

Warsaw Middle School

From the Principal:

February, 2012

February brings a short month but one filled with hopes and expectations. If you have signed up for school messenger (and 139 of you have) you have been receiving my weekly updates, and thus know that Warsaw Middle School is preparing for a Community Forum to discuss our concerns over some disturbing data. For those of you not signed up, a recap is as follows:

2009 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey Data tells us that 7th and 8th grade WMS students reported that:

- 28.8% seriously contemplated attempting suicide;
- 15.6% smoked cigarettes in the last 30 days;
- 49.2 % had a drink of alcohol that was more than just a few sips;
- 24.8% have used marijuana; and
- 22.7% have had sexual intercourse.

This survey is known for its validity and reliability so as a member of this community, naturally, I am concerned. The questions, as I see them, are “What can we do so that our 5th-8th graders don’t feel hopeless and driven to contemplate suicide when they are struggling? What can we do as a community to reduce the substance use and abuse in our 5th-8th graders?” And finally, “How do we educate students who are admittedly having intercourse prior to high school so that we don’t have more unwanted teen pregnancies?”

My hopes are that we pack the gym as tightly as it is packed for annual music concerts, and my expectations are that we open a dialogue and begin to work together not only to address these serious concerns, but also to work in partnership as a school and community.

The weekly update sent out on Jan. 23rd stated that our Community Forum is being held on March 1st from 6-8p.m. Please mark your calendars and in the meantime, the article on the back of this page by Patti Neighmond is a great find about how modeling healthy arguing strategies can help your son/daughter to resist peer pressure and say no to drugs and other high risk behaviors. (Thank you to our curriculum coordinator, Anne Miller, for finding it.)

Have a great month!

Sincerely, Kristen Gilbert ~ Principal

Good luck to the **Math Team** competing Thursday, Feb 2nd after being snowed out twice!

Good luck to all the **KV musicians** participating in the KV Music Festival in Waterville on Friday, Feb 3 and Saturday, Feb 4.

Important Dates to Remember:

February 1: Reports cards home
3: Go RED day
3: Sugar out day
3-4: KV Honors Festival
8: ½ Day Inservice
dismissal at 12:35PM
20-24: School Vacation
March 2: Mid 3rd Quarter

If you're the parent of a teenager, you likely find yourself routinely embroiled in disputes with your child. Those disputes are the symbol of teen developmental separation from parents. It's a vital part of growing up, but it can be extraordinarily wearing on parents. Now researchers suggest that those spats can be tamed and, in the process, provide a lifelong benefit to children.

Researchers from the University of Virginia recently published their [findings](#) in the journal *Child Development*. Psychologist [Joseph P. Allen](#) headed the study. Allen says almost all parents and teenagers argue. But it's the quality of the arguments that makes all the difference. "We tell parents to think of those arguments not as nuisance but as a critical training ground," he says. Such arguments, he says, are actually mini life lessons in how to disagree — a necessary skill later on in life with partners, friends and colleagues on the job. Teens should be rewarded when arguing calmly and persuasively and not when they indulge in yelling, whining, threats or insults, he says. In Allen's study, 157 13-year-olds were videotaped describing their biggest disagreement with their parents. The most common arguments were over grades, chores, money and friends. The tape was then played for both parent and teen.

"Parents reacted in a whole variety of ways. Some of them laughed uncomfortably; some rolled their eyes; and a number of them dove right in and said, 'OK, let's talk about this,'" he says. It was the parents who said wanted to talk who were on the right track, says Allen. "We found that what a teen learned in handling these kinds of disagreements with their parents was exactly what they took into their peer world," with all its pressures to conform to risky behavior like [drugs](#) and [alcohol](#). Allen interviewed the teens again at ages 15 and 16. "The teens who learned to be calm and confident and persuasive with their parents acted the same way when they were with their peers," he says. They were able to confidently disagree, saying 'no' when offered alcohol or drugs. In fact, they were 40 percent more likely to say 'no' than kids who didn't argue with their parents. For other kids, it was an entirely different story. "They would back down right away," says Allen, saying they felt it pointless to argue with their parents. This kind of passivity was taken directly into peer groups, where these teens were more likely to acquiesce when offered drugs or alcohol. "These were the teens we worried about," he says. Bottom line: Effective arguing acted as something of an inoculation against negative [peer pressure](#). Kids who felt confident to express themselves to their parents also felt confident being honest with their friends. So, ironically the best thing parents can do is help their teenager argue more effectively. For this, Allen offers one word: listen. In the study, when parents listened to their kids, their kids listened back. They didn't necessarily always agree, he says. But if one or the other made a good point, they would acknowledge that point. "They weren't just trying to fight each other at every step and wear each other down. They were really trying to persuade the other person." Acceptable argument might go something like this: 'How about if my curfew's a half hour later but I agree that I'll text you or I'll agree that I'll stay in certain places and you'll know where I'll be; or how about I prove to you I can handle it for three weeks before we make a final decision about it.'

