

RAMSEY AROUND THE HORN

MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Monthly Newsletter for Ramsey Families

Volume 2, Issue 2
October 2013

An Update from Principal Marietta

There is a lot of news about Ramsey this month. First, Ramsey was recognized recently as a "celebration-eligible" school from the state Department of Education. This designation is for schools that are Title I eligible and have shown high levels of achievement using the new MMR (Multiple Measurement Rating) by the state. The rating uses three criteria: achievement percentage, growth rate, and achievement-gap closing. Superintendent Johnson sent the following message to our staff: "I wanted to take a brief moment to personally congratulate you and all of the dedicated, hard-working professionals at Ramsey. Your school demonstrated positive academic growth. I know you have worked hard to achieve better outcomes for your students, and this proves that success comes with the strong staff, strategies, and a commitment to excellence."

The second bit of news is the announced "Five-Year Enrollment Plan" that includes changes to Ramsey. Specifically, it is stated as creating Ramsey and Washburn as a 6-12 campus. In addition to the listening session that happened here this week, we will have a Site Council meeting on October 22 at 4:30 before the PTA meeting. During the site council, we will cover the following topics:

1. State of the School

- Review of performance data
- School Improvement Plan Strategies
- Title I Information

2. Reports from the Leadership Council Leads

- Instructional Council--Randy Niemiec
- Climate Council--Kristin Bergsagel
- Family Engagement Council--Elissa Cedarleaf-Dahl
- Technology Council--Kara Cisco

Contact Information

[Join Our E-Mail List](#)
[Ramsey Middle School website](#)
[Ramsey PTA website](#)
[Homework Help](#)
[After-School Classes](#)

612-668-4040

Important Dates

Thu, Oct 10
5-8 pm
Scheduled Conferences

Tue, Oct 15
5-8 pm
Scheduled Conferences

Wed, Oct 16
8 am to noon
Drop-In Conferences

Oct 16-18
NO SCHOOL

Tue, Oct 22
9:15 Coffee and
Discussion with
the Principal
4:30 pm Site Council
6:30 pm PTA Meeting

Fri, Nov 1
NO SCHOOL

3. Feedback and Input along with Q/A from the Five-Year Enrollment Plan Listening Session

The Site Council is open to all to participate. The purpose of the Site Council is to serve as a steering committee with regard to policy development. It is not a decision-making body, but it does provide parents and stakeholders an opportunity to engage in dialogue regarding the policy and practices at the school and serve as an advocacy arm for the school.

The PTA is an organization that works with our Family Engagement Council to mobilize and create events and activities to support the students and the school. Additionally, the teachers pick a monthly topic to highlight at each PTA meeting. Last month we talked about after-school athletics and academics. This month, we will have a short presentation on science. If you would like more information about the PTA, please [see our website](#).

Sun, Nov 3
Daylight Savings Ends

Fri, Nov 8
Picture Retake Day

iPads are Coming!

The students have been using their iPads at Ramsey for the last few weeks. We created a very deliberate process that supports the students in learning how to use the devices appropriately. This includes many lessons on topics such as: Apps, Internet Safety, identifying the purpose of the iPads, and management and handling of the device itself. We feel this approach greatly enhances students' appropriate use and creates fewer management challenges. In the coming weeks, the students will start bringing the iPads home every night. We strongly encourage parents to take the following into consideration when they are brought home:

- Keep the iPads in a common area and charge them every night.
- Do not allow students to download apps on their iPads that are not already on their devices.
- Talk to your students about what they are doing and ask them to show you examples often!

We are honored that the Association of Middle Level Educators (AMLE) has selected Ramsey to be a site visit during the national conference on November 7. We will be showcasing the strategies we use to engage our learners during this time. If you would like more information about the iPad program, please [go to our website](#).

Conferences Begin Today

Fall parent-teacher conferences will be a 20-minute meeting with you, your student, and your student's adviser. Conferences will be student-led. This means it is very important that your student join you during your conference time. Your student will lead the conversation and discuss with you his or her academic goals for the year. Your student's adviser will be able to answer basic questions about your student's classes and will help facilitate the discussion.

If you have specific questions or concerns you would like to address with a teacher other than your student's adviser, please drop in on Wednesday, October 16 between 8:00 a.m. and noon. It will not be necessary to bring your student with you to the drop-in meetings.

If you are unsure of your conference time, you may contact your student's adviser or call the office at 612-668-4040.

Scheduled Conference Days with Student:

Thursday, October 10 and Tuesday, October 15,
from 5 p.m to 8 p.m.

Drop-In Conference Day without Student:

Wednesday, October 16, from 8 a.m. to noon

PTA Update

Thank you for supporting the Fall Scholastic Book Fair! Attendees purchased \$2,400 in books and donated nearly 50 titles to teachers. The PTA donated an additional \$100 in books. In total, the Book Fair helped raise \$450 for Ramsey, plus \$300 in books from Scholastic. Be sure to look for announcements about the Half-Priced Book Fair this spring!

