

# The RKA Family Newsletter

October 2024

## Upcoming Dates

Report Cards—week of 10/28  
HS Halloween Dance—1/30, 7:00-10:00  
Halloween Spirit Day—10/31  
Fall Into Reading—month of November  
Diwali (schools closed)—11/1  
Anti-Bullying Week—week of 11/4  
RKA PA meeting (virtual)—11/4, 7:00  
Election Day (no classes)—11/5  
Triple C—11/6  
Fireside Chat (virtual)—11/6  
Red Cross Blood Drive—11/7  
8th & 12th dues #1—11/7  
Veteran's Day (schools closed)—11/11  
HS Open House—11/12 & 11/13, 8:45  
Middle School Dance—11/14, 5:00-8:00  
Scholastic Book Fair—week of 11/18  
Senior Dinner—11/18  
Nat'l HS meeting—11/19, 2:50  
Nat'l Junior HS meeting—11/19, per 8  
HS Open House (virtual)—11/20  
SLT meeting—11/20, 3:00  
P/T Conferences—11/21 & 11/22 (11/22 half day)  
You Make a Difference—11/27, 7:15 AM  
Thanksgiving (schools closed)—11/28 & 11/29

Dear RKA Families,

As we start our new Marking period, I wanted to take a few minutes to share our progress thus far. We are excited, because many of our summer plans are coming together, and we are seeing the impact in the students and in the school

### Academics

Our two new high school AP classes are working well. We have added AP English Seminar for students in grade 10, and AP Pre-Calculus—giving students more opportunities to earn college credit, and providing them with access to a rigorous course experience. We are also happy to report that new curricula in nearly all high school classes are progressing nicely.

In the Middle School, we are providing intervention classes to students in grades 6-8, and will continue to deepen that work over the year, shortly adding in High Impact Tutoring (“HIT”) for selected students throughout the day.

In middle school, several staff have been attending professional learning grounded in increasing the rigor of reading and writing tasks in ELA, social Studies, and Science classrooms. Again, this is all very positive that we are in a position to push rigor in the classrooms.

We have also completed our first round of important formative assessments (iReady and Common Interim Assessments), which provide educators standards-based information so they may plan instruction with greater specificity, giving students exactly what they need.

### Athletics

We finished the Fall Varsity Athletic season strong, and are looking forward to a competitive Winter sports season. Wrestling and Basketball are always very popular with our students. I hope you can come check out a game/match!

### Articulation

Our College Fair was a tremendous success, and our students were very impressive, asking all the right questions! We have also added some other features to our post-secondary planning array. We have been bringing in individual colleges to meet with small groups of students in the daytime. This is a great opportunity, because some of the universities from farther away are able to attend this way, vs. attending on one specific night. So far, we have had Brandeis, Maryland, and Sarah Lawrence; American is coming later on this month, and of course, SUNY and CUNY. We have also added a session for interested students to help prep them for college interviews and a special night to help interested IEP students transition to job training.

Middle School parent tours are in full swing, as well as five scheduled student visits from our local elementaries. Our 8th grade families are invited to one of two High School Open House events on November 12th and 13th. All info can be found at [www.RKA141.org](http://www.RKA141.org).

Activities So many special events and trips are being planned. The middle and high school Student Governments are really doing a phenomenal job talking to their peers and designing activities that will interest them. Please check out our News & Events page, which we keep updated with slips and flyers.

I hope to see you all at an event or helping to chaperone trips in the very near future. Please join me for my next Coffee with the Principal, or email me at any time!

Be well,

*Lori O'Mara*

**YOU  
MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE**

November 27th

Nominations open  
soon!

 **PTCwizard**

RKA P/T Conferences

11/21—5:30-8:00

Register for P/T Conferences - opening soon!

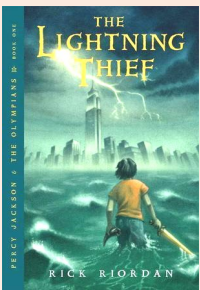
# Grade 6 Family Newsletter

## Science

We are using an exciting curriculum, *Amplify Science*. This literacy-rich enables students to take on the role of scientists and engineers in order to solve real-world problems. We recently finished a unit called *Harnessing Human Energy*, in which we were challenged to find a way for rescue workers to get energy to the devices they use on rescue missions, far away from electrical outlets. To do this, we learned about the possible sources of energy, figuring out ways to capture that energy. In our current unit, *Thermal Energy*, students play the role of thermal scientists working with a school principal to select a heating system for a school.

## ELA

Students are enjoying their first novel. *The Lightning Thief*, by Rick Riordan. Next, we will learn about Greek myths and Greek gods. Students are doing a super job with their RACE response paragraphs, and next month we will begin longer writing responses. Please check the backpacks periodically to help with organization and to see all the great work we're doing!



