



COUGAR NEWS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR CMS FAMILIES

• OCTOBER 2019 •



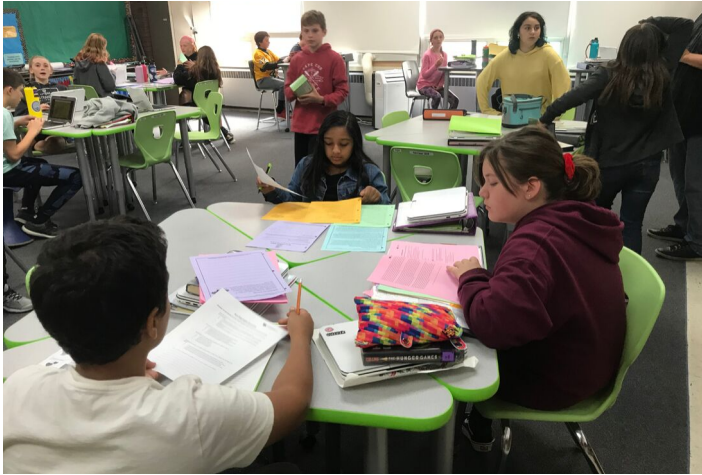
DATES TO KNOW

OCTOBER

- 8 Odyssey of the Mind Meeting • 6:30p • MBS
- 9 Select Choir Auditions • 2:15p • Chorus Room
- 10 6th Grade Field Trip to the Flynn Theater
- 10-11 7/8th Grade SBAC Literacy Interim Assessment
- 11 6th Grade SBAC Literacy Interim Assessment
- 11-17 School Book Fair
- 17 Student-Led Conferences • 10:30 - 6:30
- 17-18 School Recess: No School for Students
- 21 PTA Meeting • 6:30p • CMS Library
- 23 Picture Retakes

NOVEMBER

- 1 Quarter 1 Ends
- 4 Quarter 2 Begins
- 25-29 School Recess: No School for Students



LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

CMS Families,

Happy October and happy fall! Your students are really busy learning about and practicing reflecting on the participation part of our **Learn Essential Expectation**. Learn is one of the four district-wide Essential Expectations we have for our students (Think, LEARN, Communicate, Act). The Essential Expectations are skills that students will need for lifelong learning and support students in being ready for college or a career. At CMS, we define LEARN as participating, persevering, and problem-solving.

A few weeks ago, all the teachers spent time with their TA students teaching them about **participation** and what it looks like to achieve in participation. TA teachers shared the [participate scoring guide](#) and taught the definition of it as well as how to rate themselves on the scoring guide either as beginning, developing, achieving or

Continued...



Team Acadia at Perkins Pier after successfully rowing 32-foot longboats!

extending in their demonstration of participation skills in the classroom or out. For **three weeks**, all students are focusing on practicing reflecting on their participation skills. Content teachers are providing at least one opportunity for students to **reflect on how well they participated** in an activity in the classroom and students are documenting those reflections in a learning platform called **Seesaw**. Over the next several weeks, students will be instructed in and provided opportunities to reflect on the other two components of Learn - **persevere and problem-solve**.

On October 17th, when you join us for **student conferences**, your child will share their learning through the lens of participation. Students will let you know how they have scored themselves and **share evidence** through content classwork of when they have been successful in participating and when they have struggled to participate. **You may be asked to help** them brainstorm ideas about how they can continue to use their strengths in participation and what they might do to strengthen the areas where they struggle to participate successfully.

As a learning community, we believe our students will perform better and meet learning targets both academically and in the essential skills when they are an active participant in the process. Our focus this year during alternating end-of-day TA is to **teach students to be reflective learners**. This involves teaching, assessing and reflecting. In the classroom, this translates to educators teaching a concept with a clear learning target, then assessing the students' understanding of the concept, and the student reflecting on their learning of that concept. When students have a clear understanding of the learning goal (target) and are an active part of reflecting on their progress toward achieving that goal, **student learning is at its best**. Students are beginning to understand how to learn. They are no longer waiting for a teacher to tell them if they are right or wrong, but instead are able to consider these questions in **partnership with their teachers**, thus actively including them in their learning.

