

Albany Middle School

Updates from Academic Departments

January/February

<p style="text-align: center;">8th Grade ELA and History</p>	<p>English/Language Arts: Students are deep in their I-Search projects. They have selected topics of their choosing, created research questions, investigated a variety of sources (academic databases, websites, letters to experts, books, online magazines..etc.), kept careful bibliographic citations, taken Cornell style notes and are now in the synthesizing stage of their search. This means they are beginning their first of three major papers: the book review, interview or on-site-observation and media search paper.</p> <p>In US History: Students have completed their study of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution and are well versed in the “checks and balances” of the Federal Government. We are now investigating the first few presidents, the beginning of political parties, the War of 1812 and the challenges of varying foreign policies facing a new nation (1787-1803). At the same time, we are also looking at the difficult question of slavery and how it has affected the psyche of the American people.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">7th Grade ELA and History</p>	<p>English/Language Arts: Students are reading their CORE novels, ELA textbook, and working on persuasive writing and research writing.</p> <p>History: 7th grade history classes are studying Medieval China and Japan.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">6th Grade ELA and History</p>	<p>English/Language Arts: All 6th graders just completed the annual writing assessment in which they were given the task of writing a personal narrative about a time in which they felt proud of themselves. Leading up to the assessment, students outlined and wrote practice narratives that focused on, amongst other skills, grabbing the reader’s attention and “show not tell” language. In the coming weeks, along with written responses to literature, students will be working on reading, interpreting, and writing poetry. With regards to grammar, students continue to forge ahead with the focus turning towards verb usage. In terms of vocabulary, we continue to use the "Word Wise" workbook.</p> <p>History: Students are completing their study of Ancient India. Areas of focus included: the geographic basics of the region, Ancient Indian inventions & innovations, Hinduism, Buddhism, and various empires and their rulers. In the coming weeks and months, students will turn their attention towards ancient China, focusing on geography, inventions & innovations, daily life, and important dynasties and their rulers.</p>

Math

6th grade math: In 6th grade math, we have been working with ratios, proportions, and percentages. After completing Chapter 6 “Percents” all students take a mid-year benchmark assessment which is a cumulative test including material from chapters one through six. We will spend some time analyzing the benchmark results once all classes have completed the test.

The next topic of study is “Analyzing Data” in chapter 7. Students learn about sampling methods and reasons claims may be invalid due to biased samples or sampling methods. Students calculate mean, median, mode, and range, and learn the effects of outliers on these measures of central tendency. Students read and create all sorts of graphs, including box and whisker plots, histograms, circle graphs, line graphs, and bar graphs. Following our studies of data and data displays, we will investigate probability.

Math 6 Intensive Intervention: We are finishing up our decimal unit. We’ve been working with base ten block to model multiplication of decimals. In 6th Grade Intensive Math, we have completed our review of whole number, fraction, and decimal operations. We have now begun the regular 6th grade math textbook starting in Chapter 1. We plan to move rapidly through Chapter 1 which reviews rational number concepts. I am supplementing the chapter with another review of multiplication and division facts to build up processing speed. Our goal is to get as far along in the textbook as we can before the STAR test.

6th Grade Math Strategic Intervention: The 6th grade intervention class has been working with ratios, proportions, and percents as well. The class will take the mid-year benchmark test next week, and move into studies of data analysis.

Math 7 (Mr. Lew): We are wrapping up our fraction unit and moving onto working with integers.

Math 7 (Mr. Grove): We are in the middle of Chapter 6 which is graphing linear equations, finding intercepts, finding slope, and learning the slope-intercept form.

After the break we will begin working with geometry which includes perimeters and areas of triangles, quadrilaterals, and circles.

7th grade Pre-Algebra: In Pre-Algebra we are currently mid-way through a unit on measurements and planar figures. We began with unit measurements and conversion in both in the standard and metric systems and are learning about segment and angle bisectors, as well as areas of triangles. We will learn and apply the Pythagorean Theorem