## Math Foundations

We are building a strong foundation to support the curriculum in Core Math. After completing the iReady diagnostics, we will focus on key areas that will strengthen students' understanding of Math concepts. This includes practicing number operations, fractions, decimals, ratios, and introductory algebra. Through interactive lessons and engaging activities, students will develop problem-solving skills and gain confidence in their Math abilities. Our goal is to ensure that every student masters essential math skills to prepare them for success in future math challenges.

## Social Studies

We have already finished two full units of study! First was a mini-unity on map skills and geography, and second was a unit on early humans and the Paleolithic and Neolithic Eras. Looking ahead, we will experience rigorous, literacy-based instruction provided by our partnership with the Literacy Design Collaborative. We will study Confucianism and the Han Dynasty, which is an alignment within the year-long scope and sequence of the school's *Passport to Social Studies* curriculum. Please keep checking Jupiter Grades!

## Literature

Literature Circles are in full swing! Students have selected their first text, based on their interest and reading level. Each group collaborated to create its own reading schedule, and are expected to finish the first novel by the end of November. In class, we have begun examining the exposition of our stories, focusing on setting, characters, and point of view. Soon, we will begin to identify the different types of conflict, and identify the conflicts within our own texts. In Honors Literature, students have almost finished *A Wrinkle in Time*, by Madeleine L'Engle, and will soon begin *When You Reach Me*, by Rebecca Stead.

## Math through Technology

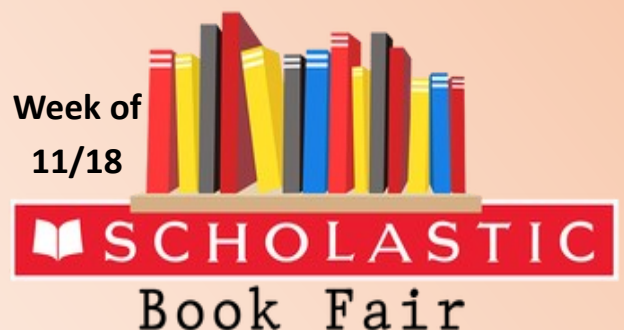
We have just finished creating our reflections for Unit 1. Students created their own scenarios and examples to demonstrate they understood the learning goal of each of the lessons learned in Core Math. We've also worked on our end-of-unit project—designing takeout containers! They started out by drawing it, then finding how much material it would take to make it, then cutting out their designs and putting them together in 3-D!

## Core Mathematics

We just finished our first unit which was on geometry. Students learned to identify and find the area of polygons and irregular figures. Then, we learned how to identify polyhedral, determine volume, and calculate the surface area of 3-dimensional figures. Next, we will work with ratios, equivalence, and rates. Helpful links are posted on Google Classroom. Students are expected to check feedback on Amplify and make any necessary corrections. Assignments are listed on GC, and grades can be found on Jupiter Ed. When work is made up, a message must be sent by the student via GC to let the teacher know it is done (within 3 days of the due date).



Week of  
11/18



# Grade 7 Family Newsletter

## Core Mathematics

Our current unit is *Introducing Proportional Relationships*. We're exploring ratios and how they connect to proportional relationships in real-life scenarios. Our tasks involve identifying, understanding, and representing these relationships through table and equations. We'll analyze and interpret data and make predictions about future scenarios. Students are in for an exciting journey of discovery as they explore how proportional relationships can be found in everything from recipes to distance/time graphs.

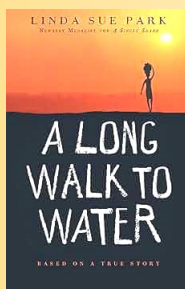
## Math Honors Enrichment

Our preliminary work has included learning how to professionally communicate with our teachers using email. We also completed a scavenger hunt activity, exploring the various features of a Google doc—changing page color, editing headers, and inserting hyperlinks and page numbers. Coming up next is the safety lab lesson, where students will learn to ensure proper use of equipment in order to maintain operation and prevent accidents, and to protect the environment.



## Social Studies

As we wrap up marking period 1, we continue on our unit, *The Earliest Americans*. We continue to use learning strategies and engage in collaborative group work. The end of the marking period will bring a unit test. In MP 2, we will begin *The Colonial Era*. We also look forward to implementing district-based modules to improve students' formal writing skills. We hope to see you all next month at Parent/Teacher Conferences!



## ELA

Our semester opened with a review of protocols, and setting up classroom agreements for the school year. We are on our first unit of study in the new EL Education curriculum, reading *A Long Walk to Water*, by Linda Sue Park, based on the true story of "The Lost children of the Sudan." Students have been studying plot details, enhancing their vocabulary, and learning the historical context of the novel. We highly encourage all parents to monitor progress on Jupiter Grades and Google Classroom.

## Spanish

In our preliminary unit, students have been learning many things, including: greetings, introductions, days of the week, terms for the weather, and the world of Spanish-speaking countries. We recently contributed a class project to the library for Hispanic Heritage Month, exploring the contributions of Hispanic pioneers who have significantly influenced their fields of endeavor. We recognize the Hispanic culture, communities, and individuals who make a difference in the positive lives of others.



