

# The Ray Review

GNMS' Quarterly PTA Newsletter - 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Review - Fall 2015

## PTA President's Letter:

We have started off with a great year for PTA. Membership is currently at about 75%, so we still need help reaching our goal of 100%. If you haven't joined, please consider doing so. You can also help by sponsoring a membership for someone else in our community. Another way to help is by giving with "Stingray Sharing". This money goes right back to our students through things like 8th Grade Celebration, Scholarships, Spring Dance, Staff Appreciation, and a Gift to School. Please consider joining or donating today.

We are working on our Student Directory. We hope to distribute this month. Thank you for your patience as this is one of the most tedious tasks.

We have had a busy start to our school year with great participation in our PTA Programs. We had a large number of students participate in our Reflections contest this year and look forward to announcing our winners. Formal awards will be announced and presented at our Winter Concert on December 15th. This will also be our next PTA General meeting. Please be sure to join us to celebrate our winners and hear about upcoming events. Our next PTA Board meeting will be on December 4th. As always, it will be at 9:30 a.m. and will be held in Room 406. Everyone is invited to attend. If you have any questions about anything regarding our PTA, please visit our website for more information at [www.gnmspta.com](http://www.gnmspta.com).

As we head into the winter "flu" season, please encourage your children to be diligent with hand washing. Also, remember the teachers can always use more tissues/hand-sanitizer/desk wipes. They always appreciate the "restock" supplies.

Thanks again for your continued support and generosity with our PTA. We are excited about the school year and look forward to seeing you at our meetings and events. Happy Fall!!!

**Missy Dixon**

Great Neck Middle School PTA President

## 2015/16 PTA Executive Board:

**Missy Dixon**  
President

**Suzanne Damron**  
VP/Membership

**Susan Lambert**  
Treasurer

**Stacey Pilla**  
Secretary

Find us at [www.gnmspta.com](http://www.gnmspta.com)



## Great Neck Middle School

1848 N. Great Neck Road  
Virginia Beach, VA 23454

(757) 648 - 4550

## Important Dates:

Nov. 10th: Report Cards

Nov. 11th: Veterans Day

Nov. 25th: Adjusted Dismissal

Nov. 26th- 29th: Thanksgiving

Dec. 4th: PTA Meeting @ 9:30 a.m.

Dec. 10th: Adjusted Dismissal

Dec. 15th:

Winter Concert/PTA General  
Meeting/Reflections Awards

Dec. 16th: Open House for

Rising 6th Grade

Dec. 23rd: Adjusted Dismissal

Dec. 24th – Jan. 3rd: Winter Break



## Principal's Corner: November 2015

On November 10, I will be joined by Mrs. Burr, Grade 8 Counselor, as we accept the National Blue Ribbon Award from the US Department of Education at a ceremony in Washington, DC. The school was nominated by the Virginia Department of Education for this prestigious distinction because Great Neck students performed in the top fifteen percent of all schools in Virginia in both reading and math. GNMS was one of only seven public schools in the state selected for this national honor. In a press release announcing this year's honorees, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated, "This honor recognizes your students' accomplishments and the hard work and dedication that went into their success."

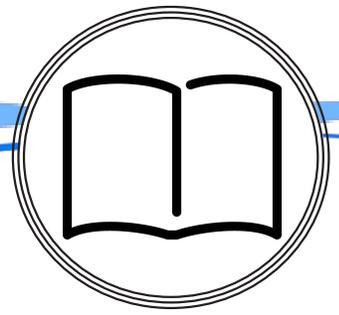
Know that this award is just one of many signs of continuous growth and accomplishment from our school and its community. Inside and outside the classroom, staff, parents, and students are making Great Neck Middle a better place. I see consistently in all classrooms solid, challenging instruction punctuated by problem-solving, collaboration, and critical thinking. A thrust on developing the literacy skills of our students is also evident, and, in short, high standards for classroom work are set and maintained on a consistent basis. Nothing replaces the value of direct instruction, and our data clearly illustrates that students who are in school on a regular basis achieve higher than those with absences. Evidence of high expectations can be found in the classrooms, hallways, playing fields, assemblies, and everywhere throughout the building.

