

Principal's Perspective -Gregg J. Desto

By now, all students in grades 6-8 should have received the letter I sent on July 8. Though I know it is unusual for a principal to send a letter directly to students, I thought that the subject of the letter was important enough to do so. As adults, we all know that treating people with kindness, civility and respect is not just a nice thing to do, but an enormously important life skill. We know that there are few professions, if any, in which the ability to get along with people does not matter. Middle school aged students, however, in their race for popularity and acceptance, often forget that. Therefore, I felt it was important to let our students know that though we have made great strides in reducing bullying and harassing behaviors, Mr. Paire, the staff and I are completely committed to eliminating it altogether. I do understand that is a lofty, some would say unrealistic goal, but I believe wholeheartedly that it can be done, and this is the year that we shift our efforts into 5th gear toward making it happen.

So the point of my letter is to let students know that eliminating name-calling, insults, and threats of any kind will be our #1 goal as a school and that they should expect some changes in the way that we expect them to treat one another. In short, it has long been a dream of mine to be the principal of a school where kids not only learn academic subjects, but do so while enjoying an encouraging atmosphere completely free from cruelty. We're almost there. This is the year that we are determined to take the next big step. If you have not done so already (and I know many of you have), please speak with your child about this topic and help us reinforce our top goal for the coming year. If we can be successful in this endeavor, think of the advantage children in Dudley will have over those just about anywhere else. A happy, reduced-stress adolescence? I'd say that is a huge advantage, and our kids deserve it!

On another note, I want to point out a sampling of some of the really important items in this summer newsletter:

- ◇ On page 3, Mr. Paire comments on the aforementioned topic of bullying. As the assistant principal, he is the one who so often deals with it when a student has been picked on. But how do you tell the difference between true bullying and the relatively common, misplaced humor that many adolescents unconsciously engage in? His article will help us answer that question.
- ◇ On page 2, is an important notice for parents and students regarding new items in the school handbook.
- ◇ On page 2, new staff members are introduced to the community.

Finally, after having recently completed my 5th year as principal of DMS, I feel compelled to offer my sincere thanks to all of you, the parents of our students, for having made my job so much easier over the years. Our students are as great as they are because of the work you do in raising them. When things have gone wrong, I have always found that you and I have worked very well together to find the solutions to problems. I am tremendously grateful for the reasonable and caring nature of the families in this community. It is my genuine hope to work with you for many years to come.

Student schedules will be mailed the week of August 24, 2009.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|---|---|
| Handbook Additions | 2 |
| Welcome New Staff | 2 |
| Contact Information | 2 |
| Assistant Principal | 3 |
| DMS Fact Sheet | 4 |
| Guidance—Custodial/ Non Custodial Informa- tion | 5 |
| Medication Policy | 5 |
| Grant Information | 5 |
| Changing Buses | 5 |
| Upcoming Events | 6 |
| MCAS Schedule 2010 | 6 |

**NEW STUDENT
ORIENTATION –
WEDNESDAY,
AUGUST 19, 2009
6:00 P.M.**

All students and parents of students, who are new to the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District are invited to meet with Principal Gregg Desto and Assistant Principal John Paire for an overview of the school, a question/answer session, and a school tour. We look forward to seeing you there.

New Students: Please check with the office to make sure your child's records are complete.

Important Notice to Parents / Students: Handbook Additions for 2009-2010

We respectfully request that when Middle School Handbooks are distributed to students on September 1, parents/guardians go over the contents with their children, putting special emphasis on rules / regulations that may be uniquely pertinent to the individual child. Additionally, please be sure to emphasize the new additions to the Handbook, which are listed below.

1. **Page 10 – Promotion** – The second sentence now reads, “Students who fail any Unified Arts class will be subject to review by the Principal before promotion is recommended.” The purpose of this change is to encourage students to give their best effort in all classes on their schedule, including Unified Arts (Art, Music, Technology Education, Computers, Health and Physical Education). If students do not pass these classes in 2009-2010, they will be required to make them up in summer school (if available) or complete an extensive summer project.
2. **Page 14 – Energy Drinks** – Due to the increased consumption of energy drinks and updated information about the health risks associated with them, we have added the following statement: “In recent years, we have seen an increase in middle school students’ consumption of highly-caffeinated beverages often referred to as “energy drinks.” Due to the adverse effects these beverages can have on middle school aged children (such as increased heart rate and blood pressure, dehydration, nervousness, irritability and insomnia), beverages such as Red Bull, Monster, Rock Star, Venom, and others are not permitted on school grounds, buses or any school sponsored activities.”

Thank you for your help in getting this important information out to our students.

Welcoming New Staff Members

Dudley Middle School is proud to welcome the following new staff members:

- **Ms. Veronica Clark, Grade 8 Science**
- **Ms. Julie Walker, Guidance**



Contact Information

Our office is open from 7:30 AM – 4:00 PM everyday this summer excluding the week of July 20-24. Please do not hesitate to call or e-mail us if there is anything we can do to help your child get off to the best start possible in September.