## Science

Students have been learning about the role of microorganisms in our bodies which keep us healthy. After discovering microorganisms' size and scale, relative to molecules, students applied their learnings to a case study of a patient infected with a bacteria causing food poisoning. They used this as evidence to craft a scientific argument against a fictitious senator who is attempting to remove public funding from a scientific research institute. Our next unit is on Metabolism. What does a cell need to function properly? We will begin to evaluate data to answer this question.

## Math through Technology

Our preliminary work has included learning how to professionally communicate with our teachers using email. We also completed a scavenger hunt activity, exploring the various features of a Google doc—changing page color, editing headers, and inserting hyperlinks and page numbers. We've analyzed each student's level coming into the grade so we may tailor the instructional approach. We are also working on lesson reflections to use learning goals to promote deeper mathematical understanding and draw connections between different concepts.



# Grade 8 Family Newsletter

## Social Studies

Continuing chronologically from seventh grade, we are now learning about the Industrial Revolution. Inventions, the rise of Big Business and the forming of trusts and monopolies started us off. Now, we are in a unit on Immigration, learning about the different periods of immigration, different parts of the world people came from and the push/pull factors that brought people to America.

## Spanish

We have revisited last year's topics while preparing to dive into our 8th grade content. We celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with a special gallery walk entitled, "Shaping the Future Together." We also engaged in a project in which we redesigned traditional attire from Spanish-speaking countries to reflect contemporary styles and trends. In this way, we reimagine Spanish Heritage for the future. For their speaking exam, students presented their work with the theme "Mi Familia!" Our next theme will be "La Casa."

## ELA

Our current book study is *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, by Michael Pollan, which investigates the secrets behind America's food industry. We will engage in class discussions, encouraging each other to reflect and practice mindfulness in our food choices, and to practice critical thinking in analyzing how problems in the food industry continue. We will delineate Pollan's arguments to answer overarching questions, like: Where does our food come from? What factors influence our access to healthy food? What factors should we prioritize when making food choices? Students are also continuing to develop their independent reading assignments, submitting a book report every marking period on an appropriate book of their choice.

## Biology

Students are exploring why certain bacteria make us sick. Our study included an in-depth look at the characteristics of bacteria, and how they grow. Now, we are on our second chapter, studying how the body responds to bacterial infections, focusing on maintaining homeostasis and the immune system. We will continue to create and analyze models while engaging in investigations and inquiry-based activities designed to deepen understanding.

## Math through Technology

Students have been participating in diagnostic assessment on iReady. The data obtained from this, along with historical data will guide which topics we will be covering. In the second marking period, we will be completing tasks on simplifying and solving equations in one variable. This will help us when we revisit this topic with greater difficulty in units 3 and 4 in Core Math. We have also spent time creating unit reflections based on our core class learning goals. These can be used as a study guide for our assessments each unit.

## Math Foundations

Students have been participating in diagnostic assessment on iReady. The data obtained from this along with historical data will guide which topics we will be covering. We have identified multiples and factors as our first area of need. Students have been working in groups on tasks designed to reinforce the ideas of prime and composite numbers, common factors and multiples, and applications of these topics. This topic is foundational, as it will help students understand 8th grade concepts, such as slope and scale factor.

## Core Mathematics

We are currently in the middle of our unit about dilations, similarity, and slope. Before this, we learned about translations, reflections, and rotations, which are all rigid transformations, and about dilations, which are not. We are learning how to dilate figures with different scale factors and different centers of dilation. We will soon be making connections between all of these!

## Science

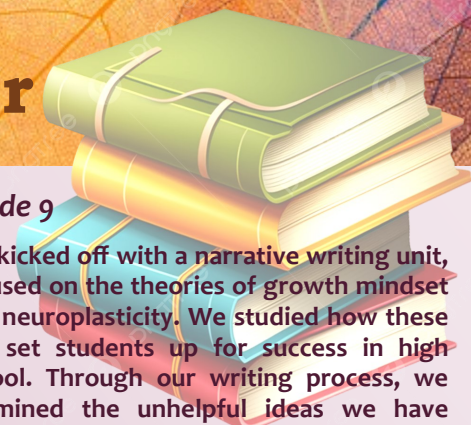
Students have taken on the role of astronomers, tasked with advising an astrophotographer who needs to take pictures of the Moon. Students will need to investigate when to best take the pictures, what causes the changes in the Moon's appearance, what conditions are required to view an eclipse, and more. We will be using a hands-on Moon sphere model, and digital tools to gather and represent information. By the end of this unit, students should be able to explain the mechanisms behind patterns of light and dark on the Moon, Moon phases, and lunar eclipses.

## Algebra

We are wrapping up our unit on linear equations and linear inequalities. We have explored many scenarios that can be represented using these. We've used critical thinking skills to determine whether a solution makes sense given a specific context. Students even discovered how to graph using their calculators! Soon, we will be learning about all the different ways we can describe data.

