



STORM NEWS

Warman Community Middle School

October 2013

Message from the WCMS Administration

It is hard to believe how quickly the first month of school has gone by at WCMS. While construction continues outside of the school day, it is exciting to see how the facility continues to transform.

Through September, our staff has worked to finalize our learning improvement plan for 2013-2014. This year at WCMS we have goals to improve student learning in three main areas. One of our goal areas is in Math. We have planned strategically to provide smaller class sizes for Math, to clearly identify and share the learning targets for each Math unit with students, to use assessment purposefully to determine what students know prior to instruction which will allow for teachers to differentiate to the needs of students, to involve students more closely in self-assessment and goal setting, and to report student progress by curriculum outcomes. We are also focusing on the development of a safe and caring learning community at WCMS. One of the main strategies to support this is by using the morning meeting format, Circle of Power & Respect. Our third goal area is in the area of assessment. We are following the lead of our school division and research from around the world to improve assessment practices. Teachers will be building their repertoire of assessment skills and we will be participating in the school division pilot of a middle years curriculum referenced progress report. More information on our assessment work, and our plans to communicate with parents and guardians, can be found in this newsletter.

"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

- Albert Einstein



Mrs. Baudais's class in CPR

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Students from 7Linner engaged in learning

School/ Legends Centre Access Plan Reminder

Moving students in and out of the facility is going fairly smoothly overall. A few reminders to parents and guardians as we continue to settle into the facility.

The area in front of the Legends Centre (east side of the facility) is for school bus loading. Please do not make arrangements to pick up your children from the Legends Centre parking lot immediately before or after school when the buses are on site. It is very dangerous for students to be walking between buses to access the Legends parking lot.

Pedestrian traffic and parent/guardian pickup takes place on the west side of the building. Students walking home should be exiting through the assigned student exit to the park paths and sidewalks. Private vehicles should park along Gowan Road when parents/guardians are picking up students.

We are very appreciative of the City of Warman for improvements that they have made to Centennial Drive and Clubhouse Boulevard. All parents/guardians should review pedestrian safety and using crosswalks in our growing city.

Student Accident Insurance

Prairie Spirit provides accident insurance through Industrial Alliance Insurance that provides insurance cover if your child has an accident at school during the school day. Children are also covered if the accident occurs at a time when they are involved in any extra-curricular activities before or after school hours, including school trips. In the unfortunate circumstances of needing this insurance, the school will need to be notified of the accident immediately so that they can submit an incident report to the insurance company and provide the parent or guardian with a claim form. The parent or guardian will need to pay any expenses initially, then ask the appropriate medical authority to complete and sign the form. The parent will then submit the form directly to Alliance Insurance. The claim process is between the parent or guardian and the insurance company.

Noon Hour Supervision Positions Available

We have several paid positions available for noon hour supervisors at WCMS. Noon break is from 12:33-1:23pm each day. Positions are flexible from every day to specific days per week. Interested applicants must submit to a criminal record check. For more information, contact Lisa Mason at WCMS.

Warman Mennonite Care Home

The Warman Mennonite Care Home invites children to come to a 'MEET & GREET OUR SENIORS' on Thursday, Oct. 31 from 5:00 to 8:00 pm and receive a treat! The Care Home is located at 201 Centennial Blvd. in Warman.

Terry Fox

Congratulations to all students who participated in the Terry Fox run. Our goal was to collect \$1046.00 (\$2.00 for every student) and our final collection total is \$1932.35. Special thanks goes to Amber Lai, who donated \$160.00!! Way to go Storm!



Recess at WCMS

Power Parent

Some have inquired about our plans for the Power Parent feature. This something that we are eventually working towards, but with changes to assessment and reporting what this will look like and a timeline for PowerParent becoming available are undetermined.

If you would like to know about your child's progress at any time, you can email or phone your student's teacher, who will provide you with a detailed update.

