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The Weekly Courier

Thursday, September 18, 2008

Dear ACMS Community:

What “goes” at ACMS? What is not allowed or not “the way we do things here”? Who decides? How do decisions get made?

As I ate lunch with a group of 6th grade students one day last week, one of them asked me a question about recess. “How come the 7th and 8th grade students get to eat lunch outside and we don’t?” An excellent question, which was followed by others from this very persistent group of students. Certainly, an answer of “well, that’s just the way it is” was not going to satisfy them, and more importantly, there *were* reasons behind the differences in the structure of lunch for 6th grade students, ones that had been thought about and discussed by teachers during summer planning. That’s true of most all of what students, parents, and staff experience here at ACMS—decisions made in a thoughtful way by the people or group that is most appropriate to make them.

So what does this look like in practice? And what *are* the answers to those questions at the top of the page?

One of the core beliefs of our school and others within the Coalition of Essential Schools is that schools should model democratic practices. ACMS is a microcosm of the world, and we hope to practice the same sorts of things any just and decent community would so that our students may learn these important habits. In such a community, decisions aren’t made in secret or to please whomever complains the most or the loudest or “just because”; what goes and what doesn’t has to be arrived at through a process that allows those who have the knowledge and experience that is needed to make such decisions to have their opinions heard and counted. In some instances, particularly those that relate to the school’s charter, decisions about issues are the domain of the school’s governing board—a group composed of parents, teachers, and community members. When matters that require the trained and skilled mind of an educator are at hand, like developing curriculum, then power rests mainly with the staff of the school. Still other issues, such as whether or not to have school uniforms, affect the entire school community, and a vote of students, families, and staff would be in order. Sometimes, the student government is the best forum for a decision to be made.

Over the next month, the governing board of the school will be working to make clear and explicit the process by which decisions get made and the individuals and groups who should make different types of decisions. Included in this process will be a description of what to do when you disagree with a decision. Though that process is yet to be determined, I imagine the experience of that group of 6th graders I mentioned will be instructive. They crafted a proposal to address some of their questions about recess and posed possible solutions. The proposal is now in the hands of their teachers to work towards an appropriate resolution.

Being a member of a community like ours is hard work that requires thoughtful deliberation about what is best for our students. We make decisions and give them the space and time to work, coming back to re-evaluate them at appropriate junctures. Will we always all agree on the outcomes? The odds are that we will not. However, while we may not always have 100% agreement on the decisions that get made, we absolutely need agreement on the process that gets us to a decision. It’s one of our central obligations to each other and to our students.

Sincerely,

Matt Underwood
Principal

Calendar

Please Mark These Dates!!! (Subject to Change)

September

Thursday, September 18 – ACMS Governing Board Meeting – 7 PM
Monday, September 29 – Dine Out at Stella – 5:00-10:00 PM

October

Monday, October 6 – NO SCHOOL – Teacher Work Day
Wednesday, October 8 – PTCA Meeting: Assessment & Testing at ACMS – 6:30 PM
Sunday, October 12 – ACMS “Housewarming Party”! (more details to come) – 2-4 PM
Monday, October 13 to Friday, October 17 – Book Fair
Thursday, October 16 – ACMS Governing Board Meeting – 7 PM

Reminders, Brief Notes, Etc.

Please remember that the school building does not open until 8:00 each morning. If you drop your students off prior to 8:00, they will have to wait outside, regardless of the weather conditions, as there is no supervision until 8:00. Thank you for your cooperation!

If you know your student will be absent from school for any reason, please call the office and leave a message letting us know. Similarly, if you are running late for regular afternoon pickup, please call the office and let the school know if possible.

The weekly Courier will be appearing in an electronic version via email and our website this year in order to conserve paper. If you do not have regular Internet access, a few paper copies will be available in the main office each Thursday or you can use the computers in the media center. If you have anything you'd like to submit to the Courier, please email it to info@atlantachartermiddle.com no later than 4:00 PM on Wednesday.

Thank You!!!

