

# Somers Newsletter

## September 2009

Stephanie Wesolowski  
Principal

*Please view the Calendar of Events each month!*


Kathy Morris  
Jerome Petty  
Belinda Shatley  
Vice Principals

From the Principal



**Continuing The Proud Tradition of Success At Somers!!**

### 2009 Maryland State Assessment Results

	Reading Grade 6	Reading Grade 7	Reading Grade 8	Math Grade 6	Math Grade 7	Math Grade 8	Science Gr. 8
Somers	90.0	88.5	92.4	85.3	88.3	84.1	74.1
Charles County	82.5	81.2	80.4	74.6	73.3	69.7	53.3
Maryland	84.5	83.1	81.5	77	73	67.2	61.4

Welcome....And welcome back to Milton Somers Middle School!!!! The 2008-2009 school year has begun with lots of enthusiasm and focused energy for success. Both the staff and students are excited and ready to meet the academic challenges ahead of them.

Once again our students made significant gains in Math and Reading on the Maryland State Assessments in Reading and Math last year. I am so excited and proud of our students and our instructional team for this amazing accomplishment. We sincerely thank all our parents and guardians as well for supporting our efforts in instruction and working with us as partners in the education of your children. We all need to take credit for a job extremely well done!!

At this point we have settled into a productive daily routine of learning. By now, I am sure you have been given informal reports about school from your son or daughter. The faculty and staff at Milton Somers Middle School hope those reports have been positive. We are all dedicated in our efforts to provide a positive educational environment for your child(ren).

I hope that you are as excited as the staff to be back at school. Our school renovation project is expected to be completed in November. The final phase includes the installation of a new fire alarm system, replacement of equipment on our basketball and tennis courts, and a new entrance. We certainly take just as much pride in our facility upgrades as we do our instructional program, our staff, students and school community.

A number of communications were sent home on the first day of school. Please take the time to read them. It is vital that we have the emergency cards as soon as possible. The emergency cards allow us to locate a parent or guardian in case of an emergency. If your telephone numbers change or the emergency contact information changes, let the school know as soon as possible. The students are required to purchase and use an agenda book for all classes. This is important and vital to your child's success; the agenda ties the home, the school and the student together in a partnership through communication and shared information. Please take the time to review the assignments your child has for homework. Additional information about the school and policies can also be found throughout the book.

We have scheduled our Open House on September 17<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-8:00 p.m. We look forward to seeing you there. Again, please feel free to contact the school if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas. Working together will ensure the very best educational opportunities for your child(ren).

**\*\*We would like to thank the members of the Parent Teacher Organization for sponsoring the "Back To School" breakfast for our staff members on August 18th. We received a warm welcome and a delicious meal as we began to embrace the new year. We certainly appreciate your continued support and all that you do for our students, staff and school community!**

## Student Drop-off and Pick-Up

### Parents Please Note!

All students who are getting dropped off in the morning need to be dropped off in the faculty parking lot across from school. There are crossing guards there to help stop traffic and help the students cross. **No students should be dropped off in front of school.**

Any student getting picked up will be released from school after ALL the buses have left the parking lot at approximately 2:10pm. NO CAR is allowed to enter the school bus loading zone until ALL buses have left the parking lot; **NO CAR is allowed to wait on the yellow curb before 2:00pm.** The yellow curb must stay clear of all cars so buses can make the turn into the loading zone. Any car waiting to pick up a student needs to wait in the faculty parking area.

Thank you,  
**Somers Administration**

## PTO News

The PTO board members would like to extend a warm welcome to all of the new and returning students, parents, and staff. We look forward to another exciting school year at Milton Somers.

Upcoming events are Open House on September 17<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 p.m. and the "Back-To-School" dance on September 25<sup>th</sup>. The PTO will need parent volunteers for the dance. If you are interested, please notify Alex Wilmer, the PTO Parent Volunteer Coordinator, at [alexirn@verizon.net](mailto:alexirn@verizon.net) or 301-392-1376. Please consider volunteering for one or more of our in-school dances. It is a really fun job for the parents to do and we could really use your help.

The first PTO Meeting will be held on September 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. in the Media Center at Milton Somers. We will have a guest speaker whose topic will be "Block Scheduling & Science, History, and Language Arts Projects". All are welcome, please make plans to attend.