Please know that Great Neck Middle offers assistance for students experiencing academic difficulty. Each morning the Homework Center opens at 7:30, and a math teacher is available at 8:00 AM to provide homework assistance. In addition, our teachers are available for extra assistance either before or after school, and students who remain at school for assistance may ride the activity bus home. We also offer SOL tutoring Monday through Friday from 7:40-9:00 AM or 4:00-5:45 PM, depending on the specific subject. Lastly, students who score below 70 in a core course of math, science, social studies, or English are assigned to an Academic Support bell in lieu of an elective during the school day. Contact your child's counselor for additional information. Regular communication with your child's teachers is important. You may contact your child's teachers through email or through the guidance office. You will find a link to our teachers on our website [www.greatneckms.vbschools.com](http://www.greatneckms.vbschools.com). Most importantly, ensure you are using ParentPortal to access your child's grades and attendance on a daily basis. To sign up for ParentPortal, visit our website.

I look forward to our continued improvement as we enter the second nine weeks. For your planning purposes and to assist families with holiday travel, on Wednesday, November 26, 2014, students at the middle school will be released at 1:20 PM. Do not hesitate to contact me or any member of my staff should you require our assistance.

Sincerely,

Gene F. Soltner, Ed. D., Principal



## GNMS Library Media Center News

**Book Fair** This year's GNMS Library Scholastic Book Fair is scheduled for Monday, December 7 through Friday, December 11. The Book Fair will be open Monday through Wednesday from 9:00am until 3:00pm. Thursday, December 10, Adjusted Dismissal Day, the Book Fair will be open from 9:00am until 1:00pm. The Book Fair will close at 10:30am on Friday.

All students will have a chance to preview the Book Fair and make purchases through their English classes. Students will need a signed planner and their method of payment to revisit the book fair. Parents have been invited to shop the Book Fair during regular Book Fair hours on Wednesday, December 9 using the entrance near the gym.

### Book Fair Hours

Dec. 7-9\*: 9:00am-3:00pm

Dec. 10: 9:00am-1:00pm  
(Adjusted Dismissal Day)

Dec. 11: 9:00am-10:30am

\*Parent Shopping Day is Wednesday,  
Dec. 9 during regular Book Fair hours

## Daily Attendance Boosts Student Success

Sooner or later, nearly every teen is going to stumble out of bed in the morning and whine, "Do I have to go to school?" Your answer can be short and simple: **YES**.

### Here's why - students who miss school:

- Earn lower grades than those who attend regularly. Learning builds on itself. A student who misses one day of math may not learn the foundation skills needed for the next several days in class.
- Are more likely to get into trouble. What else are teens going to do if they're not in school? They're more likely to use drugs or alcohol. They're more likely to get in trouble with the law and even get pregnant.
- Develop bad habits that may carry over to their adult life. Few jobs allow people to show up just when they feel like it. Instead, life is filled with things people have to do whether they want to or not.

Teens who get in the habit of skipping school are less successful in adult life.  
The above is reprinted from the VBSCHOOLS Parent Connection.

For more information check out the VBSCHOOLS Parent Connection page:  
<http://www.vbschools.com/parents/>



## Partners in Education 2015-16

Great Neck Middle School is grateful to our Partners in Education (PIE) for their continued support of our students and staff. We encourage everyone to let these businesses and organizations know how much we appreciate their contributions to our school.

7-11 (Red Tide Drive)

Beach Movie Bistro

Brother's Pizza

Chick-Fil-A (Hilltop)

Dominos (Great Neck)

Equi-Kids

Farm Fresh (Great Neck Shopping Center)

Great Neck Middle School PTA

Klar Voorhees Orthodontics

Moe's Southwest Grill (Hilltop)

NASA Langley Research Center

Shorebreak Pizza & Sports

Tini's Frozen Yogurt Bar

Tropical Smoothie Café (Marina Shores Shoppes)

Tropical Smoothie Café (Renaissance Place)

GNMS PIE Coordinator: Helen Sissel

## BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION

If you found a dime on the sidewalk, would you pick it up? Would you ever throw away a dime? That's what you do every time you toss a BOX TOP in the trash. Our school receives ten cents for every BOX TOP our PTA submits.