A Huge thanks to Margaret and Eric Kaiser with Grant Central East. They are donating ALL the pizza that we ordered during the Summer Shade Festival. Therefore, we raised close to \$700 at the festival. Please thank the folks at Grant Central East the next time you eat there.

Thank you to Kendall Silas, Bob Peatman, Tony Singh, Miranda Matani and Dylan Attwooll for helping with the students/siblings during the open house.

The first 8th grade fundraiser of the year netted \$562.50 from the sale of the Doc Marten shoes. We would like to thank Ms. Riley, Ms. Capone and Mr. Torsch for helping with the transportation and set up of the shoes. Also thanks the following parents and 8th graders for working the shoe tables on Saturday: Edi Henry Tingle, Jessi Hudson, Regan Lowring, Zach Garrett, Aeron Attwooll, Langston Daniels-Ernest, Elia Green and Caden Newcome, Gail Henry, Patricia Garrett, Martha Stovall, Debbie Matani, Patrice Daniels, Julie Newcome, and Brian and Julie Lowring. Special thanks goes to Hilary and Frank Kocsisszucs (alumni parents) for donating the Doc Martens. Without you all this fundraiser would not have been possible. Thanks again!

Can You Help?

Each week in this space there will be ways you can help the school, and, in many cases, earn required volunteer hours. For more information about the volunteer hour commitment, please read the ACMS Student & Family Handbook.

The ACMS Fund-Raising Committee is looking for adult volunteers for Oct. 4th for Hotoberfest to help sell concessions. We would also like to have a booth for the 5 Points Halloween Fest, Oct.18th with baked goods and volunteers. If interested, please contact Sheri Davis at 404-808-1995 or sherdish@yahoo.com.

A **“Communications Committee”** is being formed to make informative phone calls about the school on a monthly basis with news from the Parent and Family Involvement Committee of the Governing Board. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Susan Holloway, Parent and Family Involvement Chair, at 678-789-7521.

The school is often in need of various donated items. For more information, see the “Class News & Notes” section that follows.

Class News & Notes

Throughout the year in this space you'll find updates on what students in different classes are working on, upcoming field trips, and other important class information. Please also be sure to visit the ACMS website at www.atlantachartermiddle.com for more information about the school and class “blogs” where assignments and other information can be found.

This week's updates come from the following classes...

6th Grade Humanities – Ms. Devine

In 6th grade Humanities, students recently completed their culture projects, culminating in dynamic presentations. These projects are now displaying on the 6th grade hall for all to see. In Social Studies, students have begun to explore the theme of geography, mastering the skills they will need to explore the countries of the western hemisphere this school year. In Language Arts, students are now reading and preparing to write their own informational text. For this unit, students will be composing their own informational article based a topic of their choice and their own research to be published in a class magazine.

6th Grade Carrera Program

Academic Support & Enrichment – Mrs. Dowdell

This is “Math Month” in Education! Our T, Th classes will all be working on math exercises and games that reinforce math skills they are working on in their math classes with Ms. Ramsey, but are also level appropriate and fun! At this grade level, repetition, reinforcement and practice! practice! practice! is the name of the game! This week, our math scholars tackled some practice problems on the 3 M's: Mean, Median and Mode. They also played a game that focused on a variety of math skills from basic math functions, to word problems, to geometry; leaving their brains ready and willing to take on the next math mountain. Congratulations to our winning teams in 6A, Lexi, Ethan, Carter, and Elijah, and in 6B, Iris, Hunter K., Violet, and Crystal. Go Mighty Math-e-teers!

This week, our Wednesday class in Education is focusing on creative writing. Last week the kids heard an eerie tale about intervening with fate from a famous short story called “The Monkey's Paw.” This week, they will write their own malevolent tale of mayhem and mystery and publish it! Additionally, they'll have to get their creative juices pumping by developing their own short story booklet complete with illustrations, a front and back cover, and a title page. Please look out for your young author's completed work and read their story! You never know which child might be the next W.W. Jacobs or Edgar Allan Poe; it might be yours!

