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**The Weekly Courier****Thursday, August 21, 2008**

Dear ACMS Community:

As the first week of classes faded into the past and the normal rhythms of the school year began to take hold, I heard from several parents asking about how they could be involved, how they could help. I admire and appreciate the willingness of adults in our school community to seek out ways to contribute their time, talents, and energy to the school, and I am sure that parents and guardians understand the positive impact their involvement has on students. For many parents of middle school students, though, figuring out how and in what manner to be involved can prove tricky. Adolescents begin to create space from adults to gain a measure of independence that, though perfectly natural and for the most part healthy, causes us confusion about things like how much to help with homework or ask questions about school. And middle school feels different than elementary school for parents and guardians as much as it does for students, so doing things like coming in to visit a class can suddenly feel strange.

There are many reasons why parental involvement in school looks and feels different at this time in students' lives, but that involvement is still critically important. [A great deal of research](#) provides various ways for schools and families to strengthen their connection, and at next Wednesday's PTCA meeting, ACMS staff, parents, and guardians will have the chance to talk together about creating an effective partnership between school and home in service to our students. In the meantime, however, I'd like to highlight some of the efforts we make as a school to fully involve parents and families:

*Advisory:* The small size of the advisory group and the year-long mentorship of a faculty advisor not only helps students to be known well at school, but these features also allow for parents and guardians to establish a constant and stable connection with the school for information, questions, and more.

*Communication:* Each week in the Courier and more frequently on class web pages, teachers provide updates on class happenings, assignments, and suggestions for how to assist with your student at home with their classes. Monthly progress reports are sent home to each student and family to give a snap shot of a student's areas of strength and areas for growth. Teachers make themselves available for individual conferences with students and families throughout the year in addition to the more formal conferences in the fall and in the spring.

*Meetings, Events, and Workshops:* Along with monthly PTCA meetings, the school holds regular workshops to explore the curriculum, to get advice on monitoring student health and safety, and helping students and families determine their high school options. The first Friday of the month is a regularly scheduled "Coffee with the Principal" to hear about events at the school or ask questions about daily life at ACMS. Almost every Friday morning at 8:30 there is an all school morning meeting which parents are always welcome to attend—like this Friday when we discuss the all-school summer reading *All of the Above*.

*Decision-Making:* Parents and families are key contributors to all major decisions impacting the school, through involvement in the school's leadership structure on the governing board and PTCA. In fact, the first governing board meeting of the year is tonight at 7:00 and it is open to all.

There are other ways that the school reaches out to parents and guardians, but there are likely many others that you can think of as well. I hope you'll come to next week's PTCA meeting and share them. I imagine we have quite a bit we can learn from each other.

Sincerely,  
Matt Underwood – Principal

## Calendar

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

### *August*

Thursday, August 21 – ACMS Governing Board Meeting (see agenda later in this Courier) – 7 PM  
Friday, August 22 – *All of the Above* Activities (parents/guardians welcome to attend!) – 8:30-9:45 AM  
Wednesday, August 27 – ACMS PTCA Meeting – 6:30 PM  
Saturday, August 30 & Sunday, August 31 – Grant Park Summer Shade Festival (Visit the ACMS Booth!)

### *September*

Monday, September 1 – NO SCHOOL – Labor Day  
Thursday, September 4 – School Picture Day (more details to come)  
Friday, September 5 – “First Friday” Coffee with Principal – 8:30 AM  
Wednesday, September 10 – Back to School Night & Dinner – 5:30-8:30 PM  
Friday, September 12 – Monthly Student Progress Reports sent home  
Thursday, September 18 – ACMS Governing Board Meeting – 7 PM

## Reminders, Brief Notes, Etc.

**ACMS currently has two openings in its 6<sup>th</sup> grade class.** If you know of any families of a sixth grade student who might be interested in attending ACMS, please encourage them to contact the school and/or submit an application (available on the school’s website and in the main office).

**[September breakfast and lunch menus and order forms](#) are now available on the ACMS website!**

**Please make sure to turn in all required forms given out during orientation (including the form stating that you have read the ACMS Student & Family Handbook).** If you have any questions, please contact Maria Larson in the main office.

**Please keep in mind the school schedule as you make transportation plans for your students.** 6<sup>th</sup> grade students have Carrera programming on Tuesday and Thursday mornings starting at 8:00 and Wednesday until 3:45. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade student dismissal is at 2:15 every Wednesday. If you have any questions, please contact the main office.