Again, parents won't necessarily agree. But "they'll get across the message that they take their kids point of view seriously and honestly consider what they have to say," Allen says. Child psychologist [Richard Weissbourd](#) says the findings bolster earlier research that finds that "parents who really respect their kids' thinking and their kids' input are much more likely to have kids who end up being independent thinkers and who are able to resist peer groups."

Weissbourd points to [one dramatic study](#) that analyzed parental relationships of Dutch citizens who ended up protecting Jews during World War II. They were parents who encouraged independent thinking, even if it differed from their own. So the next time your teenager huffs and puffs and starts to argue, you might just step back for a minute, take a breath yourself, and try to listen. It may be one of the best lessons you teach your child.

7th & 8th Grade Teams

The **Bolduc Hutt team** is finishing our integrated unit centered around family history. Please ask your child to share their iMovie one-minute montage with you. Their Family History Yearbooks will go into their portfolios and be shared at student led conferences this spring.

7th grade math students are working on a unit about integers and 8th grade math students are continuing exploration of pre-algebra skills and concepts. Your student should be working on Moby Math and/or assessments nightly.

7th grade ELA students are in the middle of a debate of issues discussed in Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver*. 8th grade students are participating in literature circle discussions about different novels centered around the theme of individuality and accepting people's differences.

Thanks for keeping up with your student's progress through Infinite Campus and email.

The **GLU Team** continues to be very busy. Social Studies and ELA students are continuing a geography unit and beginning to work on oral presentations on Asia. Mrs. Stevens is connecting all of our students to e-Pals. All students will have a connection to a student from either Africa or Asia. We are looking forward to communicating through writing and at times using Skype. Grammar does not go away! Seventh graders are working with parts of speech and eighth graders are completing a unit with verb tense and agreement.

Science students continue their work investigating the interrelationship of the body systems. They will soon be engaged in claymation projects to help visualize this relationship. Ask your child to share something "cool" from the video, "The Incredible Human Machine."

Math students should continue to work on Moby Math and ASSISTments to improve skill level. Remember the Learning lab on Tuesday and teachers are available on Thursday. We encourage you to take advantage of these times.

The **Campbell/Jacques/Newhouse** team:

7th grade math classes are reviewing the order of operations and discovering the power of parentheses and exponents. Parentheses allow you to change the order of operations and exponents allow numbers to grow in value rapidly. Think about how many grains of rice you would have if you started with one and doubled the amount every day for 63 more days. It seems to be an insignificant amount for the first few days.

8th grade math students, in an attempt to illustrate their understanding of volume, are in the process of preparing presentations designed to determine how many dollar bills could fit in the classroom. Once again, the amount is astounding.

In Science, we were able to gain access to a thermal image camera from UTC and took images throughout the school. As we analyze the information contained in these images, we are expanding our knowledge of radiant energy and electromagnetic wave forms. I would like to acknowledge Vern Palmer and Scott Williams from UTC for arranging our access to this very expensive piece of equipment.

In Mrs. Newhouse's social studies classes, an economics unit is in the process of being finished. Students invested in a stock market simulation and learned the differences in various economic systems. In her science classes, students are learning about the different types of living organisms, especially concentrating on viruses and bacteria and their impact on human populations.

In ELA, all students are continuing to work with various types of punctuation - pieces like the dash, ellipsis, semicolon, and colon. Outside of this work during writing labs, each of the three classes is working hard on differing topics. Mr. Jacques's homeroom will be wrapping up *Romeo and Juliet* with a final movie project, and moving into S.E. Hinton's classic novel *The Outsiders*. They will be looking at the impact of gang life on individuals and the community. Mr. Campbell's homeroom is going to be wrapping up their novel circles while looking at tone and style, and will be transitioning to Shakespeare. Lastly, the 7th grade is continuing their novel circle work, looking at how characters, setting, and plot interact and depend on one another. When this is over, the students will be taking a look at non-fiction.

From the Nurse: Since February is both National Heart and Dental Health Month, I wanted to make sure that Parents and Students know that there is a HUGE connection between taking care of your teeth and gums and PREVENTING heart disease. There is a direct link to increased heart problems in persons with gum disease. So please remind your student to brush after each meal and before bedtime. Flossing is also very important in preventing gum disease and encouraged to be done daily or at the least weekly. Having your teeth cleaned and gums evaluated by a dental hygienist and/or a dentist twice a year is most important. If you don't already, please take advantage of our school district's Oral Health program that is offered in both the spring and the fall to all students. If you have any questions about this, do not hesitate to call me at 487-5145.

SAD #53 Goes RED!

*Friday, February 3rd is
"National Wear RED Day"*

*Join us in wearing red for
healthy hearts!*



SCHOOL HEALTH ALERT!

- WHAT:** Annual Sugar-Out Day
- WHEN:** February 3, 2012
- SPONSOR:** Oral Health Program, Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention, Maine Department of Health and Human Services
- WHERE:** Warsaw Middle School
- GOAL:** To increase awareness of the role of sugar in oral health
- ACTION:** To encourage all individuals to abstain from sugared foods on "Sugar-Out Day." (and throughout the month of February!)