Job Club Presents: Fall Festival 2008 – Ms. Dunn & Mr. Goodson

Job Club and "Young Entrepreneurs" are pleased to announce their first entrepreneurial endeavor- Fall Festival 2008. As part of the **Job Club component**, students are learning about the earning potential and responsibility that exists for those who consider becoming entrepreneurs. Students were in charge of selecting the type of business, delegating roles and responsibilities, developing a business proposal to submit to Mr. Underwood, and pitching their proposal.

The Fall Festival will be held at ACMS on Friday, October 24, 2008. Decorations and signage will be displayed in classrooms with activity stations that will be designed and constructed by Job Club students as part of their **Self-Expression component**. This event planning business will include fall-themed activities, a costume design contest,

great food and amazing prizes! This event is open to all ACMS students, staff, and family. Parents are encouraged to help their young person meet and exceed their business goals. GCAPP-Carrera will invest start-up capital and will be sending students home with a "WISH LIST" of supplies and donations to allow family and friends to support their young entrepreneurs!!! Additionally, as students learn the importance of giving back to the community, profits from Fall Festival will be divided equally amongst members of Job Club, with 25% of profits going to ACMS!

Power Group – Ms. Wiafe

Students are learning about encouragement, support, and empowerment. Students are working on developing rapport with their peers, and actively engaging in group building activities and discussions.

FLSE – Ms. Estlund

Students are increasing their knowledge about the value of communication. This week students focused on learning to communicate with their parents, and effectively seeking parents as a resource. Fun role plays and discussions were used.

Please come to the Carrera 6th grade parent/guardian coffee on Monday morning at 8:00!

7th/8th Grade Math – Mrs. Riley

7th grade students are still working on data analysis. We will be starting on scatter plots this week. After our unit on data, we will move into equations. 8th grade students have finished their probability unit and have started their next unit which covers exponents. Both grade levels had their major project due this past Tuesday. Please check the blog for regular updates.

7th and 8th grade math students have started a new homework program: Math's Mate. The student receives their Math's Mate on Monday and it is due on Friday. The program is diagnostic and helps us to find students' strengths and weaknesses. Please check and sign your child's Math's Mate each week.

7th/8th Grade Technology – Mr. Torsch

8th Grade Web Design

Students in web design have developed their first-dimension web pages about aspects of ACMS that will be the groundwork for their subsequent pages. The students used HTML (hypertext markup language) to make these simple, introductory pages. In the following week students will be broken up into groups according to their preference in the category they chose for their page; putting together a dynamic page that will be posted on the school website (one per group).

7th Grade Technology

Students in the Seventh grade have just finished and tested their catapults in class. The students have tested variables such as angle, power, and different ammunition types (marshmallow, paper wad, clay ball, etc) to find what combination of variables is most beneficial to the end result, farthest distance. After all data has been compiled, students will learn the basics of the spreadsheet application to weigh the data, finding averages and making a graph of their distances.

Teacher Wish Lists (any donation of the following items would be greatly appreciated!):

Sixth grade Humanities wish list:

1. glue sticks
2. markers
3. crayons
4. colored pencils
5. wet wipes
6. construction paper
7. any old or already read magazines
8. young adult books to add to our classroom library