**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.

**If you turned in a medication administration form** authorizing ACMS office staff to administer medicine (including over-the-counter drugs such as Tylenol or Advil), you *must* provide the medication to be administered. ACMS office staff will only give medication to students when the medication has been provided by a parent or guardian.

**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](mailto:info@atlantachartermiddle.com) no later than 4:00 PM on Wednesday.

## Thank You!!!

Thank you to Sachel Daugherty for donating crackers and ginger ale to the office for help in calming those upset stomachs!

Thank you to the Lowring family for the donation of binders and sidewalk chalk!

## 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.*

**New Listing: The ACMS after school band program is in need of a band instructor.** The band practices once or twice a week after school, and the band instructor is compensated for his/her time. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact Matt Underwood, Principal, at [munderwood@atlantachartermiddle.com](mailto:munderwood@atlantachartermiddle.com).

**Do you have a special skill, talent, or interest that you'd like to share with ACMS students? There are several ways you can do so!**

- 1) Sponsor a before or after school club: several extracurricular clubs exist due to the support and guidance of a parent/guardian sponsor. Perhaps you'd like to start one of your own!
- 2) Teach a weekly class on Wednesdays: as part of the schedule this year for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, each student chooses a class to take during Wednesday's "support and enrichment" block from 1:20 to 2:15. This is a time for students to pursue an interest or skill they'd like to develop in a class that has no homework and no grades. ACMS staff offer different classes, such as play-writing, learning to "step", book groups, that students take for a term.

If you are a parent/guardian who is interested in volunteering to work with a small group of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students each Wednesday for 12 weeks for an hour, please email Matt Underwood, Principal, at [munderwood@atlantachartermiddle.com](mailto:munderwood@atlantachartermiddle.com). You could give guitar lessons, tutor, teach dance—whatever your background or interest is!

**The ACMS flag football and cheerleading teams are in need of volunteer coaches!** These teams rely on adults to help coach them during a 5-6 week season, so if you are interested, please email Maria Larson at [mlarson@atlantachartermiddle.com](mailto:mlarson@atlantachartermiddle.com) for more details.

**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](http://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...**

### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade Carrera Program**

GCAPP-Carrera's Wednesday programming with our new cohort at ACMS involves three exciting opportunities that will have a long-term impact on their positive youth development. Our Super 52 (6<sup>th</sup> graders) will be divided into three groups and each group will have the opportunity to experience young entrepreneurship club, individual life time sports and academics once during the year. Your children have been divided into their groups and each student will have a 12-week experience.

Here is a brief highlight of those activities:

**Academics:** Educational exploration in math, science, humanities, history and other relevant subjects in a non-traditional way that invites fun, and engaged learning opportunities with our educational coordinator and tutors.

**Young Entrepreneurial Club:** Exposure to the world of work, and entrepreneurship opportunities...students will develop, and implement their personal entrepreneurial ideas and concepts under the direction of the job club coach and self-expression coordinator.

Individual Life Time Sports: Exposure to modern work out equipment, in-door track, swimming pool, saunas, and steam rooms under the guidance of our partners at the YMCA at Carver...each group will be instructed by facilitators from the Carver Family YMCA.

We are excited about our Wednesday programming and anticipate many smiles and personal growth and development from our Super 52!

### ***6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math & Science – Ms. Ramsey***

It has been a great first two weeks of school! I have really enjoyed getting to know all of the new 6th graders and watching them adapt to middle school. Everyone has done a great job adapting to the schedule and coming prepared to class with their materials.

In Science, we are just beginning our exploration of Earth Science and the Scientific Method. The students began with an exploration of buoyancy and density as it relates to boat design and will continue with that challenge over the next few days. From there we will move through our discovery of the Scientific Method and content associated with the Earth's crust. In Math, the students have just begun their first GPS unit "Gathering and Using Data." In this unit students will review various types of graphs and dive further into the process of gathering data to construct and analyze graphs and other visual representations of data. Keep an eye out for our first math project in the next couple of weeks!

### ***7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts – Ms. Capone & Ms. Black***

In Language Arts, we have been "packing" for the writing journeys we are going to take this year. We are putting a variety of reading and writing strategies into our suitcases so that we are fully prepared when we begin our Short Story writing unit in September. In Reader's Workshop, we have been analyzing author strategies for building effective characters. In Writer's Workshop, we have been doing several prewriting activities with creating characters.