This December our school will receive a BOX TOPS for EDUCATION check for **\$224.10**. The next submission is in March. Please consider clipping, saving, and sending in any BOX TOPS. Thanks!



GREAT NECK MIDDLE SCHOOL



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## FARM FRESH 1•2•3•4 COMMUNITY

The Farm Fresh 1•2•3•4 Community Program lets the GNMS Administration earn educational goods and supplies. Points are awarded through purchases made at Farm Fresh stores. Simply cut out the bar code on this page, and scan at checkout. Key tags are available and will be passed out at PTA events. Every time you shop at Farm Fresh and scan the bar code/key tags, GNMS will automatically earn points! So far GNMS has earned over 14,000 points this school year.

# Great Neck Band News

The Great Neck Band program has had a great start to the school year! Congratulations to the Great Neck Pep Band for excellent performances at the home football games and the pep rally!

Below are important dates for upcoming band events:

- December 12:** All-District Band Audition
- December 15:** Winter Bands Concert
- February 4-6:** All-District Band
- March 3-5:** VBODA Band Assessment
- April 19:** GNMS Pops Concert
- May 12:** Spring Bands Concert

MUSICAL ARTS



## GNMS Orchestra

The **Great Neck MS Winter Orchestra Concert** has been moved from December 2nd to December 10th.

The call time is 5:30 PM and the concert begins at 6:30 PM. Please be sure that your child is dressed in appropriate concert attire.

GNMS will issue bow ties and cummerbunds, which must be returned to Miss Sawyer after the concert.

## Great Neck Chorus

All-District Chorus audition results will be announced in our next newsletter. All first semester chorus students will participate in the following concerts in December:

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

**Winter Chorus Concert** in the Auditoria at 7:00 p.m.  
Meet for warm ups in the chorus room at 6:30 p.m.

Monday, December 21, 2015

**Day Winter Concerts with Band & Orchestra**

- Bell 1: 8th Grade Auditoria
- Bell 2B: 6th Grade Gym
- Bell 5: 7th Grade Auditoria

Chorus Concert Dress Requirements:

Concert Dress is required for all day and evening concerts

**Girls:**

- Long Black Skirt (ankle length only)
- White Long Sleeve Shirt with Collar
- Black Dress Shoes

**Boys:**

- Black Dress Pants
- White Long Sleeve Shirt with Collar
- Tie
- Black Socks
- Black Dress Shoes

*"Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and that which cannot remain silent"*  
-Victor Hugo



## GRADE 6 COMBINED NEWS

It is difficult to believe we have moved through the first quarter! Students have settled into the challenges of block scheduling, more freedom, and the use of lockers, and they have done well! Please check your student's school supplies and replenish them as needed, and please make sure you are signed up for Parent Portal and Listserv.

**Language Arts** - Advanced Language Arts will travel to the Victorian Era and study the work of Charles Dickens as they learn the strength of character of young Oliver Twist. The objective of this novel study is to understand how conflict changes a character. Students will also read other material during the unit to emphasize character change. They will complete a literary analysis of this concept at the end of the unit. This novel study will further be placed into the framework of understanding child labor in the world both past and present.

Core Language Arts will also study how conflict changes a character as they meet young Jesse Aarons, Jr. in the novel, Bridge to Terabithia. This coming-of-age story emphasizes how friendships shape our lives. Core students will also complete a literary analysis of how characters change due to overcoming conflict.

**Math** - Math 6 is starting a unit on fractions. Students should be reviewing multiplication facts. IXL program is available for extra practice.

Pre-algebra continues algebra and integers units. Students should be reviewing integer rules. Please discuss the importance of showing complete work when simplifying algebraic expressions.

**Science** - Advanced Science is currently in the middle of the Waves Unit. We just finished Sound and are beginning on Electromagnetic Radiation and Light. We have a big poster project that is due at the end of October. The students have to draw the Electromagnetic Spectrum. We will be looking at mirrors and lenses next.