Monica Knuckles  
PTO Secretary

## Guidance

The Guidance Department is ready for another exciting year at Milton M. Somers Middle School. Please feel free to contact your grade level counselor with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your child.

6<sup>th</sup> grade – Kristin Dougherty  
7<sup>th</sup> grade - Kenneth Tojek  
8<sup>th</sup> grade - Denise Barnes



## Sixth Grade News

Welcome to an exciting first year of middle school! The sixth grade team of teachers is looking forward to introducing your child to the challenging new world around him/her. We have numerous activities planned for our students: exploring math concepts using real life scenarios, traveling through history and nature in social studies and science, improving and enhancing reading and writing skills, and balancing academic activities with related arts and physical education.

Each of your child's teachers has prepared a class syllabus and/or outline that provides information about the class, teacher expectations, homework, grading, supplies needed, etc. It is important that both parents and students read and understand this information. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask. Many of your questions can be addressed at the **Open House** scheduled for **September 17, 2009 from 6:00-8:00 p.m.** Since space will be limited, we ask that students do not attend. This is an informational evening for parents.

One of our favorite activities at Somers is the Student of the Quarter assembly. Every quarter, students will be recognized for their academic progress, effort, and achievement. Every student has the opportunity of receiving an award throughout the school year, and parents are invited to attend the presentations.

Below, you will find some useful tips on homework. We hope that you will use them to create a homework friendly environment in your home. Remember – homework is to be done, and it is the child's responsibility to do it. Please keep abreast of what's going on at school by reading the school's "electronic" newsletter every month and checking agendas and homework folders for information that will ensure a smooth school year.

Our enrichment science students will be completing a science project this year. They will be expected to come up with an idea during the first few weeks of September. With the help of their science teacher, they will then work on researching their idea, and then refining their project topic, as well as other components of the project such as writing their hypothesis and procedure. Be sure to ask your child what idea they are considering. (See tip # 5 below.)

Here are seven tips on managing homework by creating an environment at home that puts across the message, "Homework is to be done."

1. Make the point that education is important and keep making it. Parents need to let children know that this is what they value.

2. Prepare a workspace at home. It can be almost any place, from a lapboard to a drop-leaf shelf, to a space with a table, chair, and lamp.
3. Develop with children a schedule for homework and for chores around the house. List these on a calendar, day-by-day, week-by-week.
4. Convey the impression that your children can do the job if they are persistent.
5. Help children, as needed, to break down a job into manageable steps that can be done one step at a time. This works for both household jobs like room cleaning and big homework assignments.
6. Pick the time for homework with care. In some houses, early morning is the best time; in others, it is after supper. TV should be off and the telephone off limits.
7. Do not expect perfection. When children ask you to "look" at their achievements, from skating a figure eight to completing a math assignment, praise but do not overdo. If you have criticisms, make them, but gently.

REMINDERS TO OURSELVES: Let's not worry about what we might not have done in the past. Let's start where we are now. This is the way we can improve our children's success for now and later...and our own, too.

(Reprinted with permission: MegaSkills Education Center The Home and School Institute – 1500 Mass. Ave. NW – Washington, DC 20005, 202-466-3633.)

We wish our students and parents good luck this school year. Please feel free to contact the school if you have any questions or concerns about your child's education.

Patty Howard  
6th Grade Team Leader



## 7th Grade News

The Seventh Grade teachers would like to welcome all seventh grade students and parents/guardians to a challenging, rigorous, and exciting school year. We have worked hard (and had fun) this summer developing thematic units of study which will integrate two or more disciplines of study. These units will incorporate various levels and types of responses to accommodate all of our students. We are also planning field trips and programs that will enhance and enrich our students' experiences this year.

All seventh grade students will need to purchase an agenda which has been specifically prepared for Somers students. The cost of the agenda is \$5. The agenda can be purchased during Homebase. The agenda

contains the Student Handbook, a daily agenda for the school year, and other useful academic information and interesting trivia. Teachers will incorporate its use into daily lessons, short and long term planning, and other organizational strategies. The agenda is a valuable asset for time management of homework, long term projects and a tool for communication between school and home. It is also used as a classroom pass. Students are expected to have their agenda with them at all times throughout the school day.

Students will not be assigned school lockers until they have purchased an agenda and Student Emergency Cards and other essential information have been completed and returned with parent/guardian signatures to homebase teachers.