In the next couple of weeks, we will be reading a variety of excerpts from different genres (seventh and eighth grade will be reading different materials) and focusing on the following writing strategies: plots and subplots, resolutions, engaging beginnings and messages in stories. We will continue our study of Greek and Latin word roots during our vocabulary study and begin diagramming sentences with simple and compound subjects and predicates, adjectives and adverbs.

### ***Visual Arts – Mr. Edmison***

We are off to a great start! Last week, students worked together to recreate the pieces of two portraits. Each student received a 1"x1" tile from a portrait of a famous artist. They had to recreate the design from that tile onto a 3"x3" tile. We are in the process of assembling the pieces to make our masterpieces.

This week, the sixth grade will begin their life-drawing unit. These students will learn about the different types of drawing pencils, shading, value, proportion, and perspective through several activities and projects.

The seventh grade 2-D class will begin a study of monochromatic painting. They will learn to mix tints and shades of a color to create a monochromatic self-portrait. These students will also look at the work of Chuck Close, as they examine the way that he uses a grid to help break-up the portrait making process. They will use the grid method to draw their self-portraits before painting.

All visual arts students received their sketchbooks as of last Friday. This is an important component of the visual arts program. More information on the requirements for this sketchbook is available on the visual arts blog.

### ***8<sup>th</sup> Grade Performing Arts – Mrs. Gardner***

This week in 8<sup>th</sup> grade Theater Arts, the students have been working in groups on a Panel Discussion project. This project will allow the class to learn about four important musicals from the Golden Age of Musical Theater, they include *The Sound of Music*, *Carousel*, *The King and I* and *South Pacific*. They have been researching what was going on in the country when the musicals opened on Broadway, what were some of the significant themes in the

musicals and the history of the musical itself. Each group will present a Panel Discussion on their musical for the class on Friday, giving each student to learn about all of the musicals.

Next week we will be having auditions for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the Musical Theater class for *School House Rocks, LIVE!* It should be an exciting time!

**Teacher Wish Lists: Any donations of the following items would be greatly appreciated!**

**Ms. Devine's 6<sup>th</sup> grade humanities:**

- glue stick for each student (52 total)
- donations of any middle school age books for our classroom library

## PTCA News

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

**The first PTCA meeting of the year is scheduled for Wednesday, August 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM.** The focus of this meeting is on developing a strong partnership between the school and families in order to help our students. There will be a chance for discussion, idea sharing, and dialogue among parents, guardians, and ACMS staff. As well, there will be other important information about volunteer hours and ACMS partners. And just as importantly, there will be food! See below for information about bringing a "pot luck" dish to the meeting:

*Last name begins with A-G:* Bring a salad or fruit dish

*Last name begins with H-N:* Bring an entrée or meat dish

*Last name begins with O-T:* Bring a vegetable

*Last name begins with U-Z:* Bring a dessert

\* PTCA will provide drinks and paper products.

Child care will be provided at the PTCA meeting for children who are of walking age. If you will need child care, please indicate so in your response to the invitation that was sent out via email to reserve a spot. If you have other questions about the PTCA, please email Paula Jessup, PTCA President, at [pjessup@mindspring.com](mailto:pjessup@mindspring.com).

**SAVE THE DATE: Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup> is the annual ACMS "Back to School" Night!** The evening will begin at 5:30 with a catered dinner, followed by grade level meetings from 6:00 to 7:00. 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents/guardians will have the opportunity to find out more about the Carrera program from its staff and from Dr. Michael Carrera who will be coming down to visit from the Children's Aid Society in New York. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents will have a chance to get important information about class trips, high school transition, and more. Then, from 7:00 to 8:30, parents/guardians will go through an abbreviated version of their students' daily schedule to meet teachers and find out more about each class. Look for more information in upcoming issues of the Courier!

## ACMS Extracurricular Activities

### ACMS Sports

**ACMS belongs to a league with other charter schools around the Atlanta area, and the first sports of the season are set to begin!**

FLAG FOOTBALL PRACTICE TO BEGIN ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 21ST AT ACMS! Practice will begin at the school at 4:00 pm and will conclude at 6:00 pm SHARP! Please be on time to pick up your athlete.