Exceeding Outcomes

This year's report card does not include a specific level of "exceeding" as it did last year for Grade 4 and 5 students. A checked box on the progress report will indicate that a student has exceeded an outcome and in such a case, teachers will provide specific evidence of the student's achievement as well as next steps for progress.

Assessment Changes

As we begin the current school year, we want to let you know about a change that you will be seeing in report cards for our school. All of the schools in Prairie Spirit School Division will be transitioning from current report cards to a Curriculum-Referenced Progress Report for all grade 1 to 5 elementary school students. Some parents will be familiar with this process, which was piloted by Grades 4 and 5 teachers from Warman Elementary School last year. Our Grades 6 and 7 teachers will be part of the pilot program introducing these Curriculum-Referenced Progress Reports for Grade 7-9 students across the division this year.

In the past few years, there has been significant provincial curriculum renewal. The content to be taught, instructional strategies to be used, and how evidence of student learning is gathered, has transformed. The Progress Report has been designed to suit these changes. Both academic achievement and learning behaviours will be reported.

On the new progress report, instead of the traditional grading scale, you will see the following:

- M - Meeting – independently demonstrates a complete understanding of the curriculum
- AP - Approaching – demonstrates a basic understanding of the curriculum with occasional support
- BE - Beginning – demonstrates a partial understanding of the curriculum with frequent support
- ME - Missing Evidence – missing, incomplete, or unacceptable work
- NT – not reported at this time

The Progress Report will allow for continuity across Prairie Spirit School Division. Our target is consistency among teachers in grading and reporting practices that increase learning as well as communicating through reporting in an accurate and meaningful way.

What will this mean for my child?

Students will be part of determining what went well and what next steps are needed

Frequent, descriptive, feedback from teachers, peers, and others will be part of the learning journey

Students will regularly set goals and engage in self-assessment

Students will have opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do in a variety of ways (by saying, doing, or creating)

If you have additional questions about this change please plan to attend an informational meeting at WCMS at 7:00 pm on October 9th, 2013. Questions and concerns can also be directed to Amy Orth, Vice Principal at WCMS.



Why should a parent be excited about Standards-Based grading?

by Sara Needleman

Sara is a mom of elementary and middle school students, educator and former middle school teacher. She currently works with graduate students in the University of Southern Maine's Teacher Education Department and consults on teaching and learning for JumpRope.

We have been reporting grades for as long as we have sent kids to school. Grades have always told parents where their kids land along a certain spectrum. Why change that?

Traditional grading systems fail to tell parents, students and teachers what the students have actually learned. Rather, they show us, according to any specific teacher's system, how our kids measure up to one another. Parents have seen report cards with A's and have praised their kids for those high marks, but with little understanding of what those marks mean. Similarly, other parents have held their heads in their hands as they look at a column of D's or worse and ask, "what now?"

Standards-Based Teaching, Learning and Assessment systems empower parents and students because they encourage teachers to be very explicit about what a student needs to learn in order to earn an A. Such a system helps teachers and therefore parents and students celebrate what has been learned as well as identify the student's gaps in learning. So, for the student whose report card shows a column of D's, the old mantra of "study harder" becomes "you can add fractions really well, but I see you are struggling with subtracting them." Speaking as a parent, I would much prefer this second conversation starter because now I have a sense of what my child needs to do to turn those D's around.

In addition, how many times have we had the conversation about the "demanding teacher" on one side of the hall and the "easier teacher" on the other side of the hall? Traditional grading paradigms have teachers working in their own spheres, designing their own systems for arriving at grades. While those systems generally reflect fair-mindedness and clear thinking, they are individual systems and so, a "B" in Ms. Smith's class might be equivalent to an "A" in Ms. Brown's class. Standard-Based systems help schools engage in mindful conversations about learning that focus on questions like "what constitutes an A?" and "what do good work habits look like?" As a parent, I want the teachers in my kids' schools to agree on the answers to those questions.