**Atlanta Charter Middle School
Board of Directors Meeting, Media Center
Thursday, September 18, 2008 – 7:00 PM**

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Approval of Minutes
- 3) Approval of Agenda
- 4) Public Comment
- 5) New Business
 - a) Action items
 - i) Hotoberfest Volunteer Agreement
 - ii) CES Fall Forum Sponsorship
 - b) Information items
 - i) ACMS Facilities Use Agreement
 - ii) ACMS Lunch Policy
 - iii) ACMS House Warming – Michelle Blackmon
- 6) Unfinished business
 - a) Information items
 - i) Building Air Quality – John Wright
 - ii) Strategic Initiatives Reports
 - a) Fund Development – Michelle Blackmon
 - b) School Community Issues – Susan Holloway
 - c) Programming - Matt Underwood
 - d) Board Membership – Gigi Conner
- 7) Special Reports - task force, school-wide committees, etc.
 - a) Fundraising
 - i) Action items
 - a) Hotoberfest Volunteer Agreement
 - ii) Information items
 - a) Fall Fling – Sherri Davis
 - b) Building & Grounds – Scott Smith
 - i) Action items
 - ii) Information items
 - c) PTCA – Paula Jessup
 - i) Action items
 - ii) Information items
 - d) PFI – Susan Holloway
 - i) Action items
 - ii) Information items
- 8) Principal's Report
- 9) Committee Reports
 - a) Personnel
 - i) Action items
 - ii) Information items
 - b) Finance – Julie Fishman
 - i) Action items
 - a) Budget for 2009
 - ii) Information items
- 10) Executive session
- 11) Announcements
 - October 4 - Hotoberfest
 - October 6 – No School/Teacher Work Day
 - October 8 – PTCA Meeting 6:30 PM – Focus: Assessment and Testing

PTCA News

Please check this section often for news about the ACMS Parent-Teacher-Community Association

If you have other questions about the PTCA, please email Paula Jessup, PTCA President, at pjessup@mindspring.com.

Dine out at Stella on Monday, September 29th to raise money for the ACMS PTCA! A portion of money spent at Stella Restaurant on Memorial Drive from 5:00 to 10:00 PM will be donated to the ACMS PTCA. So come on out and get a great meal while supporting your school. Visit www.stellaatlanta.com for more about the restaurant.

We have 35 families/staff that have joined PTCA. There are 50 families that have completed PTCA resource form. We are in the process of putting the information on a spreadsheet. If you have not completed yours, there is still time. Just turn the completed form to the PTCA box in the office.

We had 51 families/staff that signed in at the August PTCA. There were 62 families that signed in at the September PTCA. Special thanks go to Kendall Silas, Bob Peatman, Tony Singh, Miranda Matani and Dylan Attwooll for helping with the students/siblings during the open house.

Please join the PTCA, you do make a difference!!! There are forms in the PTCA box in the office.

Also there are forms with the school barcode for Kroger in the PTCA box. Every time you shop at Kroger or Publix, the school could receive money if you use the barcode. We still need help on the various committees. If you are interested contact Paula Jessup or Susan Holloway.

Time to turn in those box tops that you have been saving!! We have one submission due October 31st. There is a box in the parent room for the box tops.

C in PTCA stands for community. The Grant Park Tour of Homes needs some help. There are two shifts on Saturday September 27th from 10 am to 2 pm and from 2pm to 6pm. The two shifts on Sunday September 28th are 12noon to 3pm and 3pm to 6pm. Please contact Paula Jessup if you can help. It would be fun to have enough ACMS volunteers to help in one home for the whole weekend.

High School Transition News

There is an Atlanta Private School Expo at Phipps Plaza on October 4, 2008 from 11a-3pm. Parents attend for free and have the opportunity to gather information and speak to representatives from several Atlanta area private schools.

Here are some helpful websites for families interested in private schools:

A How to Guide to Choosing a Private School in Atlanta

<http://www.atlantaparent.com/08-01-January2008/jan08-art4.html>

Georgia Independent School Association

<http://www.gisa-schools.org/>

For more information about high school transition, please contact Kristin Lee, ACMS Counselor, at klee@atlantachartermiddle.com.

ACMS Extracurricular Activities

ACMS Sports

The next flag football game of the season is tomorrow at 8:00 PM! Football players and cheerleaders will be transported to the game by bus. Parents/guardians are responsible for transportation from the game. A complete schedule and directions to the stadium are on the following page and on the school's website. If you have any questions about the ACMS sports program, please contact Ms. Maria Larson at 678-904-0051 or mlarson@atlantachartermiddle.com.

