last year. Our year end goal is to have 80% or more of students receiving 0 or 1 detentions or referrals. Please talk with your student about continuing to make good choices as we move into 4th quarter.

As we enter spring, please remind your student to follow the dress code as they prepare their outfit for school. Please check the handbook or contact the office if you have any questions in regards to the dress code. I would also like to remind parents that skateboards are not permitted on school property. As the weather warms many more students take to walking and riding their bikes to school; skateboards, however, cannot be stored inside the school during the school day.



PBIS Tier I

Our theme for the school year, “You Can Get There From Here” is still going strong and students are really working hard towards their goals. Our booster celebration day was mid February to congratulate students on hard work towards grade level goals. Way to go!

Cool tools for expected behaviors continue to be taught weekly in Study Hall classes and reinforced the following week in classes. Our focus has been on being respectful to all staff and classmates throughout the school day and being prepared for class. Students have really been doing a nice job with these, and our growth as a school shows!

Students of the Week continue to be chosen weekly and we are getting ready to choose our Quarter 3 Cog of the Quarter soon. Look for those yard signs in town to recognize those students! Congratulations to those students-you should be proud of your accomplishments.

Our five students that joined our PBIS Tier I team in December have really helped out. Their ideas already have helped us to improve our efforts with PBIS. They are helping to bridge the gap with our students so that their voices and ideas can be heard for ways to change and improve positive behaviors here at GKMS. Again, thank you for your continued support! #gkccogs.

GKMS Drama presents “Night at the Wax Museum”. The show will start at 7:00pm on Friday, April 6, and Saturday, April 7. Admission is \$3.

The hysterical meets the historical in this comic romp through the wackiest wax museum in history! School’s out for summer, but not for six unlucky students who don’t know much about history — they have to re-take the class in summer school. First year teacher Heather Fairchild has arranged for them to help her two aunts set up a new wax museum as a class project. Though the students’ eyes glaze over with boredom, there’s a twinkle in the wax figures’ eyes when a mysterious incantation from the back of Cleopatra’s bracelet brings them to life! King Henry VIII finds himself smitten with Cleopatra, making his queen, Anne Boleyn, furious. If she can just not lose her head, John Adams is there to serve as her divorce attorney! When Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid, Blackbeard and a bevy of lady pirates show up, everybody’s out for one thing — treasure! Supposedly, there’s a mighty valuable one hidden in the museum! It’s a wild goose chase to find it, with a greedy museum landlord and her bumbling son joining in the mad search. And why is Lizzie Borden lurking in the shadows, since the aunts say they never had a wax figure of her?! Join the hilarious fun as treasure-hungry outlaws, pirates and royalty mount the greatest siege since Vicksburg! Wax historical in this mad-cap comedy adventure where the magic of history comes alive... literally!

From the 6th grade Team

Science

Rocks, layers, fossils...what can we learn about the past from these? We will continue our study of rocks, the rock cycle and plate tectonics.

Reading & Language Arts

In Reading, we will be facilitating a whole class novel study of "Tuck Everlasting" by Natalie Babbitt. With this novel we will be continuing to strengthen our fiction reading strategies as we analyze the novel. Using events from Tuck Everlasting, we will be making inferences and determining themes of the novel. As we analyze narrative story elements including plot, setting, characters, problem, solutions, and conflict we will summarize those elements in brief paragraphs. Finally we will be identifying, analyzing, and explaining examples of figurative language throughout the novel. Through the application of these strategies the students will come to deeper understanding of "Tuck Everlasting".

Functional text will be explored through small groups activities. Functional text is described as everyday reading that we need to do in order to function on a daily basis. Examples include street signs, grocery lists, advertisements, brochures, menus, informational pamphlets given out at banks, and even travel brochures.

The nonfiction book report in the form of a "pizza" will be due on March 16. The directions, rubric and materials are available at anytime in the Reading classrooms. The last book report will be due the end of April. In an effort to help students practice their oral speaking and listening skills, it will be another oral book report. Student will have an option of choosing a fiction or nonfiction book for this.

During Language Arts, we will be incorporating the reading of "Tuck Everlasting", written by Natalie Babbitt, using Extended Response questions relating to the novel in the form of informative, persuasive, or narrative modes. While writing their responses, the students will focus on creating a connection to the audience, specific and accurate word choice, and smooth sentence fluency and organization.

The conventions that we will focus on this month is correct punctuation and capitalization when writing dialogue, as well as correct use of commas, dashes and parentheses. We will continue working on the subject and verb agreement when writing.

Third quarter ends on March 8th, and report cards going home on the 15th. If you have any questions or concerns please contact us. We are looking forward to a very productive 4th quarter with expectations at their peak.

From the 7th Grade Team

Science

In February, we finished up our Genetics unit looking more closely at DNA and how even the smallest change (mutation) can cause a big effect in an organism. These effects can be harmful, have no effect on the organism, or even be helpful. As we move into March, in accordance with the Next Generation Science Standards, our next unit will deal with how these mutations (changes in DNA) can affect a population of organisms. For example, a rabbit with brown fur will not be able to survive and reproduce in a polar environment because it will be easily spotted by predators. A white rabbit, on the other hand, would thrive in that environment. Over time the population of rabbits would, therefore, change to one with a high percentage of white rabbits. Through both hands-on and computer simulations students will explore this fundamental idea of biology.