Core Science has been trucking through the Matter unit. We just finished Physical and Chemical Properties and Changes. We will be focusing on Elements, Compounds and Mixtures for the next week then we will test and finish that unit.

**Social Studies** - Social Studies students are finishing up Unit 1 - Geography and moving towards Unit 2 where they will focus their study on the motivation of explorers who discovered certain parts of our country. Students will also complete performance tasks that are sure to be both fun and challenging.

# RIPTIDES

In **English**, the Riptides began with a quick summary and overview of the writing process. Writing portfolios and Works-In-Progress folders were established to collect the students' writings and provide an opportunity for student reflection and growth. Our first unit was The Emergence of Literature. The students read Greek myths, created and described a mythological creature, studied allusions and irony, and wrote an original myth. The Advance English class is currently reading Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll. We are studying the different levels of meaning in the novel and we are looking at methods of characterization. The core English class is reading A Single Shard by Linda Sue Park. Our focus is on internal and external conflicts, the six stages of plot, and characterization.

English tutoring is available on Wednesdays after school from 3:50 – 5:30 PM. Students need to complete a permission slip and bring it with them to the session. Students can be picked up at 5:30 PM or ride the activity bus home from the tutoring sessions.

**Science** classes started with a brief introduction and review of necessary concepts. We reviewed the types of lab equipment and lab safety. We began a study of life characteristics, cells, and cell processes. We are finishing the Cells unit and will begin the Genetics unit.

In **social studies**, we are riding up San Juan Hill with Teddy Roosevelt to study the Spanish-American War. Afterwards, we are looking at how progressive reforms in America have changed government, laws, and the way we live. Reformers will include Carry Nation, Ida Tarbell, Booker T. Washington, Jane Addams, Nelly Bly, and many other colorful characters!

**Math** 7 students have completed Unit 1 on Exploring Numbers and Number Relationships and are continuing Unit 2 on Patterns, Functions, and Algebra. Algebra I Honors students have completed Units 1 & 2 on the Algebra Basics and Solving Equations and Inequalities. We have just started Unit 3 on Relations and Functions and will continue on to Unit 4 on Linear Equations next. Please continue to make sure your child completes homework and reviews his or her notes nightly. Check your child's "I Can Checklist" to identify his or her strengths and weaknesses within the unit. Also, please continue to have your child use IXL to reinforce material taught in class ([www.ixl.com/signin/vbschools](http://www.ixl.com/signin/vbschools) username: student id #, password: first and second letter of last name and student id #). There is a math tutor available every morning in Room 121 from 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. The tutor can help students with homework and quiz and test preparation.

## SEVENTH GRADE



## DOLPHIN

The **Dolphin** team is off to a swimmingly super start to the school year! Our students have been advancing along at a swift pace through each subject.

**Math** - In Algebra 1 Honors, we have covered the basics such as solving for variables and learning to use the graphing calculators properly. Topics coming up include Graphing & Slope. In Advanced Math, we have been working in our Patterns, Functions & Algebra unit, focusing on Equations. Next, these students will match wits with inequalities.

**English/Language Arts** – Students became scholars of ancient Greek mythology by examining popular myths to understand the purpose of telling stories to help explain the unexplainable. Then students transformed their knowledge of gods and goddesses into their own original myth. Now our focus shifts to the novel, with core students going back to 12th century Korea to learn about the importance of perseverance and family with Tree-ear and Crane-man in A Single Shard, while advanced students while fall into the rabbit hole with Alice in her ...Adventures in Wonderland.

**Life Science** - Students began the year by learning how to think like a scientist using scientific language, skills, and processes. Our knowledge of the scientific method can now be applied through the study of the wonderful world of the cell as we investigate cell theory, parts of a cell, and the functions of those parts. Soon we will delve even deeper into understanding our own biology as we look at our cells under the microscope.

**Social Studies** - Reconstruction, Westward Expansion, Immigration and Industrialization were the primary topics of the first quarter. By analyzing primary source documents like political cartoons and speeches, students drew conclusions and synthesized their knowledge with a mind map. The Progressive Era, including women's suffrage and prohibition, World War I, the 1920's and the Great Depression will be examined in the coming weeks. Please feel free to share any artifacts from relatives that you may have that relate to these exciting times in our history!