**RKA High School**  
**Open House**  
**November 12 & 13**

# High School ELA Family Newsletter



## AP Literature and Composition

Students have all written their college essays through multiple drafts with feedback, stimulated by John Trimble's *Writing with Style*, and inspired by reading "New Journalism" essays. As we focus on academic skills, we are reading and analyzing a series of essays on current topics like: homelessness, disability, and racial profiling. Students will then write their own essays and participate in Fishbowl Socratic Seminar discussions. Next up: a mega-study of poetry!

## AP Seminar—Grade 10

We are in the middle of a unit on the theme of education. One goal of this class is to study how arguments are constructed, what qualifies as valid evidence, and identifying credible sources of information. Students will read nonfiction articles, texts, and peer-reviewed studies from multiple perspectives about how students should be taught. Other work will include researching this subject further using NY Public Library databases, writing annotated bibliographies, writing research papers, and, finally, presenting their findings to the class. All of these skills are necessary to master for success on the AP Seminar exam and to prepare students for college.

AP<sup>®</sup>

CollegeBoard

## AP Language and Composition

We focus intensely on skills as this year, as we prepare for the AP Language Test, The NYS Regents Exam, and the SATs. We have learned and practiced higher-level close reading, evidence-based writing, and public speaking skills, learning several strategies for analysis. Students have read and analyzed personal essays and written their own, polishing and perfecting through the drafting process. This marking period, we will "Flip the Classroom" to teach lessons on McCarthyism. Students are reading academic and popular articles on the Salem Witch Trials, and will use these materials to draft persuasive research essays which will help prepare them for college work, as well as those standardized tests. Additionally, we will be learning the elements of rhetoric to use in an analysis of persuasive texts and in their own writings.

## Authors as Social Critics

This new course will unpack and confront the kinds of social issues grappled with by the creators of contemporary works of fiction, poetry, music, and film. We will analyze the tools and techniques used by their authors to make their views known, while critically examining the cultures that produced them. We began our foray into literary criticism with a look at several popular examples of speculative fiction, then established expectations for our engagement with Socratic Seminar and movie reviews. Next, students will lead a series of discussions around their favorite socially-conscious songs.



## Journalism

We are studying style and voice within reliable news sources, and how students can emulate these techniques in their own reporting. While we prepare to publish the year's first issue of *The RKA Gazette* in a little over a month, we will practice and apply interview strategies, as well as complete the editorial process of constructive criticism and revision.

## Grade 9

We kicked off with a narrative writing unit, focused on the theories of growth mindset and neuroplasticity. We studied how these can set students up for success in high school. Through our writing process, we examined the unhelpful ideas we have about ourselves and how "training our brains" can help us become more successful both in school, and in life in general!

## Grade 10

Students are participating in a unit designed around the novel, *Bodega Dreams*, by Ernesto Quinonez. His novel is an exploration of identity through the lens of young LatinX characters growing up in New York City. One of the essential questions we will discuss is whether or not our environment affects and influences our ability to succeed. We will also focus on identifying and analyzing the central idea of the text—a skill that is necessary for the Regents exam in 11th grade.

## Grade 11

We have begun our year with a skills-based unit as we prepare for the AP Language Test, The NYS Regents Exam, and the SATs. We have learned and practiced higher-level close reading, evidence-based writing, and public speaking skills, learning several strategies for analysis. Students have read and analyzed personal essays and written their own, polishing and perfecting through the drafting process. This marking period, we will "Flip the Classroom" to teach lessons on McCarthyism. Students are reading academic and popular articles on the Salem Witch Trials, and will use these materials to draft persuasive research essays which will help prepare them for college work, as well as those standardized tests.

## Grade 12

After closely analyzing renowned examples of short memoir, Seniors drafted several different styles of personal essays. We are now eagerly revising our best work in preparation for upcoming application deadlines!

# High School Mathematics Family Newsletter

## Algebra

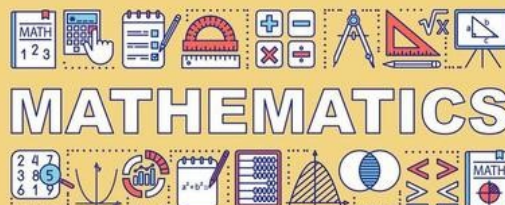
We are wrapping up our unit on linear equations and linear inequalities. We have explored many scenarios that can be represented using these. We've used critical thinking skills to determine whether a solution makes sense given a specific context. Students even discovered how to graph using their calculators! Soon, we will be learning about all the different ways we can describe data.

## Algebra 2

We are about to take our second exam. Our first unit was Sequences and Series. We are now midway through our unit on Polynomials. We have learned various factoring techniques which will be necessary for Precalculus and Calculus. Next, we will learn how to divide polynomials, solve various systems, and how polynomials are used in rational expressions and equations. Also looked at will be domain restrictions and asymptotes. Students have received their first of many Regents preparation packets which will cover questions on the current topics. It's never too early to start preparing for the Regents!