Reading

In reading classes, students will focus on making inferences and determining how point of view influences narrative writing. Students will examine point of view through a variety of fiction and nonfiction passages in class. They will respond to the passages through answering comprehension questions as well as generating written responses. Students will focus on providing valid textual evidence to help support their answers.

Also, the month of March is Women's History Month. March officially became Women's History Month in 1987 when President Ronald Reagan wrote the first public proclamation declaring: Women's History Month is a time for us to recognize and salute women's contributions to the American family and to society. In honor of Women's History Month, students will research a variety of important women in history and share their research using a foldable or flyer. Students will begin literature circles this month as well. In literature circles, small groups of students gather together to discuss a piece of literature in depth. The discussion is guided by students' response to what they have read. You may hear talk about events and characters in the book, the author's craft, or personal experiences related to the story. The next book reports are due on April 5.

Language Arts

In language arts classes, we will continue to work with the 6 of traits writing with constructed responses and essays. Six Traits focuses on ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. In direct connection with reading class, students will practice continuing a narrative writing in a realistic, organized, and logical way. It is our goal to help each of our students grow as writers, and we are very impressed with the growth we have observed so far! The ability to critically look at their own writing, be able to change it (constructively), consider its effect, and shape it further, are skills that will pay off considerably as students continue to grow as writers.

From the 8th Grade Team

Science

Currently we are learning about atoms, elements and substances of all kinds. During this unit we will identify and discuss the structure and function of the particles that make up atoms. We will investigate how different combinations of particles change the properties of the atom. We will analyze the Periodic Table of Elements and learn what each number and symbol has to tell us.

Coming up soon, we will begin a new unit on Chemical Bonds. In this unit we will strengthen our understanding of the previous concepts by describing what occurs when different elements bond together. For example, what do you get when one atom of sodium (Na) bonds with one atom of chlorine (Cl)? Salt (NaCl)!

I would also like to again encourage all parents to ask their students about the things we are doing in school, to keep checking assignment connection and grades on Powerschool. As you know middle school students are not fully independent and need support from home studying for tests, completing projects and finding purpose in the lessons they are taught.

Thank you for your support and your fantastic kids!

Reading

Spring is just around the corner which means students are especially busy in Reading class. Students have been studying immigrants and immigration by working with famous poems and nonfiction dealing with that topic. We looked at Ellis Island and students were put into simulations to see what it was like for immigrants back then. We also looked at some famous fiction short stories that dealt with immigration and coming to a new land. Looking at ideas from a new perspective was our focus in this unit and it was enjoyable for all students.

We are getting ready now to move into our tall tale/fairytale unit. We will analyze the structure of these and look at how they have changed generation to generation. This leads us up to looking critically at different reading pieces on the same topic to demonstrate how multiple texts and paired texts can help to make understanding of a topic even easier.

Students will continue to have goal centered sheets weekly, known as the red folder sheets, and Newsela weekly. Newsela now is accompanied with an in depth summary worksheet that needs to be finished instead of the quiz. Any questions, never hesitate to email me at cstoll@gkschools.org. As always, thank you for your ongoing support!

Social Studies

Students are currently using primary sources to "interview" suspects involved with President Lincoln's assassination. Using primary sources such as courtroom transcripts, personal testimony, police reports and personal letters, students are making inferences and drawing conclusions on who was guilty and who was not. In addition to these primary sources, students are also examining Louisiana "Black Codes" to identify their purpose and then drawing parallels to the Jim Crow laws of the 1890s and 1900s. After we have finished our Reconstruction unit, we will move into the 20th century and begin our study of the rise of industry and cities. Next unit's "crime scene investigation" will be the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire.

STEM

In the second semester of STEM Concepts students will be having me as their Encore teacher for the second time this year. All students in 6th and 7th grades will be assessed in their ability to meet the keyboarding standard as described in Common Core to: “demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.” All of my current 6th and 7th grade classes have an account in Typing Club to practice their keyboarding which can be accessed at <https://gkschools.typingclub.com>. Students who are not able to meet the standard will be given daily and weekly practice in class. But all students are encouraged to practice on their own time as well.

In 6th grade students will first be learning the fundamentals of coding using the lessons found at <https://code.org>. We will learn how to program animations using Scratch found at (<https://scratch.mit.edu>). Then we will create a model to describe the role of gravity in the motions within galaxies and the solar system using Scratch.

7th grade students will be building upon the Engineering and Design lessons from first semester. We are solving an engineering design problem to create a puzzle out of excess 3/4" wooden cubes. And they are to design a therapeutic toy for a child with cerebral palsy. Working individually and in groups, they will be planning, drawing and designing on the computer their ideas. Every student should be taking home a puzzle cube that they designed and assembled themselves.

8th grade students will be using the Engineering Design Process to develop a tool or system to solve a problem. Then we will be learning how to program VEX Robotics using RobotC (a form of the C programming language). Then we will apply the Engineering Design Process with VEX Robotics and C programming to make automated machines and robots to solve problems.

We have a lot of learning to do in just 6 weeks!

Important Dates:

3/15: Report Cards go home

3/22: PTO Blood Drive @GKMS

3/26-30: Spring Break

4/2: Classes Resume