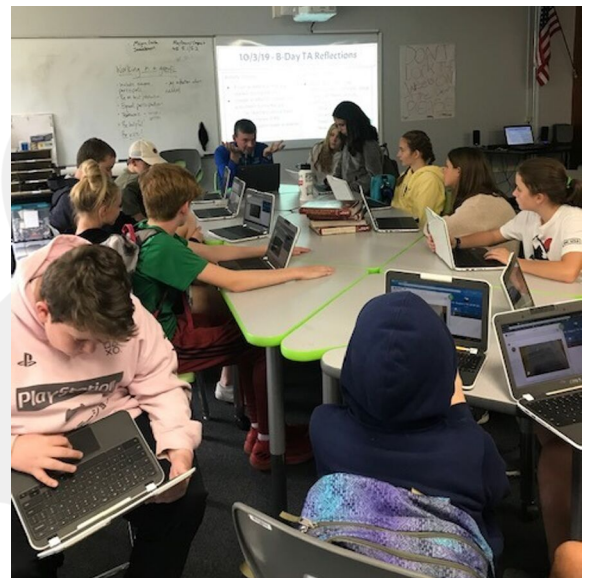
We are looking forward to seeing all our families and **students at conferences on October 17th**. If you have not yet, please make sure to sign up for a time for you and your student to attend conferences. You can do that by opening this [conference sign up link](#). If you are unable to attend on the 17th, please still open the link and complete the form. There is a place to indicate you need a different day and time.

See you soon!

Michele



Two 6th grade students reflecting on their work. One is looking at her grades in PowerSchool and the other is reflecting on participation in Spanish class.



A teacher leads his TA students through reflection of the participation scoring guide.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

NOTE FROM THE NURSE



Colchester Middle School is fortunate to have a full-time nurse on duty each day. Below is a note from Melissa Goldberg, RN, MS.

As we begin the new school year, I would like to take a moment to remind you that if your student uses their personal cell phone to call you saying they are ill, please first ask them if they are in the health office. If they are not in the health office, please ask them to go there and check in with me. When your child arrives, I will discuss their symptoms and take a temperature and other vital signs as indicated. If your student is not acutely ill, I may allow them to rest awhile to see if symptoms subside. If your child is acutely ill, I will call you with my assessment results and concerns.

Having your child check in at the health office allows me to touch base with them to see how they are doing. It is also an important way for me to keep track of health trends in the general school population.

To provide the healthiest learning environment for our students and staff members, we need everyone's assistance. I look forward to another great year at CMS!

SIGN UP FOR TEXTS



Text "y" or the word "yes" to 67587

We try to only call you when it's important so we send the majority of our updates and reminders through email and text. We even sent a text with a link to this newsletter so you can read it on your phone on the go!

If you'd like to receive texts, all you have to do is text "y" or "yes" to 67587.

BOARDGAMES NEEDED

Do you have any board games at home you are looking to get rid of? The teachers at CMS would gladly accept any used games that your family no longer plays. With winter upon us, we know there will be times we will have to hold recess indoors and would like to supply our indoor recess classrooms with a variety of activities for students to access during that time. We think some old fashioned board games would be great! Thank you in advance if you are able to make a donation!



WHAT'S GOING ON AT CMS



FROM CARDBOARD BOX TO FLOATING BOAT!

The Arches Team recently took on a cardboard challenge. Their task was to construct a boat made of cardboard in four days that would hold one person and float on the water. They had four days to accomplish the task. The challenge involved teamwork, planning of a design and constructing a model

before getting into the actual building of the boat. On the fifth day the challenge was on. Would the boats float while carrying a passenger? Students took their creations to Malletts Bay where they tested them

in the lake. The results... all the boats stayed afloat and even held a passenger for several minutes!



SETTING SCHOOL TRADITIONS

On Wednesday, September 25th we held our first of four early release days of the school year. Students had an alternative schedule that day in which we celebrated as a school community by holding our first schoolwide town meeting. During town meeting we recognized students for their participation in a variety of activities as well as played "What Do You have in Common with the Principal?" We also played Monkey See, Monkey Do which was a big hit! At the end of the assembly, we went out to the side field and had a school picture of all of us forming the letters CMS.



AND THE TRADITIONS CONTINUE...