We want all of our students to have a successful school year. To accomplish this we must all work cooperatively. Ask your child **everyday** to tell you what his/her day was like, and what new and interesting things he/she learned that day. You can also help by **daily** checking your child's agenda.

Students need a specific and consistent time and place to study. They also need the materials and supplies required by each class. Students must complete all assignments on time. Students without their assignments will be required to complete a "No Homework" form stating the reason(s) why the assignment is not being turned in on time. The Seventh Grade team policy for late work is as follows: partial credit will be given for work that is turned in one day late; after one day, students will receive a zero (this excludes medical absences). As a courtesy, teachers will also try to stamp the student's agenda to indicate when an assignment is not complete or missing.

The tardy policy for our school is as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> offense – warning, 2<sup>nd</sup> offense – parent contact, 3<sup>rd</sup> offense – problem solving intervention with vice principal, 4<sup>th</sup> and subsequent offense – referral to vice principal. Being in school every day and arriving on time is a priority. We appreciate your assistance in making sure your child is here and on time every day.

We look forward to meeting you on Thursday, September 17, during Open House. This is a great way to meet you child's teachers and get an overview of each class.

Whenever there are any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact us. We are looking forward to a great year!

Ms. Stephanie Harris  
7<sup>th</sup> Grade Team Leader



## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade News

Our new school year has gotten off to a great start! During our first week of school, we not only welcomed our new eighth graders, but we also extended a big welcome to our new team members. New to Somers this year is Ms. Sarah Williams who will teach Algebra II and GTT. We would also like to welcome back Mr. Petty (Vice-Principal) and Ms. Barnes (Guidance Counselor) to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade team. Another new addition, Ms. Smith, is our Instructional Specialist and is a part of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade team.

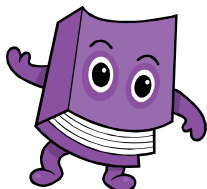
The first week of school was one of transition for our eighth graders. During this time students familiarized themselves with new schedules, teachers, texts and expectations. One change that some of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders have had to adjust to is the 8<sup>th</sup> grade team's policy regarding late homework/classwork. **NO LATE HOMEWORK OR CLASSWORK WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR POINTS.** It is our team's goal to challenge our students to make this school year a productive one, not only academically, but one that will provide your children with the "springboard" they need to advance to high school.

Teachers will continue to check agendas as the year progresses, and we hope that parents will do the same. The school agenda is an excellent way to assist our students with developing their organizational skills, as well as providing a vehicle for communication between teachers and parents.

There are many important events planned for our 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Between field trips, Career Day, high school transitions, and much more, this is a very important year for our students as we try to prepare them for high school.

Remember we are a team! Parents, students and teachers can set goals and can make them happen. I feel confident that this school year will be a successful one for your child. Contact me at 301-934-4663 or [ghopkins@ccboe.com](mailto:ghopkins@ccboe.com) if you have concerns or questions about eighth grade activities.

Mr. Allen Hopkins  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade Team Leader



## Media Center News - Picturing Greatness

The Media Center is ready for a fantastic new year. Already, we have many fun and educational plans in

store. Our first contest of the year gives students a chance to introduce some of the interesting characters they met during their summer reading adventures. Students can pick up an entry form in the Media Center. Three lucky winners will receive their own USB thumb drives to help them start off the year right! Also, on September 11<sup>th</sup> we will kick off this year's *We the People Bookshelf Challenge*. The theme for this year's bookshelf is "Picturing America". The challenge will be for students (and faculty) to read at least five books from the Bookshelf by mid-May. This year, challenge participants will have the opportunity to share thoughts on the books and craft their own "pictures of America" via our blog site: <http://somerspagemturners.edublogs.org/>. Somers' Page Turners is basically an online book club. It's a great chance for students to write about what they are reading in an informal setting. The site has the complete list of the 2009-2010 *We the People* books and Maryland Black-eyed Susan Award nominees. Our first novel for book club discussion is *Schooled* by Gordon Korman. It is one of this year's Black-eyed Susan Award nominees for grades 6-9, and it had me laughing out loud from the beginning!

With their Language Arts class, students will generally visit the library for mini-lessons, booktalks, and book checkout/return every other week. There are several new features in Destiny (our catalog) and tons of new books that I'm eager to share with our patrons. Many students can expect to begin putting their information seeking skills to use as they start researching their History Day and Science Fair topics this month. Students can access all of our fine databases from home by going to <http://www2.ccboe.com/library/athome/>. The username is **charlescounty** and the password is **welcome**. For more information concerning any of our library programming, be sure to stop by during Open House and to read the information concerning the Media Center in your child's agenda book.

