

TMS Summer Update

Back-to-School News & Information from Thurston Middle School

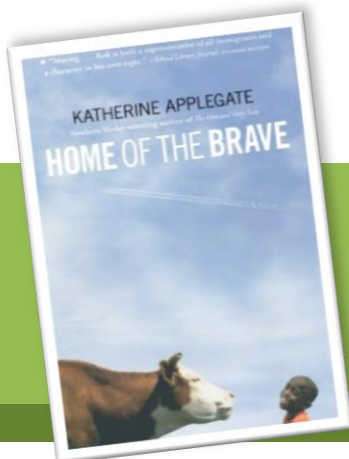
August 2016



Important Dates

- September 2 No School – Labor Day Weekend
- September 14 Early Release Day (dismissal at 1:10)
- September 16 Welcome Back Dance for all TMS students (7:30 – 10:00 PM)
- September 22 Curriculum Night (6:30 – 9:00 PM)

Visit the TMS web site calendar for a complete list of upcoming events!



Advisory at TMS

A mysterious, new item appeared on every student's schedule this summer: advisory. What is it? How does it work in the schedule? Why did we add it in the first place?

Advisories are non-academic sessions in which an adult faculty member meets with a small group of students. The goal of these sessions is summed up in Thurston's advisory mission statement, developed last year by the faculty:

Thurston's Advisories create a safe and consistent place and time for students and adults to build a sense of belonging within a community. Advisories promote meaningful relationships between and among a group of peers and their adult advisor. Advisories will also give students the chance to work on the development of skills for processing emotions, interacting with peers and adults, goal setting and problem solving.

Advisory groups will meet mid-morning every day for 20 minutes, except on short Wednesdays. Twice a week, groups will engage in planned advisory activities. On the other days, advisors will check in with students before they head out for recess or enjoy a R&R (relax and read) session.

Time for advisory was created by shortening x-block and by modifying the

Summer Reading and Math Update

This year's summer reading featured all new selections, and summer math provided much more choice than last year. If you are new to Thurston or just getting back from enjoying summer in far-flung places, don't worry-you still have a few days left! Details about summer reading and math can be found on the [TMS web site](#).



More Chromebooks & More Computer Science!

There are some technology-related exciting changes afoot at Thurston this year thanks to the expansion of Westwood's 1:1 Chromebook initiative and the addition of a dedicated computer science component to our fledgling Computer Science and Engineering (CS&E) course.

The 1:1 Chromebook program successfully piloted last year with 8th grade students is continuing this year and expanding to include our 7th graders. Each member of the class of 2021 and 2022 will be issued a Chromebook: a device to support learning both in and out of school.

The 1:1 program at Westwood High School, now entering its fourth year, proved tremendously successful in helping teachers create a personalized, flexible, and project-oriented learning environment. With Chromebooks in hand, students find themselves spontaneously researching interesting ideas or questions, partnering in meaningful ways with their classmates, making better use of teacher feedback, and managing the organizational demands of a rigorous class schedule. By providing middle school students with this opportunity, our aim is twofold: 1) to promote a rich,

student-centered learning environment and 2) to help students develop good habits that will follow them into high school and beyond.

After a successful pilot year for CS&E, we've expanded the course to a full trimester. Two teachers, Mr. Lamb (engineering) and Mrs. Moore (computer science), will meet with students on an every-other-day basis. The new part of the class supplements engineering challenges with everything from foundation programming skills to robotics and even some app design work.

Advisory at TMS *(continued from p. 1)*

morning routine so that students who arrive after 7:40 will go straight to homerooms.

This year's pilot program grew out of the work of a joint TMS/WHS study group that included faculty and parents from both schools. The group, co-chaired by WHS Principal Bevan and TMS Assistant Principal Grady, examined programs and services already in place to support

student mental health needs and generated a list of suggestions that included the creation of a middle school advisory program

Last year, Thurston faculty members started planning for an advisory program during professional development time. A representative group continued to meet during the summer to design initial activities and shape up the schedule. The



pilot year will feature ongoing professional development for staff as well as program assessment and opportunities for feedback from students and parents. Special thanks to Thurston's PTO for their support of this pilot program!



Daily Life At Thurston

A quick guide to buses, bells, lunches, and everything else you need to know to get your school year started off right

Rise and Shine

School starts bright and early at Thurston: students should plan arrive at school between 7:30 and 7:45 AM. This year, students will head straight to homerooms. For early arrivals, there is supervision available in the cafeteria starting at 7:15.

Drop-Off/Pick-Up

Parents should use the back driveway loop to drop students off in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon. Please drive all the way around the loop and drop off along the sidewalk that runs alongside the gym and cafeteria. After dropping off, drivers must turn left out of the parking lot and exit via Nahatan Street. For safety reasons, parents are prohibited from using the front driveway during busing hours.

Absences & Dismissals

Please call our dedicated absence hotline to report a student absent: (781) 326-7500 x2394. Leave a message with your child's name, grade, and the reason for the absence.

Health Records

Massachusetts State Law requires all students to have required

immunizations before starting school. Please make sure that your child's immunizations are up-to-date and that the most recent copy of your child's physical is on file in our Health Room. Contact our school nurse, Mrs. Sweeney (tsweeney@westwood.k12.ma.us or 781-326-7500 x 2334) with questions or to share medical updates relevant to your child's education.

What's For Lunch?

Many students enjoy purchasing meals and snacks at Café West, Thurston's breakfast and lunch program. A regular lunch is just \$3.00. Snacks and breakfast items range from \$0.50 to \$1.00. To add money to your child's lunch account, register online at www.myschoolbucks.co or send a check directly to the Food Services Department at 220 Nahatan Street. Free/reduced cost lunch forms are available on our web site and in the office. Menus are also posted on the web site. If you have questions about the lunch program, call Westwood's Food Services Director at (781) 326-7500 x1301.