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## SEVENTH GRADE



## BEACHCOMBERS

The **Beachcombers** have had a great start to the school year. We would like to congratulate our September Student of the Month – Michael M. and our Citizenship Award winner Lindsey B.

**Mrs. Hawkins's** English students are in the midst of reading novels with core classes wondering whether Tree-ear will make the trek to the embassy in *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park, and advanced classes are going on an adventure with Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. In addition, students will read A Christmas Carol and have the opportunity to attend an actual play at the Wells Theatre! Parts of speech, sentence structure, theme, characterization, and much more continue to fill the day of English students as well!

**Mrs. Werner's** science students have just been introduced to the amazing world of cells, and they are busy using their microscopes to observe various types and parts of the cell. Students will be continuing the study of the history, parts, functions, and the different processes of cells in this unit.

**Mr. Jucksch's** Advanced Math students have just completed Exploring Numbers and Number Relations. Students are now beginning an introduction into the world of Algebra in a unit called Patterns, Functions, and Algebra. Algebra is simply a way in which we describe patterns, and it is used in many professional occupations from carpentry and electricity to business applications, engineering, and the sciences.

**Ms. DeTorres's** social studies students are working on a 21st century Orbital. After participating in a brainstorming session, students will be instructed to choose a 21st century problem that they believe needs to be reformed. Students will have the opportunity to research their topic and to develop possible solutions to their 21st century problem. Students will then create a presentation using Photo Story. This activity ties in with the Unit on Progressives. Please remember to replenish all school supplies. A prepared student – is a successful student. We would like to wish everyone a safe and happy Thanksgiving holiday.



## GRADE 8 COMBINED NEWS

**Math 8** students will be finishing up the algebra unit before Thanksgiving break and will then begin proportional reasoning. This involves practical real life situations such as calculating discounts and mark-ups, determining interest on bank accounts and investments, or paying interest on car loans and home mortgages. All of these are skills that will be used in the real world. Next up: Geometry.

In **Algebra** the students have finished up the first two units: Unit 1 - Algebra Basics and Unit 2 - Equations and Inequalities. With their newfound skills solving equations, the students are moving into Unit 3 - Functions and Linear Equations. In this new unit, students will learn the relationships between linear equations and functions. While examining functions, students will learn domain and range, function notation, and zeros of functions. They will apply this knowledge to linear equations as they learn about y-intercepts and slope.

**Geometry** honors students have already finished three units and have just begun their first unit of many on triangles. We have been studying logic and proof writing using segments, angles and parallel lines. We will now put our skills to use in proving triangle congruence and similarity. The many properties, theorems and definitions they have already learned will be applied throughout the first semester so it's always a good idea to go back to previous notes and refresh your memory!

During this quarter our **Earth Science** students have covered important SOL information on the scientific method, topographic maps, and astronomy. This is very interesting to most students and covers information from the Big Bang Theory to the formation of our solar system. Next quarter we will cover meteorology. We will study high and low pressure systems, hurricanes, tornadoes, and global winds. Students will learn about Earth's Climate during this unit.

In **Physical Science** students began the year learning about energy, energy transformations, and heat. They are finishing the quarter learning about waves, light and sound. Next quarter we will focus on the Laws of Motion. We will spend most of our time learning how the laws of motion can be applied to real world issues such as the use of wind turbines to generate electricity.

In **Civics and Economics** students have been studying the Legislative Branch and researching the complex law making process. They will be delving into interest groups and lobbying before moving into Unit 4: The Executive Branch. Please continue to watch the news with your child and discuss current events to make our in-class experience rich with discussion!

This quarter in **Language Arts** we'll be focusing our time on essay writing. Students in the advanced classes will continue reading *The Once and Future King* while the students in core classes will finish working their way through *Freak the Mighty* and head into *Elie Wiesel's Night*. All students should continue to review literary devices as well as their rules and notes for writing mechanics.