NEWS FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL—John D. Paire

As I reflect on my first year working at Dudley Middle, naturally the line of thinking immediately shifts to areas where we, as a school, and I as a member of the school community can improve. Understanding that it is very easy to recognize that this is a great place for kids to go to school, really it only takes a walk through the building during the school day to figure this out, the one issue that continues to cross my desk more often than others is students making unkind comments to one another. While I don't think that it is a major problem here, I would be naïve if I thought that it didn't happen and therefore, also didn't think it affected the ability of at least some students to learn. And since learning is the reason kids are here, it is only natural that I would be interested in helping eliminate this impediment that surely does exist. Whether your child has been bullied directly or has witnessed it happening to someone else, it is likely that if you were to ask your child about bullying at Dudley Middle they would tell you that unfortunately, it happens.

I think we can all agree; bullying is bad. My belief is that no kid should walk through the doors of our school thinking they were going to have a miserable day because of the way they are going to be or were treated by someone. That belief is reasonable and to me, it makes sense. Now, the hard part - how do we make a clear distinction between bullying and "normal middle school behavior" which is a necessary (and sometimes awkward) part of human development?

Dan Olweus, who is often cited regarding bullying in schools, defined bullying as "negative behavior intended to inflict injury or discomfort to someone else." It is also generally accepted that for a behavior to be recognized as bullying, the behavior has to be "repeated during successive encounters" (eliminating the instances that a single insensitive comment, that we have all made and probably regretted at one point or another, is made). It is this type of behavior that can lead to a student getting ready for school or walking through the doors of their school already convinced it is going to be a terrible day because another person has made them feel badly, on purpose, on several occasions in the past and they assume it will happen again today. Whether it actually happens on this specific day or not is secondary. The damage has been done and the bullied student already has negative thoughts in his or her head regarding school and, really, who can blame them for feeling this way?

As a staff, we work towards eliminating this practice and try to be in-tuned to what is happening with our students. Teachers and other staff members do an excellent job monitoring their classrooms and the hallways around their classrooms for this type of negative behavior and address it appropriately and compassionately when it is encountered. However hard we may work, there are always areas that are not as easily monitored (buses, bathrooms, etc.). It is in these areas where behaviors such as bullying are most prevalent. This is why it is important that the students who do the right thing (proudly, the vast majority of our kids) and want Dudley Middle to continue to be the great place it is to learn need to step-up and work on developing the compassion that we want them to have as adults. They can do this by helping those students in need. They can make those who are bullied feel welcomed and wanted by doing things like inviting them to sit with them at lunch, they can tell an adult in the building what they witnessed or know, and they can talk about what happened and get good advice from those who are the most influential figures in their lives, their parents (sorry pro athletes, pop stars and other American cultural icons).

As always, please talk to your child about making a positive difference in school. A child who develops compassion and empathy is a child who is developing key attributes associated with being successful in our society. If there is any thing we can ever do to help, please contact us at school at any time.

NEW STUDENTS—Please check with the office to make sure your child's records are complete.

MIDDLE SCHOOL FACT SHEET

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL:

Tuesday, September 1, 2009

TELEPHONE:

508-943-2224

Fax 508-949-0720

DISTRICT WEBSITE:

www.dcrsd.org/DM.html



CAR RIDERS:

Students should **not** be dropped off prior to **7:35**. Proper supervision may not be available until that time. Students will be dropped off in the front of the building. In sequence with buses.

OPENING DAY PROCEDURES:

Students will report to specific locations by grade level. Teachers will be available to direct students to the appropriate location. An orientation meeting will take place in the gymnasium. Students will be dismissed by team and escorted to their appropriate classrooms by their teachers. A letter with student schedules and further information is forthcoming.

DAILY SCHEDULE:

A.M. Routine - 7:25 am Bus drop-off begins

7:35 am **Parents drop-off begin**

7:37 am Students to lockers/
homerooms

7:50 am OFFICIAL START OF SCHOOL DAY

8:00 am First class of the day begins

P.M. Routine - 2:22 PM OFFICIAL END OF THE SCHOOL DAY

2:22 pm First bus dismissal or
as called by office

2:28 pm Second bus dismissal

2:33 pm **Car riders dismissal**

LUNCH: Students' cost is currently \$2.00. There are four lunches scheduled between 11:00 am— 12:20 pm. Students will eat with their appropriate grade. A choice of meals is offered every day. When it's available, ice cream is sold. ***Pre-paying for lunch is encouraged. Please call for details. Send in a check payable to: Dudley Middle School. Make sure your child's name and ID number are listed on the check.***

SCHOOL SUPPLIES: Do not purchase school supplies before the start of school. Teams will send a letter home during the first week of school listing necessary supplies and detailing team expectations. You may also refer to the letter enclosed in your child's report card last June. Paper, pencils, pens, notebook, and an assignment agenda, will be provided for each student. Large binders and large book bags do not fit in the lockers.