Emergency Information

Earlier this week, all parents should have received an email with

directions to update your child's emergency contacts in Aspen, our student database. Please be sure to update this information promptly and completely—we rely on accurate information in the event of an emergency. Thurston will send home a confirmation page in mid-September.

Email Updates & Communication

Every other week, Principal Borchers sends an email update to parents about what's happening at Thurston. This, along with our web site, is the primary communication tool used at TMS. The only thing you need to do in order to receive the updates is make sure you list your preferred email contacts in Aspen. Please do not include your work email address if you do not want to receive updates at work.

Be sure to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. A list of key staff and details about who to call for what appear on page 4 of this newsletter, and a complete directory is available on our web site.



Who's Who 2016-2017

All staff emails follow the format first initial + last name with the address @westwood.k12.ma.us.

Team Leaders:

6 Blue	Lisa Yetman
6 Red	Patricia Lund
7 Blue	Andrea Morrell
7 Red	Kathryn O'Reilly
8 Blue	Denise Collins
8 Red	Debi Peterson

Mental Health:

Guidance Counselor A-L	Austin Bushey
Guidance Counselor M - Z	Kelsey Yim
Adjustment Counselor	Melissa Burke
Psychologist	Todd Danforth

Nurse: Terri Sweeney

Metco Coordinator: Chanel Taylor

Administrators:

Principal	Allison Borchers
Assistant Principal	Kyle Grady
Dept Head of Student Services	Edith Graichen

Finding Help at the Middle School

*Who do I contact when I have a question about how my child is managing socially?
How about a concern about academics?*

Individual teachers are the best people to contact about your child's performance, grades or well-being in a particular class.

Team leaders facilitate team-wide efforts on behalf of students. Contact them with any questions or concerns you have about your child's overall academic progress.

Counselors offer support for social and emotional development as well as assist with academic concerns. Contact them with any concerns you have about your child's well-being or to share confidential information relevant to your child's education. Counselors also coordinate 504 plans at Thurston.

The **Department Head of Student Services** oversees special education services at Thurston. Contact her with questions or concerns about your child's IEP or if you think your child might be in need of specialized instruction.

The **Assistant Principal** handles issues related to student behavior, oversees after school activities programming, works with our operations team on building and grounds improvements and oversees school safety efforts. Contact him with questions or concerns about student behavior, activities, and school safety.

The Principal is in charge of school-wide improvement efforts, works to provide high-quality learning experiences and promotes community engagement through regular communication. Contact her with questions, concerns or ideas about anything related to the middle school.

Thurston's PTO

The Parent-Teacher Organization at Thurston organizes and funds numerous school and student activities in conjunction with Thurston faculty and administrators. Last year, our PTO ran the fall Scavenger Hunt, published the student directory, showered teachers with goodies during Teacher Appreciation Week, sponsored a visit from Travis Roy, put together a fantastic semi-formal dance and much more! This year's PTO Officers are:

Alan Jacobson, *Co-President*

Ariel Mullen, *Co-President*

Frank Vitiello, *Treasurer*

Jennifer Atkins, *Secretary*

Parents can join by visiting the [PTO page on Thurston web site](#). Dues are \$35 for families with one child at TMS, \$45 for families with two or more children. All dues-paying PTO members receive a student directory.

To volunteer for PTO committees, sign up at Curriculum Night or contact one of the Executive Board Members.

New Faces at Thurston

This year, Thurston adds seven new individuals to our staff. They bring tremendous talent, enthusiasm, insight and experience to the school. Please join us in welcoming them!

Stephanie Finegold, *Science Teacher (grades 7 & 8)*

Abbey Kalman, *English Language Arts Teacher (grade 6)*

Christy Harrison, *Math Teacher (grade 7)*

William Holets, *Special Education Intern (therapeutic learning center)*

Paula Moore, *Computer Science Teacher (all grades)*

Nyna Urovitch, *Math Teacher (grades 7 & 8)*

Ashley Weimar, *Board Certified Behavior Analyst*

Fall Happenings

Important Events at TMS and Beyond

The **Hale Reservation Trip** for grade 6 on emphasizes problem solving, pond studies and team building: 9/12 (6 Red) and 9/13 (6 Blue).

Our **Welcome Back Dance** is a great way for 6th graders to meet new classmates and for 7th and 8th graders to have fun with friends.

Curriculum Night gives parents a chance to walk their child's schedule and meet the teachers: 9/22, 6:30 – 8:30.

Westwood Day includes fun for all ages: 9/26.

Comedy Night raises funds for the 8th grade trip and is a fun-filled night out for parents: 11/4 (tentative).

Parent Teacher Conferences are short, in-person meetings with up to three of your child's teachers: 11/2, 11/16, 12/7.

Report Cards are posted online at the end of each trimester and Progress Reports halfway through each trimester.

Progress Reports

October 28

February 3

May 19

Report Cards

December 9

March 24

June 19

*Watch your inbox for updates about the **Scavenger Hunt**, our fall **PTO General Membership Meeting**, and more great events!*



Thurston PTO Presents *Screenagers*

Mark your calendars! On Tuesday, October 4 Thurston's PTO will present *Screenagers: Growing Up in the Digital Age*. In this high-interest film, award-winning documentarian Delaney Ruston "probes into the vulnerable corners of family life, including her own, to explore struggles over social media, video games, academics and internet addiction" (<http://www.screenagersmovie.com/about>).

The viewing will be held in the WHS Auditorium from 7:30 – 9:30 PM and is open to all Westwood parents and community members. Parents are welcome and encouraged to bring along your middle school aged kids as well. A panel discussion will follow the film.

Tickets are on sale now online for \$10.