## Geometry

We are at the end of the unit covering rigid transformations and angle relationships. Our next unit will cover triangle congruence proofs and properties of quadrilaterals. Students will continue to work together through *Illustrative Math* activities in order to discover properties of congruent shapes with the understanding of how to apply rigid transformations to prove corresponding congruent parts. Please check Jupiter Grades for updated assignments, attendance, and grades. Google Classroom has resources that go with each topic.

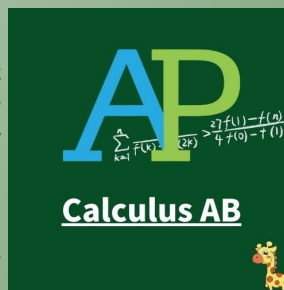


## Media and Marketing

How is data used in media and marketing situations? Our first unit covered how data can be manipulated by graphs. We made and read line graphs, bar graphs, circle graphs, and infographics. We discussed what motivated people to manipulate data. Next, we studied Fake News, and the differences between mal-information, rumors, misinformation, and all the ways the population gets its news. We learned about fact checking and searching for original sources. Moving forward, we will learn about gerrymandering—an appropriate topic as we lead up to November's election.

## AP Calculus AB

We have covered most of the derivative formulas, analyzing instantaneous rates of change, and acceleration in real life. In our current unit, we are studying more complicated formulas. Next, we will analyze applications of derivatives with graphing, theorems, and real-life scenarios. We have also been working on problems from the AP Collegeboard website to prepare for the AP Exam. Please check Jupiter Grades for updated assignments, attendance, and grades. Google Classroom has resources that go with each topic.



## Personal Finance

We started the year recognizing and analyzing different cognitive biases in our society as it relates to the way we spend money. While we cannot expect to avoid them completely, we have to learn how to address them, now and in the future. In our unit on banking, students learned about a variety of accounts that banks offer. We have concluded our bank research presentations, in which all three groups were presented with information on eight different banks. We made informed decisions using this info on which banks we would use and why. Our next unit will be on investing, which we have already started through competing in the nationwide "The Stock Market Game."

## AP Precalculus

Students have just completed the first chapter of the year, covering some topics from previous years, ramped up to the level of an AP. They have made great strides in being able to explain their thought processes using formal mathematical language. Next, they will dive deeper into the unit circle, which they encountered last year in Algebra II. We have continued to challenge ourselves with AP-level problems, as well as the prospect of taking half the exam without a calculator.



# High School Social Studies Family Newsletter

## *Global Studies—Grade 9*

Students began their year learning about the Paleolithic Age and how early humans hunted and gathered food to survive. Then they learned about the importance of the Neolithic Revolution in creating organized society, and, ultimately, civilization. Recently, student began their unit on river valley civilizations, including Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China.

## *U.S. History—Grade 11*

We are wrapping up our study of the American Revolution and the early forms of national government: The Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution. Students completed a document-based short essay on the causes of tension between America and Britain in the 1760s and a multiple-choice test covering material from the first unit.

## *Psychology*

Having completed our introduction to the course, we are now talking about research methods in Psychology. We will look at experimental methods of study versus non-experimental. First, we will design experiments using the scientific method; then we will design a survey to be carried out in class. We will also discuss psychological testing, observational studies, case studies, and correlational studies. We'll talk about famous case studies, like the "Genie" study, as well.

## *AP African American Studies*

Our students are progressing well through the content work, currently learning about freedom, enslavement, and resistance. Students created masks, which are now on display in the school library. It is our plan in the weeks to come to visit the African American Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan.

## *Sociology*

We are in the second unit of our course, learning about the effects of culture from a zoomed-out structural perspective down to the individual actions and symbols that affect behavior. Students are applying their theoretical knowledge of symbolic interactionism and the sociological imagination to their first sociological studies. Be on the lookout for students interviewing and surveying around the school!

## *Civil Law*

Students started off the year by learning about the importance of laws in society. They learned how laws reflect a nation's values. When a nation's values change, laws can, too. They did a deep dive into the six factors that make up the "Rule of Law", and learned about its importance for a fair and functioning government. Students watched, read, and learned about modern examples in which the rule of law was weak, and in which it was strong.

## *AP U.S. History*

We are currently studying the American Revolution, having finished our study of the British American colonies. Students completed in-class short answer questions on the geography and development of the three major colonial regions, and tensions that emerged after the French and Indian War. They had a DBQ essay on the ways Puritan values shaped colonial New England. Our first multiple-choice test covered material up until 1763, and in upcoming class discussion, we will delve deeper into the extent to which historians agree about the "revolutionary" nature of the American Revolution.

## *Global Studies—Grade 10*

We are in the middle of a unit on Political Revolutions, focusing on the causes and the different stages of the French Revolution and the effects of the Revolution on 19th century Europe and Latin America. For one assignment, they will write about whether Napoleon was a friend or a foe of the French Revolution, for another they will create a political cartoon about the Congress of Vienna. Then they will take a multiple-choice test and write an in-class essay aligned with the Global Regents which they will be taking in June.