And one of my personal favorite features of Standards-Based systems is they encourage teachers to distinguish between academic achievement and habits of work. Students earn grades in academic subjects based on their understanding of that subject, not, for example, their homework completion in that class. The really cool thing, though, is that teachers can still report on things like homework completion, time on task and preparedness. They just do that reporting in its own place. As a parent, I would be thrilled to see those things reported separately because I know mastering things like preparedness and organization are true keys to success. In fact, author Paul Tough suggests in his latest book *How Children Succeed* that indicators like those typically found in a habits of work report are far better predictors of success than the traditional indicators like IQ or test scores.

I want my kids to succeed. I think it's safe to say parents in general feel that way. Standards-Based systems provide more specific feedback on strengths and weaknesses, empowering students with the tools they need for success.

S Needleman. (2013, September 23). Why should a parent be excited about standards based grading? [Web log comment]. Retrieved from <http://www.jumpro.pe/blog/why-should-a-parent-be-excited-about-standards-based-grading/>

Grade 6 Soccer Update

The grade 6 Storm Soccer teams have had a busy September. Both teams won their first games in Hague against the Panthers. Action continues with more games in October. The final tournaments are scheduled for Friday, October 18th. The Girls will be hosting the tournament at Arthur Neufeld field and the Boys will travel to VCA. Go STORM Go!

Coach Fast and Coach Vikse (Boys)

Coach Folden (Girls)

Drama Club

The Drama club has had several meetings already and a letter went out to parents last week about the club. We are very excited to be in preparations for our show. This is a very ambitious group and a very ambitious goal for performance, but all of the nearly fifty students in the group show great enthusiasm and readiness to put in the work. Mr. Abbott is looking forward to continuing to work with the group and he invites parents to come to any meetings. The music club is run by Mr. Abbott in 1303 from 3:30 to 4:30 on Tuesday each week.

Music Club

The Music club is taking shape. Resources have arrived for the group and music is being selected. The group is intended to be fun activities with music and is always open for all. Drop-ins are welcome and no music background is required. The music club is happy to report a group size nearly twenty during the last couple of meetings, but we are always looking for more! The music club is run by Mr. Abbott in 1303 from 3:30 to 4:30 on Wednesday each week.

Magazine Sale

Are your magazine subscriptions due soon? Warman Community Middle School will be having a magazine sale beginning on October 7th. Please consider renewing your magazine subscription through our program. A portion of the subscription cost of each magazine sold will stay in the community of Warman. Over the years we have raised thousands of dollars for our school. The money raised has been used to benefit our students. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions about the campaign please contact Michelle Schaff at the school.

Bring Your Own Device

Technology has become an essential part of education. To be able to live, learn, and work successfully in our information-rich society, students must be able to utilize technology effectively. Many students' lives today are filled with technology that gives them access to information and resources, enabling them to pursue their learning in their own way and at their own pace. The opportunities are limitless, borderless, and instantaneous.

With many students owning mobile computing devices and frequently using these devices for their school work while at home, the school division would like to invite students to utilize their own technology in a more seamless way at school. In an effort to put students at the center and empower them to take control of their own learning, students may wish to use personal technology devices for educational use while at school.

This fall, some teachers will pilot the Bring your own Technology (BYOT) program. Students in the pilot phase of this investigation will be able to bring their own mobile computing devices to school for use in their classes. A filtered Internet connection will be provided for students to use for educational purposes.

The student is solely responsible for any equipment that he/she brings to school. The Prairie Spirit School Division is not liable for damaged, lost, or stolen equipment. All students must adhere to the School Acceptable Use Policy. When students use technology inappropriately while on the school network, the same consequences apply, regardless of who owns the device. Please go to <http://blogs.spiritsd.ca/wcms/> for more information and FAQ for teachers and students.

Contact Us

Give us a call or email any time with questions, concerns or suggestions.

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