

December 11, 2006

Dear Middle School Parents,

After reviewing data from our first semester, we are very encouraged by how much our fifth-, sixth-, and seventh-grade students have learned. There are wonderful things going on in every subject. All lessons are being planned with rigor and individual needs in mind. It has also been determined that a greater emphasis on specific reading strategies through the content areas needs to be a focus. Keeping this in mind we will be making a few changes to our instruction for the second semester.

The Language Arts and Social Studies classes will be combined into a Humanities block. Specific reading and writing strategies will be taught through the social studies curriculum at each grade level. This will create a large chunk of time that allows for more flexibility and greater attention to individual students' needs. It will also focus more time on meeting Georgia Performance Standards for each grade level, by integrating reading, writing, and social studies topics.

The reading strategies that will be taught are based on the best current research on comprehension. The faculty will begin workshops focusing on this professional development this Friday. This professional development will be provided by the administration and modeled in the classroom with the students by Jelena Naim, our instructional guide, and our Expeditionary Learning Schools school designer, Roslyn Blache. Weekly planning will take place with the guidance and assistance of this team as well.

We are certain that you will see a dramatic change in the way your child reads for meaning and is able to respond to literature. You will also see a marked improvement in your child's ability to grasp concepts across the curriculum through the greater emphasis on these strategies.

In order to accomplish this change there needs to be a room change. Mary LoCurto and Merry Herdt will be changing rooms. This will allow math and science to be integrated more often. There will be a "movable" wall purchased and installed over the holiday break. Merry Herdt will teach the Humanities block to the 5th grade classes and Jennifer Liang will teach it to the 6th and 7th grades. This change will begin taking place next week, with full implementation to happen on January 8th, 2007.

We are very excited about the opportunities these positive changes will afford our students. If you have any questions or concerns please contact any member of the Middle School Crew or the administration.

Thank you,

Amaris Mohler