Flag Football Athletes MUST bring in their ATHLETIC FEE & STUDENT CONTRACT in order to PARTICIPATE in practice. PHYSICALS must be in the school office by SEPTEMBER 4th. Students will not be able to play if a current physical is not on file.

ATHLETIC FEES:

Students Receiving FREE meal benefits: \$30.00

Students Receiving REDUCED meal benefits: \$35.00

Students who are FULL PAY: \$40.00

We are stilling looking for FULL TIME ASSISTANT COACHES.

CHEERLEADING:

We are still trying to secure coaches for cheerleading. If you are interested, please contact Ms. Maria Larson at 678-904-0051 or [mlarson@atlantachartermiddle.com](mailto:mlarson@atlantachartermiddle.com).

ACMS will inform you when cheerleading practices will begin.

**ACMS Band**

**The ACMS after school band program is in need of a band instructor.** The band practices once or twice a week after school, and the band instructor is compensated for his/her time. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact Matt Underwood, Principal, at [munderwood@atlantachartermiddle.com](mailto:munderwood@atlantachartermiddle.com).

**Atlanta Charter Middle School**  
**Board of Directors Meeting, Media Center**  
**Thursday, August 21, 2008 – 7:00 PM**  
*All ACMS Board meetings are open to the public*

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Approval of Minutes
- 3) Approval of Agenda
- 4) Public Comment
- 5) New Business
  - a) Action items
    - i) Election of Officers
      - a) Chair
      - b) Personnel
    - ii) G-Capp/Carrera After School Program
  - b) Information items
    - i) Board Retreat Recap – Strategic Initiatives
- 6) Unfinished business
  - a) Action items
  - b) Information items
- 7) Special Reports - task force, school-wide committees, etc.
  - a) Fundraising
    - i) Action items
    - ii) Information items
      - a) Fall Fling – Gigi Conner
  - 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) Executive Director's Report – State Report – Matt Underwood
- 10) Committee Reports
  - a) Personnel
    - i) Action items
    - ii) Information items
  - b) Finance – Julie Fishman
    - i) Action items
    - ii) Information items
- 11) Executive session
- 12) Announcements
  - a) AUG. 27 – PTCA 6:30
  - b) AUG 30-31 - Grant Park Summer Shade
  - c) SEPT 10 – PTCA 5:30
- 13) Adjourn

Dear ACMS Family:

The PTCA is putting together a resource list comprised of family members, neighbors, friends and community members for the school to go to when a service is needed. The school is periodically in need of a variety of services and talents, and it would simplify the search if we had a “go to list.” This list will be comprised of people who would donate their services, talents or expertise and/or would be selling their services, talents or expertise. We would like this to be a comprehensive list that would include attorneys, accountants, landscapers, musicians, artists, and businesses such as print shops, restaurants, hardware stores, etc.

We also thought it would be a great idea to have the “paid-for” services list available to school families for when they are in need of a particular service. There are so many people in our own communities that we could be supporting and at the same time receiving quality products or services.

***Please fill out the form on the following page and return it to the school in the PTCA mailbox in the main office.***

We would appreciate your prompt response and thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Paula Jessup  
PTCA President

**ACMS PTCA Resource Information Form**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Contact No. \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Any Special Skills or Talents:

Parent/Guardian 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Contact No. \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Any Special Skills or Talents:

Friends, Relatives, Neighbors with occupations, skills or talents that could be added to the school resource list (remember not only do we want people who would volunteer or donate their skills to the school, we also want to create a list of people who offer services the school or school community could hire. For example, a handyman, graphic artist, painter, attorney, accountant, gardener, etc.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation/Skill/Talent: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation/Skill/Talent: \_\_\_\_\_



**Atlanta Charter Middle School**  
will have a booth in the  
**Summer Shade Festival**

**Saturday August 30 11am to 10pm**

**Sunday August 31 11am to 6pm**

We will sell pizza, soft drinks, and sweets

There are many ways to help

1. Help in the ACMS booth (parents or students) 2 hour shifts
  - We need 2 adults to help with set-up on Friday time TBA ,  
6 more adults on Saturday, 6 more adults on Sunday
- 2. Bake cookies or brownies
3. Adults and students to help in the information booths for the Festival

Call Paula Jessup 678-643-0317 or  
email [pjessup@mindspring.com](mailto:pjessup@mindspring.com) or

Fill out this form, cut it out, & turn in to school office

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> Choice Time: \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> Choice Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Which day? (Circle One)      Saturday      Sunday