Next PTA Meeting is October 22. Please join us for this month's PTA meeting, during which the science teachers will present an in-depth look at the Ramsey science curriculum. The meeting will take place in the Media Center from 6:30 to 8 p.m. If you can't make it to the evening meeting, drop by the Media Center at 9:15 on the morning of the 22nd for coffee and discussion with Principal Marietta.

Boxtops Due at the End of the Month. Please help us raise money for Ramsey by collecting BoxTops from [select products](#). Place BoxTops in the box in hall outside the PTA room by October 28. For more information, [e-mail Sara Strzok](#).

What's New in Seventh Grade?

In seventh-grade science, we have been investigating the concept of adaptation: any structural or behavioral characteristic of an organism that helps it survive and reproduce. Ask your student to tell you about the adaptations they discovered during their virtual fieldtrip to Hawaii, their experiment with bird beaks, and their online simulation with walking-stick bugs. We have used our iPads to collaborate with a partner, to analyze data, and to take an assessment. Next, we will learn the basic genetic mechanisms that determine the traits expressed by individuals in a population.

In seventh-grade U.S. Studies, students are finishing up Unit 2-- "United States Founding Documents"--and they are completing a final assessment. The next unit is economics. Students will take a pre-test that will help Ms. Kragthorpe and Mr. Sommers determine what students already know. We are using our new learning management system, "Moodle," with the iPads to turn in work electronically, have online forums, and participate in virtual chats. We are also incorporating arts integration into the end of unit 2. Ask your student about the balance of power outlined in the Constitution!

Math 7 students have completed the first unit of the year on 2D and 3D Geometry. During this unit, students completed a project comparing the packaging of Coke and Pepsi products. We are now working on Unit 2: Rational Numbers and Integers. The large goal of this unit is to help students become fluent ordering and performing operations with rational numbers and integers (specifically negative numbers). This will be the only unit in grade 7 in which calculators will be used minimally. We encourage families and students to work on fact fluency and review their understanding of fractions from grades 3 to 6. Please ask your students how "hot and cold cubes" model operations with negative numbers.

In language arts, students are beginning to draft personal narratives about a memorable event in their lives. We will use what we have learned about qualities of a strong narrative--such as details, character development, and first vs. third person narration--to develop these stories. Most drafting and revising at this stage will be done in class, but students are welcome to work on their writing outside of school as well. Over the next few weeks, students will go through a process of self-critiquing, giving and receiving feedback, and revising before publishing and sharing final drafts. Details about the assignment can be found on Ms. Constant's or Ms. Bergsagel's

web page.

Following the October conference break, all students will receive a sign-in code for ST Math, an online math program meant to support the math students learned before arriving in Math 7. If students are feeling behind in mathematics, we encourage them to spend approximately 90 minutes per week on this program. Focus Math 7 students will use this program during the school day. All iPads will come loaded with the ST Math application.

Help Raise Cash at the Dash

The PTA is sponsoring a water stop at the [Monster Dash](#) on October 26. We'll be there with the Ramsey Banner so all the runners will know a little bit more about us, AND it will raise some money for the PTA. We are looking for 12 to 15 kids and 4 to 5 adults (or more) for 3 hours (10 a.m. to 1 p.m.) to set up the tables, hand out water, and then clean up. Normally they need their volunteers to be 14 and older, but for us they are willing to make an exception (providing we have enough adult supervision). If you'd like to volunteer, or if you have questions, please send e-mail to Ramsey.Volunteer@gmail.com.

Open Your Hearts, Open Your Home

Please consider an opportunity for your family to host and make friends with a delightful 17-year-old exchange student who is studying at Washburn High School for the current school year. He comes from the French-speaking part of Belgium, not far from Brussels. He is loving life in the USA, enjoying his teachers and new friends, playing soccer, taking theater class and serving as an aide in French class. He has an engaging personality, loves to chat and socialize, and is very helpful and kind.

The host mom who is serving as his welcome family will gladly give a recommendation to any interested families. Host families provide a comfortable bedroom, family meals, and reasonable transportation. A loving home atmosphere, good communication, and interest in the student's country and culture are essentials. Students have their own spending money and insurance and are responsible for personal expenses and all school and sports fees. For more information, please contact Carol Hines, ICES, at (888) 258-1101 (day or evening).

3 Ways to Stay Connected at Ramsey

Sign up for [Ramsey E-News](#), which provides this monthly newsletter--Around the Horn--as well as PTA updates.

Sign up for the [Student Directory](#).

Sign up for the [Parent Portal](#).

Send Us Your Submissions

If you have any suggestions or contributions for the next issue of *Around the Horn*, please [send an e-mail to the editor](#) by November 8.