## *Participation in Government*

We have examined the functions, forms, and types of governments, and the Declaration of Independence. Students have written and presented persuasive political speeches, and taken quizzes on the subjects. Now, we will be studying the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. We will engage in a debate project—arguing controversial political and social topics from the Federal vs. the States' Rights perspective, and have more quizzes.

## *AP Psychology*

We have been studying cognition, examining how and where memories are formed in the brain. We're looking at different kinds of memories, like long-term and short-term, and where they are processed and stored. We are also discussing explicit and implicit memories, and have been looking at ways to improve our memories and problem-solving. What gets in the way of remembering? We will also learn about what language is and the theories of language development.

Senior  
**Spirit Week**  
Week of November 18th

# High School Science Family Newsletter

## Chemistry

Students explored density, learning how to calculate it and apply it to identify substances. They studied the historical development of Atomic Theory, tracing the progression of atomic models from early ideas to modern concepts. The class delved into atomic structure, understanding the roles of protons, neutrons, and electrons. They also analyzed the Periodic Table, focusing on its organization and the properties of elements. Next, students will investigate chemical bonds, learning how atoms interact to form compounds.

## Biology

Students are exploring why certain bacteria make us sick. Our study included an in-depth look at the characteristics of bacteria, and how they grow. Now, we are on our second chapter, studying how the body responds to bacterial infections, focusing on maintaining homeostasis and the immune system. We will continue to create and analyze models while engaging in investigations and inquiry-based activities designed to deepen understanding.

## Weather and Climate

You can't avoid it; everyone experiences the weather! This course is an introduction to weather and climate phenomena. It is designed to provide knowledge of Earth's atmosphere and its changing behavior as it influences our daily lives. We're first looking at solar radiation, global circulation, environmental issues, and much more. We will cover climate processes like El Niño, Earth's past climates, and mechanisms of future climate change.

## Anatomy and Physiology

In this course, we will investigate the following topics and systems: orientation of the body, chemistry of life, cellular structure and function, histology, the skeletal, muscular, and nervous systems, and so much more. Students will have the opportunity to learn thousands of new terms and concepts—almost like learning a whole new language. The challenges will be great, but the rewards will be worth the effort!

## Fundamentals of Physical Sciences

Class was buzzing with excitement as students dove into the mystery of why reentering a car while pumping gas could lead to a dangerous explosion. Through engaging hands-on labs, students gathered evidence to uncover the underlying principles. They constructed and revised models to explain the phenomenon. By experimenting with static electricity and charges, they gained a deeper understanding of how this invisible force can ignite flammable vapors. Progressing through the unit, this hands-on approach not only helped them learn the material, but also fostered a sense of scientific inquiry and critical thinking.

## Earth and Space

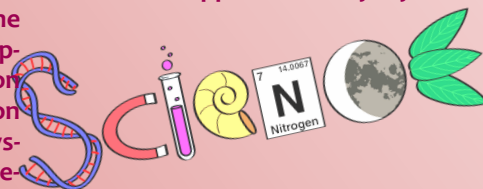
For almost 12,000 years, Earth has been an ideal place for human and other life to evolve. But Earth is becoming less livable, due to human-caused stresses to the Earth's systems. After brainstorming possible solutions, students will investigate the possibility of finding another Earth-like home in our galaxy. They will develop a model to explain what makes Earth an ideal place for us, based on patterns observed at different scales in data from simulations related to the stability of stars, planet formation, and planetary motion. They will use these to consider other solar systems and to argue from evidence about which exoplanet is the most Earth-like.

## AP Environmental Science

Currently, students are developing an understanding of how biodiversity is critically important to ecosystems. They will discover and discuss key concepts: that biodiversity is a key component to sustaining life within the living world, that natural and human disruptions have short and long term impact on ecosystems, and that ecological succession can occur in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in both developed and developing areas. Organisms within ecosystems must adapt to the changes created by these disruptions. In subsequent units, students will examine in greater detail how populations change over time.

## Science Investigations

We've embarked on a hands-on STEM project to explore the science behind flight. Students were tasked with designing and constructing their own paper airplanes, testing them to determine their flight time and distance. Through meticulous experimentation and data collection, they learned first-hand about the aerodynamic principles that govern flight, such as lift, drag, thrust, and weight. By applying these concepts to their paper airplane designs, they gained not only a deeper understanding of Physics, but also valuable problem-solving and critical thinking skills. As they iterated on their designs and analyzed the results, they discovered the fascinating ways in which science can be applied to everyday life.



## Forensic Science

A single hair or clothing fiber can allow a crime to be reconstructed and lead police to the responsible person. The goal of a crime scene investigation is to recognize, document, and collect evidence at the scene of a crime. Solving the crime will then depend on piecing together the evidence to form a picture of what happened at the crime scene. This marking period, we will touch on collecting and packaging trace evidence, the 7 steps of an investigation, the types of professionals at an investigation, and more.