Last but not least, I wanted to quickly remind you that it is easy to support your school media center. There are so many ways you can help. First, you could volunteer a couple of hours a week to assist with tasks such as shelving books, general housekeeping, delivering materials to teachers, or even help out during the book fair (our first will be in December). Secondly, we are once again collecting Box tops for Education. Just send in your clipped items to the media center. And finally, you can encourage your child to not only make use of our fine facility and resources, but to return materials on time and in good condition. Your support will benefit your child and will be greatly appreciated.

I'm picturing that this is going to be another great year in the Somers Media Center!

Ms. Van Gelder and Mrs. Bragg

## Scholars Course of Study Update

Please remember that in order to receive official acknowledgement for participation in the Scholars Course

of Study at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade promotion or awards ceremony, a student must meet the following requirements:

- Have taken enrichment or gifted language arts (6 & 7 & 8)
- Have taken enrichment social studies (6 & 7 & 8)
- Have taken enrichment science (6 & 7 & 8)
- Have taken enrichment math in one of two sequences: pre-algebra, Algebra I and Algebra II OR enrichment mathematics, pre-algebra and Algebra I
- Have taken foreign language (8) OR Gateway to Technology (8)
- Have maintained a 3.2 cumulative G.P.A.

Scholars brochures are available from Ms. Hunt, the Gifted Education Resource Teacher at Somers. All new students who qualify will have the Scholars designation noted on their first report card.

Ms. Katie Hunt  
Gifted Ed Resource Teacher



## NJHS News

Welcome back National Junior Honor Society members! We hope you enjoyed your summer off and are ready to make this year a great one. Prior to our first meeting on September 24<sup>th</sup>, all current NJHS members must pick up a permission form from either Ms. Christiansen (room 214) or Mr. Hopkins (trailer 8). This permission form allows you to stay after for our monthly general meetings (see dates below).

Members of NJHS are responsible for several projects throughout the year including the annual Thanksgiving Food Drive to help families in need from the community, the Somers Idol talent competition, and the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Dance. Each member earns "pin points" for attending meetings as well as participating in activities and events. At the spring Induction Ceremony for new members, awards will be given based on the number of pin points earned.

We are pleased to announce our NJHS Officers for the 2009-2010 school year, elected by the group in May. Our four officers are Nicholas Fullard (president), Michelle Dickerson (vice-president), Rachel Drummond (secretary), and Pateley Bongiorno (reporter). These four will serve as the leaders of the organization and work closely with the sponsors in planning meetings and activities.

Here is the schedule for our general meetings (all are on Thursdays). These dates are subject to change due to weather or unforeseen issues. Meetings will begin at 2:15 and end at 3:30. All members should be picked up promptly at 3:30.

September 24<sup>th</sup>  
October 15<sup>th</sup>  
November 19<sup>th</sup>  
December 17<sup>th</sup>  
January 21<sup>st</sup>

February 25<sup>th</sup>  
March 18<sup>th</sup>  
April 15<sup>th</sup>  
June 3<sup>rd</sup>

## Sleep-Smart Tips to Help Your Child Get a Better Night's Sleep

The following information was taken from [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org).

Getting enough sleep at night helps fuel your brain and body to perform better in school, sports and other activities. Unfortunately, students in middle school may have a hard time falling asleep, staying asleep and then waking up the next morning. As the new school year begins, the following ideas may help you and your child plan for a better night's sleep for your teen.

### Sleep-Smart Tips for Teens:

1. Keep a consistent bedtime and wake up schedule, even on weekends and school vacations.
2. Most adolescents need 8.5-9.25 hours of sleep each night. Figure out what time you have to get up in the morning and then count back to find out what time you should go to bed.
3. Get into bright light in the morning to help you wake up but avoid bright light in the evening to help your body prepare to go to sleep.
4. After noon, stay away from stimulants, such as coffee and sodas with caffeine, which will disrupt your sleep at night.
5. Be sure to get plenty of exercise during the day.
6. Relax and unwind before you go to bed, avoid heavy reading, large meals and computer games one hour before you go to bed. In addition, don't fall asleep with the television on because the light from the television can interrupt your sleep cycles.