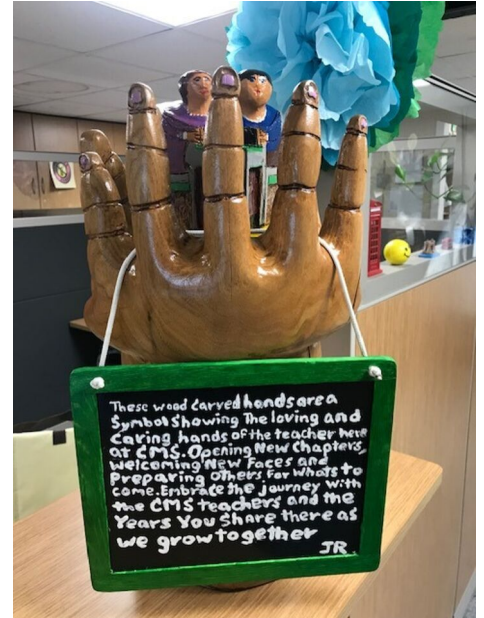
Also on September 25th, we held our third annual reading circles. This is a culmination of our summer reading program. Each spring, we ask students and staff to choose a book from our summer reading list to read over the summer. When we return in the fall, each staff member hosts a reading circle based on the book the staff person read. During the circle time, the group discusses the book including questions about why they choose the book, what were some themes, and if they would recommend it to another student. Some groups created a project or poster about the book while others watched documentaries or gathered other information to gain a better and deeper understanding of some aspect of the story. This tradition has become a nice way to further build community and connections between students and staff.



WHAT'S GOING ON AT CMS

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU!

To Jeff Real for his dedication to the staff and students at Colchester Middle School. Jeff, one of our evening custodians, has been taking care of our classrooms for many years. Not only does he clean, but he often leaves notes on the board for students. They in turn leave him notes or cards of appreciation thanking him for keeping their classrooms clean and orderly. Recently, Jeff gave the school a token of his appreciation. As you can see in the photo, it is a wood carving (by Jeff) of two hands holding a desk in which two students are seated with books. The blackboard has a message of caring and growth together as a CMS community of learners. A huge "thank you" goes to Jeff this heartfelt sentiment!



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM



Did you know we have an outdoor classroom? In the spring of last year the Arches Team began construction on the classroom. The students and staff designed an outdoor space that has been set up just inside the woods behind the school. With the help of our maintenance department, a small area was cleared of brush, wood benches were built, and an enclosed blackboard was installed. The "room" has no walls except for the trees that enclose the opening with benches set in a semicircle. Teachers have been taking classes out there as an alternative to being indoors. Recently, a group of students were out with teachers reading the book, "Vermont Wild: Adventures of Vermont Fish and Game Wardens." It was the perfect setting for the story!

EARLY RELEASE DAY - WHAT DID OUR STAFF DO?

On September 25th, after students left for the day, the CMS staff participated in the first of four trainings on restorative practice. Restorative practice is an approach to responding rationally to wrongdoing in the school while simultaneously building relationships and community. This learning fits well with our work in Developmental Design and provides us another way of having meaningful conversations as TA, classroom and school community which increase acceptance and belonging for all in the community. When done well, restorative practice can lead to increased feelings of belonging, stronger emotional and social capacity and increases in academic performance. All staff will continue this training during the remainder of the early release days this school year.



PARKS AND RECREATION



Happy October from the Colchester Parks & Recreation Department! The cooler weather has us dreaming of **BASKETBALL**! It's time to get signed up for the Colchester Youth Basketball League (CYBL) 2019/2020 season. Teams are offered for Grades 1 – 8, and if you sign up before 10/18, you'll save \$10.

Visit <http://colchestervt.gov/recreation/CYBL> for details about the upcoming season. Note that the Rec League is separate from the Middle School teams, but still offers a great opportunity to keep playing basketball and building your skills (regardless of experience), whether you are on the Middle School team or not.

Fall programs are filling quickly! If you are interested in any upcoming programs, be sure to register soon so that you are guaranteed a spot! Middle School programs like Babysitter Training (on 10/17) and LCATV's Video & Computer Special Effect (Tuesdays, 10/29 – 11/19) have very limited spots remaining. We are also offering a Teen CPR/First Aid Training on 11/25 for teens ages 13 – 17 and registration is open for that too!

You can register online at <http://bit.ly/WebTracColchester> or visit <http://colchestervt.gov/recreation> for more details. All programs require pre-registration. Questions? Call us at 802-264-5640.



PTA NEWS

Questions?
ColchesterMiddleSchoolPTO@gmail.com

The PTA's first meeting will take place on Monday, October 21st from 6:30p - 7:30p in the CMS Library. Our focus for the school year is to fund enrichment for the students, faculty and staff at CMS. Do you have any ideas or interest in participating? We'd love to have you come to a meeting or contact us at ColchesterMiddleSchoolPTO@gmail.com.

One way to get involved is to help with the bottle hut. We're especially looking for someone with a truck who can take bottles to the Cap and Cork (located near Price Chopper in Colchester) either midweek or on the weekends. Believe it or not, we receive most of our funding from bottle returns! We use the money to help support field trips, snacks for SBACs, and grant requests.

We hope to see you at our first meeting!