	<p>and its converse before studying quadrilaterals and their areas.</p> <p>Math 8: We just finished percents and starting on ratios, proportions and solving equations.</p> <p>Introduction to Algebra: We just finished studying linear equations and we are moving onto a unit on exponents.</p> <p>Algebra 1: We are moving on from systems of linear equations to exploring exponent properties.</p> <p>Honors Geometry: We are wrapping up our right triangle unit next week with a test which will cover Geometric Means, Pythagorean Theorem, and Trigonometry. We will move into the study of circles next week.</p>
<p>6th Grade Science</p>	<p>After studying plate tectonics, students study two of the major geologic events which result from plate motions: earthquakes and volcanoes. Students learned about stresses, faults, and the earthquakes that result when rock breaks due to the buildup of stress. We worked with the Mercalli, Richter, and Moment Magnitude scales to understand how an earthquake's strength can be rated according to the damage it causes or the amount of ground shaking and energy released during the quake. At the end of the unit, we focused on safety and preparation strategies, to help minimize the damage or injury caused by an earthquake.</p> <p>Our present studies focus on volcanoes. Students are learning about the different types of volcanic eruptions, and the different types of volcanoes that are created by the eruptions. We have looked at some volcanic rocks, and investigated lava flow rates. At the end of the unit, students will study California geology, and understand how some of the features of our state were created. Our next unit of study will focus on the processes of weathering, erosion, and deposition.</p>
<p>7th Grade Science</p>	<p>Students spent January learning how to focus the microscope, and created beautiful Micrographia projects that demonstrate their skills. We then used the microscopes to learn about plant and animal cells. Now students are learning about how new cells are created (mitosis), and what happens when that process doesn't stop (cancer). They are currently working on a WISE project about mitosis and cancer.</p>
<p>8th Grade Science</p>	<p>Students have been learning about the periodic table, looking at trends they see in the table and examining characteristics of the families of elements. They are studying atoms of the elements, including the parts</p>

	<p>of the atoms. They have also done a WISE project on the chemical reactions that occur with global warming.</p>
<p>English Language Development</p>	<p>The ELD classes have been working steadily on their genre writing. We have just finished our unit on problem and solution and will begin our argumentative unit. We've also just finished our annual Valentine's Day Luncheon. The beginning and intermediate classes hosted an international lunch for our teachers and staff. As always, it was enjoyed by all. The beginning ELD class will be joining a 6th grade class to the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum later this month.</p>
<p>P.E.</p>	<p>The Physical Education Department has begun the third rotation of units. These include: rock climbing and juggling in the gymnasium, paddle tennis on the blacktop, track & field on Cougar Field, and softball and kickball on the baseball field. Additionally, each class participates in a long fitness run, or timed mile run once per week to build cardiovascular fitness and endurance. We are also offering a "push-up challenge" to all interested students and faculty for the month of February. Interested participants track their daily push-ups on the supplied chart, with the goal of reaching 1,000 push-ups for the month.</p>
<p>Library</p>	<p>We had a nice quiet and steady return in January. The 8th graders spent some time in the library doing preliminary research before getting "engaged" to their I-Search topics. The 7th grade is continuing to cycle classes through our Biography section to complete their Time Magazine project work. Ms. Kaiser's French students came in to do research on famous Monuments or places in Paris, and create presentations on Google Drive (Presentation).</p> <p>Now that the 8th graders have "married" their I-Search topics, the real work begins! The Writer's Coach program started up again in early February. Coaches come in on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and classes alternate visits every other week. We had our first "Late Afternoon in the Library" session on February 8th. Students are invited to come to the library for extra help, snacks (generously provided by PTA), and I-Search camaraderie. We had a great turnout of <i>very</i> directed students this year. Hard work was accomplished and a good time was had. Students commented, "<i>We should do this more often!</i>" We also got all of our 8th graders set up in NoodleTools, an online platform for research. In 8th grade we use it primarily for creating bibliographies (Works Cited page), but in 9th grade they will use it extensively for the big debate project.</p> <p>We had our very first Comic Book Club meeting on Friday, February 15. The turnout was small, but the group is <i>very</i> eager to read and</p>

	<p>discuss. Mr. Z gave a special presentation on the skill of reading panels, and how the artwork and storytelling has changed over time. Books are provided by the California Center for the Book in conjunction with the California Library Association.</p>
--	--

Elective and Wheel Classes

<p>Health Wheel</p>	<p>The Third Spoke of the Wheel has covered the following required subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Alcohol/Tobacco and other Drugs. B. Body Systems and Composition. C. Goal Setting and How to Deal with Stress. D. Body Awareness and Sexual Education. E. Mental Illness <p><u>Alcohol/Tobacco and other Drugs:</u> Students learned the pitfalls of using drugs/alcohol and tobacco. They learned the steps of abuse that lead to alcoholism and drug addiction.</p> <p><u>Body Systems and Composition:</u> Students became aware of how the circulatory and cardiovascular systems work together to supply the body with needed energy.</p> <p><u>Goal Setting and Dealing with Stress:</u> Students were given ways to cope with every day stresses. They also learned the importance of setting goals for the day as well as for the future.</p> <p><u>Body Awareness and Sexual Education:</u> Students learned about the changes their bodies will experience in the next few years and the traits that both male and females have in common.</p> <p><u>Mental Illness:</u> Students learned how to recognize signs of depression and other illnesses. They also learned where to go for help.</p>
<p>Drama Wheel & Elective</p>	<p>We have written and acted out Bedtime Stories for 2 year olds, worked on monologues and two-person plays, as well as doing our daily improvs!</p>
<p>Computer Wheel & Elective</p>	<p><u>8th Grade:</u> This semester we have already covered our standard applications (Word, Excel and PowerPoint). These concepts were also reinforced using Google docs to make sure that students are familiar with different applications. We are now finishing our first project in web programming. Additionally, the Computer dept. has been working with the English dept. to teach across the curriculum for topics related to the I-Search project. As always, the focus of the class is on retainable 21st century skills that are</p>