LOCKS and LOCKERS: Lockers are equipped with combination locks. No personal locks may be used on lockers. Lockers are school property, and should be treated with care. Students will be responsible for any damage to lockers.

BACKPACKS AND BOOK BAGS: Students will not be allowed to carry backpacks or book bags during the school day. ***These must be stored in the student's locker.*** This is strictly enforced for the safety and well being of our students.

DISMISSAL: Students **riding buses will be dismissed at approximately 2:22 p.m.** In order to avoid congestion and to provide for the safety of students, **car riders will be dismissed at 2:35 p.m.** We ask for your cooperation with student dismissal.

Car riders may be picked up in front of the school **after the buses leave.** Should you have an early appointment, plan to dismiss your child prior to 2:00 p.m. Please send a note with your child with the time of dismissal. No car riders will be dismissed between 2:00 p.m. and 2:35 p.m. due to the buses coming down the hill from the high school.

From the Guidance Office

Non-Custodial Parent information

The school encourages all parents to be actively involved and informed in the education of their children and sees parents as a vital link to the success of their children in school. However, many parents may not be aware of a recently enacted Massachusetts Law (General Laws Chapter 71, Section 3H) that specifies procedures that govern access to student records by parents who do not have physical custody of their children. The guidance office can answer questions you may have regarding access to student records as well as the procedural and notification process involved. Please contact the school guidance office at (508) 943-2224.

Requests for information

From time to time parents are likely to receive requests for teachers or school personnel to complete various types of questionnaires, surveys, evaluations or rating scales at the request of their Physician or other professional. Please keep in mind that the release of student information requires specific authorization by law. Please contact your child's Guidance counselor so that appropriate release forms may be obtained.

Attendance

Parents please pay particular attention to the Attendance policy in your child's handbook regarding changes in the attendance policy. Students exceeding 12 absences may be required to repeat the grade, or attend summer school to meet the promotion requirement, as schools must now act in a manner to ensure student attendance. Parents are encouraged to review this requirement in the student handbook.

MEDICATION POLICY NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL NURSE—Mrs. Hickey

All medication **must be brought** to the school nurse by a **parent or guardian**. Prescription medicine must be in a pharmacy labeled container bearing the child's name, name of medication, dosage, time of administration, name of physician and date of prescription. **A written, signed and dated letter from a physician authorizing dispensing of all medication (prescription and non-prescription) must be provided.** Psychotropic drugs may be dispensed at school only after the proper certification by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Not more than one month's supply may be kept at the school. Self medication (prescription and non prescription) is strictly forbidden.

A student is not allowed to carry medication of any kind.



IMMUNIZATIONS; Letters have been sent to all students who are not current with all legally required immunizations. Please check to be sure all necessary documents have been sent to DMS.



The Dudley-Charlton Regional School District intends to submit an application for the following grant: Title IV, Part A: Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) grant. Community members who wish to participate in this process may contact Shawn McNamara at 508-248-1423 or @ smcnamara@dcrsd.org or Claudette Eagleton at 508-942-2224 or @ ceagleton@dcrsd.org.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT STUDENTS' CHANGING BUSES

Please note that according to the Middle School Handbook, "*students are not allowed to ride any bus other than the one assigned to them unless they must go to another destination for child-care or other emergency purposes.*" The student must have a signed note from a parent/guardian explaining the reason for the bus change, the name and address of the place they are going. If you have any questions about this procedure or have special circumstances that need to be discussed, please call the DMS office. Thank you.

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dudley, MA 01571

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Grade 7 Guidance Counselor
Psychologist

Julie Walker
Grade 8 Guidance Counselor
504 Coordinator

*DUDLEY MIDDLE
SCHOOL NEWS
JULY—AUGUST
2009*

District Web Site
www.dcrsd.org/DM.html



"...to advance the knowledge and well being of our children and our community."

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 20—24, 2009—Dudley Middle School will be closed.

August 11, 2009—Sports Physicals at Charlton Middle School, 8:00 a.m.

August 11, 2009—PTO Meeting at Dudley Middle School, 6:30 p.m.

(Everyone is welcome to attend)

August 18, 2009—Sports Physicals at Shepherd Hill High School, 8:00 a.m.

August 19, 2009—**NEW Students** to the Dudley-Charlton Regional School

District Orientation at Dudley Middle School, 6:00 p.m.

September 1, 2009—First Day of School for Students

September 7, 2009—Labor Day/No School

September 11, 2009—Instrumental Rental Night, 6:00-8:00 p.m. (Cafeteria)

September 17, 2009—LifeTouch School Pictures

2010 MCAS Schedule

Though they are still subject to change, please take note of the probable dates for **2010 MCAS** testing and, if at all possible, avoid scheduling vacations and appointments on these days.

- * English / language arts—March 23, 24, and 25
- * Math—May 11 and 12
- * Science / technology—May 13 and 14 (gr. 5 and 8 only)