Thanks to all who came out in support for the first game! A reminder to fans from our sports league that only players in uniform, coaches, athletic directors, and managers are allowed on the sidelines. Parents, visitors, alumni, friends, etc. must view the game from the stands. All fans must sit in the stands. Thank you!

Chess Club

ACMS CHESS CLUB starts this Friday, September 19, 7:40 am to 8:30 am. All skill levels can participate. Chess Club will meet every Friday morning that school is in session. IT'S FREE! For more information contact Bob Peatman at 770/865-7918 or peatmanb@gmail.com.

ACMS Band

The ACMS after school band program will be starting up soon. More info to come!

LUKESPORTS

Achieving Excellence on and off the field ...

September 12, 2008 - Home vs. Visitor

- 5:00pm **KIPP W.A.Y.S.** vs. Hapeville
- 6:30pm **KIPP South Fulton** vs. Atlanta Charter
- 8:00pm **Drew Charter** vs. DeKalb Academy

September 19, 2008

- 5:00 pm **KIPP South Fulton** vs. DeKalb Academy
- 6:30 pm **KIPP W.A.Y.S.** vs. Drew Charter
- 8:00 pm **Atlanta Charter** vs. Hapeville

September 26, 2008

- 5:00 pm **Hapeville** vs. Drew Charter
- 6:30 pm **Atlanta Charter** vs. DeKalb Academy
- 8:00 pm **KIPP W.A.Y.S.** vs. KIPP South Fulton

October 3, 2008

- 5:00 pm **KIPP South Fulton** vs. Drew Charter
- 6:30 pm **DeKalb Academy** vs. Hapeville
- 8:00 pm **Atlanta Charter** vs. KIPP W.A.Y.S.

October 10, 2008

- 5:00 pm **Drew Charter** vs. Atlanta Charter
- 6:30 pm **DeKalb Academy** vs. KIPP W.A.Y.S.
- 8:00 pm **Hapeville** vs. KIPP South Fulton

October 17, 2008 – Playoffs

- TBA – #2 Seed vs. #5 Seed
- TBA – #3 Seed vs. #4 Seed

October 24, 2008 – Playoffs

Championship Game On Saturday, October 25th or Saturday, November 1.

Location to be determined.

- First Place Team Advances to Championship Game
- Sixth Place Team Does not Qualify for Playoffs

LUKESPORTS

Atlanta:

Sports league for charter schools providing soccer, flag football, basketball and cheerleading.

Badgett Stadium 3636 College Street College Park, GA 30337

Directions:

From the intersection of I-75/85 and I-20, go south approximately 5 miles.

Take the I-85 S exit, exit number 242, towards ATL AIRPORT/MONTGOMERY.

Merge onto I-85 S.

Take Highway 85 South to Virginia Ave - Exit

Turn right onto Virginia Avenue off the ramp.

Travel on Virginia Ave. and turn left onto College Street which will be the third stop sign.

Travel on College Street through one stop sign and Badgett Stadium will be on your right directly across the street from McClarin High School.

Park legally or you will be ticketed by the College Park Police.

Thank you.

** Buses will need to call 678-754-7700 for parking instructions on the day of the event.



November 15, 2008 5:30-
10pm
Glenwood Park

Breaking News! We are pleased to announce our event location! Fall Fling 2008 will be held at 890 Bill Kennedy Way SE in Glenwood Park (in the space adjacent to The Shed at Glenwood restaurant).

Tip of the Week: Tell your friends and neighbors about the event! Donations are rolling in and we need these goods to bring in top dollar for our schools!

You can help: Be a part of it! Go to the Fall Fling link at www.neighborhoodcharter.com to access donation forms. Have access to a vacation home or other valuable/creative donations? Please fill out a form and leave it in the auction mailbox or send it to us www.auction@neighborhoodcharter.com . If you have physical items you'd like to donate, please contact us to make drop-off/pick-up arrangements.

*Michael Berzsenyi, Sheri Davis, Margaret Kaiser, Susan Rouse
and Amy Smith*

Questions? Contact us! auction@neighborhoodcharter.com