	<p>useful for present and future endeavors.</p> <p><u>7th Grade:</u> We are beginning the fourth spoke of our wheel today. So, new students are starting the class. We are going to start with MS Word and MS Excel to establish a good base for computer usage. I am pleasantly surprised with the technology aptitude of the seventh grade class in general. Work on our projects using applications and computer language has been fantastic. Students have learned solid skills that are immediately applicable to many other aspects of their educational careers.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Culinary Arts Wheel</p>	<p>We completed the third spoke of 7th grade Culinary Arts wheel class. The cooking groups have a “free choice” lab at the end to demonstrate their newfound skills. The top three free choice items are chocolate chip cookies, red velvet cupcakes, and brownies. Other new developments in the class include a class set of tortilla presses so we can now make corn tortillas, as well as a class set of pasta machines. A big thanks to AEF for the grant to purchase these items. All class recipes can be found at http://amsculinaryarts.blogspot.com/.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Music</p>	<p>Students are completing their small ensemble projects, students form small chamber groups and perform their piece for the class. This Solo/ Ensemble unit wraps up with a student recital in the Albany HS theater on Feb 13. I choose the top 10 - 12 student groups and they perform for all band students, on the HS stage. Surprise guest performer is a professional clarinetist. Student’s have never done this before and they are responding very well. March/ April project is an adjudicated band festival at El Cerrito HS</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Art Wheel & Electives</p>	<p>8th Grade Art Elective: Students are beginning a unit in clay slab construction this week. Their first assignment is the make a cylindrical mug with handle. This is most students’ first experience rolling out clay and using patterns to cut out forms and assemble them. When they are finished, their functional mug can be taken home and used.</p> <p>7th Grade Art Wheel: Today is the beginning of the fourth session (out of five) of the seventh grade Explore Wheel. Students are here for approximately eight weeks of Art. On the first day of class there is a lot of information, but I also want to begin the first project on the first day, so that students can begin to experience what a typical day is like – the flow of instructions, time for hands-on work, clean-up, and preparing to be excused. Our first assignment is a simple four-part assignment that gives me a first chance to get to know each of my students.</p> <p>8th Grade Ceramics Elective: Students in the Ceramics class have so far made a pinch pot bowl and a double pinch pot vase. Both have been kiln fired and are ready to be glazed. For these two items, under-glazes will be</p>

	<p>applied using squeeze pens. Because these pens work so well for fine details, students are researching designs that create a continuous patterns on their forms.</p>
<p>French 7</p>	<p>Parents came through seamlessly just two days after the return from Winter Break with Galettes des rois, a traditional puff pastry, for Épiphanie, and students learned about customs that crowned two of them queen for the day. Our cafe skits featured student-made menus, original scripts, and props.</p> <p>We have recently been learning how to tell time in French, about the calendar, and now we are studying how to talk about the weather. Students are using French to communicate in class with our new oral language challenge. Mardi Gras King's Cake (thanks again to parent and student bakers) was a hit with 7th and 8th grade French students alike, and many students turned up with their new beads, masks and crowns to hear the AMS Jazz Band players' rendering of Dixieland Jazz at lunch. Up next: favorite activities and conjugating verbs!</p>
<p>French 8</p>	<p>French 8 students continued singing popular French music and in so doing; reading authentic texts like "Aux Champs-Élysées." Our topics have included places in the town and activities we do there. Group slideshow presentations have introduced students to famous places in Paris.</p> <p>Oral language production has really picked up as students have taken stock of their utterances on rubrics and through the oral language challenge! Mardi Gras King's Cake (thanks again to parent and student bakers) was a hit with 7th and 8th grade French students alike, and many students turned up with their new beads, masks and crowns to hear the AMS Jazz Band players' rendering of Dixieland Jazz at lunch. Now we are learning how to talk about our family relationships and our possessions.</p>
<p>Spanish 7</p>	<p>Sra. Valadez-Soto: We are currently in the second part of chapter 2A. Students know how to talk about time, date, and weather. Students also know how to introduce themselves, talk about their likes and dislikes and personality traits. They also know how to write and talk about their best friend as far as how she or he is like and what they like to do. Students just finished a project that reinforced their understanding about the subject pronouns. It is very important they have this foundation because the next step will be conjugating "AR" verbs.</p> <p>Sra. Forrester: Spanish students continue learning in Chapter 1B how to discuss their likes and dislikes as well as how to describe personality and some physical characteristics. They are enjoying very much their deepening ability to authentically express themselves as evidenced by the outstanding work they did in completing their Álbum de Recuerdos project which will be hanging in rooms 204, 201, the Art Room and the 7th grade hallway upon our return. Please stop by and see the posters ~ it's been a</p>