Mrs. Bostwick  
School Psychologist

## Chic-Fil-A Spirit Night

Chic-Fil-A in La Plata is having a spirit night on Tuesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 5-7 p.m. They will donate 10% of the proceeds to Milton Somers.

## Three Brothers and Carvel - Spirit Night

Three Brothers Italian Restaurant and Carvel Ice Cream in La Plata are both donating 20% of the proceeds earned between 4:00-10:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>. A flyer with more information will be distributed to students.

## LIGHTS! CAMERA! Picture Day!

This is a reminder that picture day is quickly approaching. We will be photographing our Seahawks on Thursday, October 1, and Friday, October 2, 2009. All students can be photographed for free so that they may be included in the yearbook and receive a student ID card. In addition, students may purchase photos for an additional cost. Brochures for photo packages that can be purchased will be coming home soon. If you have any questions about pictures, please contact Mrs. Chewning at [mchewning@ccboe.com](mailto:mchewning@ccboe.com).

## Fall Yearbook Special!

Yearbooks are officially on sale! You can purchase yearbooks online for \$30.00 plus tax until October 31<sup>st</sup>. After October 31<sup>st</sup>, the price of yearbooks will increase. You can purchase yearbooks online by going to [www.jostensyearbooks.com](http://www.jostensyearbooks.com). Computers will be set up in the library during Open House on Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup> so that you can purchase yearbooks at that time. If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Chewning at [mchewning@ccboe.com](mailto:mchewning@ccboe.com).

## 2009 Seasonal Flu Vaccination Clinics

Get your family immunized at the Charles County Department of Health. No appointments necessary, walk-ins welcome. Prevention and control of Influenza for good family and community health.

### Public Family Walk In Clinic

(Ages 6 mos. & Older)

**Friday, October 23, 2009, 9:00am-6:00pm**

**Wednesday, November 18, 2009, 9:00am-6:00 pm**

**Wednesday, December 16, 2009, 9:00 am-6:00pm**

For more information: (301)609-6900 ext. 6025/6011 or visit [www.charlescountyhealth.org](http://www.charlescountyhealth.org) or [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

Main Lobby Reception Area  
4545 Crain Hwy  
(off Theodore Green Blvd)  
White Plains, MD 20695

## Parks and Recreation: After School Activities Program

Parents, do you need an after school program for your child? Sign your child up for the Parks and Recreation After-school program. The program runs 2:15 - 6:00pm. Students get a snack, homework help, and then stay busy with crafts, games and much more. Fee is \$25 per week. Call Parks and Recreation at 301-932-6679 for more information.

## Important Information about E-Mails

When corresponding with school staff via email, please include your child's name in the subject area of any email. Due to the great deal of Spam mail staff members receive, we have been instructed to delete emails without opening them if we are uncertain as to their origin. Your child's name in the subject area will help the staff from accidentally deleting your email.

## Emergency Cards

Please notify the front office **in writing** with any phone number changes. The front office has a form for address changes. **It is very important that the emergency cards have current information.**

## Work Requests

Parents, please keep in mind our policy on work requests for students who are out sick. A student must be out 3 days **before** we can gather the work. Teachers are allowed 24 hours to get the work ready. It is inconvenient to gather the work if the student will return the next day. In this case, the student may get the make up work when returning to classes.



## Bus Passes

Due to our enrollment, **we can only issue bus passes for emergency situations.**

## School Security is a Priority!

The key to our success is a shared responsibility – we need your help! It is essential that every visitor sign in on the computer in the front office and wear a visitor/volunteer badge during the time they are in the school. We also ask that you designate the activity, etc., when signing in. Before leaving, please take a moment to “check out” on the computer. We also ask that you only enter through the front doors of the school. Together we can continue to make our school a safe learning environment for everyone. Thank you for your support!

## Classroom Interruptions

If it is necessary to drop off items (lunches, homework, instruments, permission slips, keys, notes, etc.) for your child, please give the item to the office staff before your child's lunch shift. We will call students down during their lunch shifts so that we are not interrupting an entire class.

# Character Education



My Name is Ridgely and I Am a Very Responsible Rabbit!

**Responsibility:** The state of being accountable or liable for someone or something.

**Dependability:** The act of being trustworthy and reliable; keeping one's word and following through with it.

**Accountability:** The act of being responsible for one's words and actions.