# High School Spanish Family Newsletter

## Spanish I

We are concluding our present unit on where the Spanish language is used in the world. We've focused on authentic culture and real-life communication using Spanish, practicing reading, writing, listening, and speaking. We compare the Spanish language and culture with that of our own community. We're learning how to say countries, meeting and greeting, introductions, months, seasons, dates, etc. We also took part in the recent Spanish Heritage Celebration in the school library!

## Pre-Advanced Placement

Students from last year's Spanish for Spanish Speakers pilot program are now in the Pre-AP class. They are continuing to enhance their skills and are deeply invested in their learning. We are still using the *Galeria 2* textbook, and by June will delve into AP coursework. We are also starting to work towards achieving their New York State Seal of Biliteracy. In modulo 4, we are discussing employment and professions. We have created our resumes in Spanish and will practice interview skills and writing skills as we write cover letters and thank you letters to future employers. We will also be reading the work of the famous Nicaraguan writer, Ruben Dario. The onceshy Freshmen and now-maturing Sophomores are becoming more like a family every day.

## Spanish II

We opened the school year focusing on Hispanic Heritage Month, concluding with a class project displayed in the school library. We will now start to focus on our preliminary unit, learning to identify classroom objects, describe likes and dislikes, and daily routines. We'll talk about family relationships, leisure activities, and more. We will also review the verbs *hay*, *ser*, *tener*, *gustar*, *estar*, and *ir*. We'll also study indefinite articles, noun-adjective agreement, regular verbs in the present tense, reflexive verbs, stem-changing verbs, possessive adjectives, verbs with irregular yo forms, and *ir a* + infinitive.

## Spanish III

In order to prepare for the World Languages exam at the end of the year, we will continue to work on our reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in Spanish. Students are familiarizing themselves with every aspect of the exam. They have produced amazing projects about Latino innovators and also presented their "bio-poems." We are reviewing the preterite tense and will soon move on to the imperfect tense. We'll work on a variety of speaking assignments, and listen to and read authentic sources in Spanish. We studied different aspects of Latino history and culture for Hispanic Heritage Month.



## AP Spanish Language and Culture

Throughout the school year, we will become familiar with all parts of the AP Exam which we will be taking in May. We will focus on each part, individually and collectively. In addition, we have begun working on our first theme, *Families and Communities*. Students will be required to write various email replies and give cultural comparison presentations. They are encouraged to read articles and listen to podcasts related to the topics in order to increase their vocabulary comprehension.

## Spanish for Spanish Speakers

With over 200,000 Spanish speakers in New York City classrooms, our city is well-poised to better serve Latino students by expanding equity and access to the SHS program. We are one of six schools in the city to host a pilot program for this class. Our students began the year expanding their own Latino identity and culture. We've created maps, and studied lexical families and accent rules. We've immersed ourselves in Puerto Rican history, and read the work *When I was Puerto Rican*, by Esmeralda Santiago. Next, we will study the history of the Dominican Republic, evaluating the work of Julia Alvarez in *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Then, a module on Latin American poetry.

**Support your child at home by encouraging him/her to review vocabulary a few minutes each day, to complete all assignments, and to use Spanish wherever possible. Read labels that come in Spanish. Try listening to Spanish TV and music. Download apps like Duolingo to help improve Spanish speaking skills. We look forward to seeing our students progress throughout the school year.**

# Guidance

Welcome to a new school year! To help you succeed and stay on top of things, here are some essential tips to keep you organized and focused:

**Time Management**—Create a daily or weekly schedule to balance your homework, study time, and activities. Set specific times for studying and stick to them.

**Check your email regularly**—Make it a habit to check your school email every day for updates from your counselor, teachers, and for announcements and important school updates.

**Stay updated on Google Classroom**—Log into Google Classroom daily to keep track of assignments, deadlines, and class announcements. Don't let anything slip through the cracks!

**Stay Organized**—Use a planner or digital calendar to track assignments, due dates, and tests. Keeping your materials organized will help you avoid unnecessary stress.

**Communicate with Teachers**—Don't hesitate to ask questions if you don't understand something. Reach out to your teachers for help early on—communication is key to staying on track.

**Get Involved**—Join clubs, sports, or extracurricular activities. Being part of school activities helps with time management and builds valuable skills.

**Self-care is important**—Make sure to rest, eat well, and set time aside for yourself. A healthy mind and body are essential for academic success.



## College and Career Readiness

We have focused on personal identity through our first two units of study. Students created intersectionality maps to better understand the many parts of their identities. They also defined what a successful life looks like for them, presenting their visions for their futures to one another. 12th grade students are currently working through their CUNY applications in class, understanding the processes of putting together an excellent application!