	<p>special treat for me to learn so much about my student’s hobbies and interests and to see so many family and personal photos!</p> <p>Another exciting development in Spanish 7 is the use of the Daily Oral Language Challenge or ¡El Juego de la Expresión Oral! which has students using Spanish for all sorts of daily school language such as “may I go to my locker?”, “may I get a drink of water?”, “I have my homework” and so on - it’s very rewarding and exciting to hear my students naturally use Spanish to communicate with me and each other! Finally I have introduced the daily Self-Evaluation Calendar and Rubric which I designed along with Mme. Kaiser the French teacher, to get students thinking about and reflecting on their own learning. This has been a huge success please ask your student to show you his/her Febrero calendar and discuss with him/her the daily score s/he is giving him/herself - the kids have been very honest and most students are definitely earning more Stars and Smiley Faces !</p>
<p>Spanish 8</p>	<p>In 8th grade we are just completing a unit on "The Restaurant" which included items and dialogues that take place in a restaurant. After the unit test we will be viewing Don Quixote, the extraordinary Spanish novel written by Miguel Cervantes at the beginning of the 16th Century. The students will be reflecting on aspects of the novel including writing a summary of the story in Spanish using the historic present tense.</p> <p>We have then approximately 10 more weeks to finish the last two units of the year, "In My Bedroom" which includes colors and furniture and "The Home" which will include rooms in the home and chores. The last two units focus on stem changing verbs and how to compare things. In between these last two weeks we will be making piñatas in the garden and will students will be making and sharing classic dishes and desserts from the Spanish speaking world. The last two weeks will be dedicated to review and to take the Placement/Final exam.</p>
<p>Mandarin 7</p>	<p>In this quarter, Students have finished unit 3 and learned to express likes and dislikes. They also learn to say many new vocabulary words about food and drink. Chinese New Year will be on Feb. 10 this year. Therefore, I create a unit which focuses on learning dates, birthday, Chinese New Year customs and 12 Zodiac animals. Students have learned to say and write 12 months of the year, day of the weeks, and how to express dates in Chinese. Students also learned to ask and respond to questions like “how old are you”, “What is your zodiac animal”, “What day/ date is today?” and “When is your birthday”.</p> <p>We focus one week to create artwork and learn about Chinese New Year customs. Students did Chinese paper cut, make zodiac animal book mark and Chinese New Year greeting card. They learned to express good luck greetings like “Happy Year of the Snake” and “Wish you Great</p>

	<p>Prosperity”. The high light of this cultural week is cooking “Tang-Yuan, rice dumpling” which is a festival food for the Lantern Festival (the last day of the Spring Festival). After the celebration, We go back to review the dates and Zodiac animals and have a unit test.</p> <p>After coming back from the mid-winter break, we will enter unit 5 to learn about weather and time expressions. I skip unit 4 for now is because the time and dates themes should be tied in together. Students will review dates and learn to say time. After this unit we will go back to unit 4 to learn about school class schedule.</p>
Mandarin 8	<p>In this quarter, 8th grade students have completed two unit themes, parts of body and dining. Students learned to say parts of the body and describe the facial features of themselves and their friends. They have created a portrait of their friend and wrote a paragraph to describe his/ her friend’s look. They also learned to express pain and ache for each body part and telling others if they are sick or not. Students created a paper bag alien puppet and wrote a paragraph describing the puppet. Each group of 3 students write a short skit and produce a puppet show related to this unit.</p> <p>For the dining unit, students reviewed how to express likes and dislikes. They learned many Chinese and American food names and learn to express if they are able to make the food. Students have unit tests for both units.</p> <p>For Chinese New Year celebration, on the week of 2/4-2/8 we started creating artwork to create a dragon for the bulletin board. Students make bookmarks that require them to find out what good luck food eaten during Chinese New Year and what are their symbolic meanings. They also cooked rice dumplings and received “red envelops”. After the break, we will enter weather unit and learn about 4 seasons and more extensive vocabulary about weather terms.</p>