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A graphic with a dark blue background. On the left, the words "HELP IS HERE" are written in white, bold, sans-serif font. To the right, a pink hand is reaching down from the top, and a yellow hand is reaching up from the bottom, as if they are about to shake hands. Below the hands, white text reads: "When you see this Help is Here symbol it means that the staff member inside is ready and willing to help you with whatever is on your mind."

A graphic with a white background. Two hands, one yellow and one pink, are clasped together in a heart shape. The words "Stop Bullying" are written in pink, bold, sans-serif font across the hands. Below the hands, the text "Anti-Bullying Week" is written in red, bold, sans-serif font on the left, and "Week of 11/4" is written in red, bold, sans-serif font on the right.

The logo for PTCwizard features a silhouette of a woman holding a child's hand, followed by the text "PTCwizard" in a large, bold, dark red font. To the right of the logo is a dark red box containing white text: "RKA P/T Conferences", "11/21—5:30-8:00", and "11/22—1:00-3:00". Below the logo and box, a dark red banner contains the text "Register for P/T Conferences - opening soon!" in white.



# Health and Physical Education

## Health

Students started off the year with a unit on nutrition and physical activity. The lessons included: guidelines for healthy eating, reading food labels, and guidelines for physical activity. Our school SAPIS counselor, Ms. Johnson, has been coming into classes to teach lessons on life skills, leadership, decision making, and substance abuse prevention. Each class works in groups, as well as individually. Students should be prepared for each class with a notebook and a Chromebook. All assignments can be found on Google Classroom. Parents and students should monitor GC and Jupiter Grades for any missing assignments.



## Physical Education

Our first three Phys Ed units will include soccer, football, and wiffleball. In soccer, students worked on skills which included: dribbling, passing, offense, and defense. They ended the unit by playing small games. In the football unit, students learned to throw, catch, run passing routes, and play offense and defense. They played passing and throwing games, as well as two-handed touch football games. Now, we are working on wiffleball. The skills in this include hitting, pitching, throwing, catching, and running the bases. In November, we will complete a Team Handball unit. Throughout the semester, we will also work on Fitnessgram testing. These tests include height and weight measurement, the PACER test, sit-ups, push-ups, and flexibility tests. Students are graded on participation and preparation. Students should wear an RKA shirt and sneakers to class every day. Students should also lock up their phones and any electronic devices in the locker room.



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# Arts and Letters



## *In The Library*

Available using your NYC Public Schools email address and password. Enhanced library privileges, including fine-free library cards, school delivery, and access to the unparalleled digital resources of the NYC Public Library system. <https://www.mylibrarynyc.org>.



Students and teachers have access to the World Book Encyclopedia at home and in school. Authoritative content for all ages, with abundant illustrations and maps. Users can save and share information, and save it to Google Classroom. [www.worldbookonline.com](http://www.worldbookonline.com). See Ms. Loving in the school library for User ID and password.



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The database NOVELny provides eResources to all New York residents. Newspapers, magazines, and scholarly journals. <https://novelnewyork.org/>

## *Ceramics*

Students are learning the ins and outs of working with clay, and making their artwork viable for the kiln. They have learned about the three major techniques: pinch pot, slab, and coil. With these skills, they will be able to create much of their ceramics artwork. We're excited to see all the wonderful work that they will create throughout the year. We concentrate on coil first, and will also learn the basics of the glazing process.

## *Instrumental Music*

**Middle School Band**—Beginning Band students have chosen their instruments and can already play five notes. We are working on making the connection between reading pitch on a staff in our Method Book, counting the rhythm shown, and applying it to our fingering.

**High School Kids Rock Guitar Class**—Our guitar classes have already learned fourteen chords and are using them in a variety of songs. Students are currently working on learning how to read pitch on a treble clef staff so that they can also play simple melodies.

**Morning Honors Band Club**—We are excited that our Morning Band Club continues to grow, with new members wanting to challenge themselves with higher-level songs. We have already learned two pieces. Please speak to Ms. Castiner if you are interested in joining—Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 AM.

## *Core Art*

As we continue our drawing unit, some students are improving their observational skills by drawing still-life compositions of various objects like flowers, food, and vases. We are focusing on artists, including Georgia O'Keeffe and Giorgio Morandi, as well as exploring new media, such as oil pastels and charcoal. In the next marking period, we will begin a watercolor painting unit.

Other students are making Fall tree drawings, inspired by Van Gogh. Van Gogh's drawings of furniture and rooms has been a main focus for 8th grade, and they are making 3D renderings of their own bedrooms. Some are studying the line qualities of master draftsman Charles White in order to make pencil portraits of their favorite singers while others are creating works inspired by the ballet dances of Edgar Degas.



## *Vocal Music*

After using the "Do Now" to focus on an aspect of musical literacy, Chorus class begins with a rhythm warm up using body percussion, followed by a focus on notation. There is always a silly song of the week, a vocal warm up, and then we rehearse our concert repertoire. High school ukulele classes have learned to pluck all the notes of the C-scale, can strum a few chords, and are learning songs they will be performing at the Winter Arts Festival.