Felix V. Festa Middle School
September/October Academic Newsletter



Identifying Academic Excellence Award Winners & High Honor Roll

- Students in Felix V. Festa Middle School have multiple opportunities to earn Academic achievement awards throughout the course of the school year.
    - Honor Roll
    - High Honor Roll
    - Academic Excellence



- When calculating student averages, the following method and averages are used:
    - Averages - weighted averages (only Advanced Course in 8th grade are weighted, they include **Algebra, Earth Science, Global 9H, English 9H, and Studio Art**)
    - Physical Education does NOT count towards your student's GPA.
    - To calculate your quarterly averages:
        - Add up all grades from Quarter 1
        - Total up the points
        - Divide the total points by the amount of classes
        - Do not round up.
        - Repeat for Quarter 2 and 3 respectively
        - Then add your quarterly averages together, get the total points, and divide by 3.

Progress Reports and eSchool Gradebooks

- As part of our work to make grades more accessible/transparent to parents, staff will be uploading student grades to student and parent portal as we approach Progress Report and End of Quarter dates.
- Quarter 1 dates are:
    - 10/9/2026: Grade Entry for Progress Reports uploaded by 8:50am
    - 11/6/2026: Grade Entry for Report Cards uploaded by 8:50am

Homework Website

- Please see the link for our FFMS Homework Website **HERE**.
- Our homework website is broken down by each wing
    - A-School
    - C-School
    - D-School
- Within each school site, homework charts are maintained by each team of teachers. You can access your child's homework chart through your team's hyperlinked page within each "School's" homework site.
- Homework charts are maintained and updated regularly with assignments and assessments.
- If you have any questions about your child's assignments, please contact your child's teachers directly.

Nominate a Falcon Staff Member of the Month

- We would like to give parents and students the opportunity to nominate a Falcon Staff Member of the Month.

- **Nominations will be submitted through the Google Form linked HERE.**
- Nominations are to be based on your child's current teachers.
- The Falcon Staff Member of the Month will be recognized during our Monthly Staff Meetings.

Congratulations to our Flying Falcons for April

- Congratulations to all students who have earned our Flying Falcons for September. We are truly proud of your accomplishments.
- **6th Grade**
    - **Amber Goldstein, Stacy LaRocco, Elizabeth Bass, Harrison VanMeter, Sofia Ghiniatullin, Parker Benaquista, John Errico, Lauren Chmielewski, Isabella Larios**
- **7th Grade**
    - **Kyle Zeccardi, Jack Guinan, Aiden Shea, Grace Moran, Stella Forgione, Miguel DeLa Cruz, Pierce Wolfe, Mila Cespedes, Sebastian Domercant, MacKenzie Bascom, Ava Leiken**
- **8th Grade**
    - **Connor Miller, Francesca Jennings, Hayes Eisold, Declan Bonanno, Stephanie Bailey, Antonio Formosa, Julia Tsekouras, Trevon Thomas, Nariah Larson, Mya Connelly**
- Students are selected by their team facilitators or by staff members from the various departments throughout the building.
- Students are selected as a Flying Falcon of the Month by excelling in one or more of the following criteria:
    - Clarkstown Portrait of a Learner Characteristic- ***Motivated***
    - Clarkstown Portrait of a Learner Characteristic- ***Innovative***
    - Clarkstown Portrait of a Learner Characteristic- ***Empathetic***
    - Clarkstown Portrait of a Learner Characteristic- ***Resilient***
    - Enthusiastic participation in classroom activities
    - Positive attitude exhibited
    - Academic excellence achieved
    - Leadership qualities demonstrated
    - Outstanding preparation and attendance
    - Respectful to peers and teachers
    - Helpful to peers and teachers
    - Follow school/classroom expectations and rules
    - Demonstrates creativity
    - Demonstrates growth and improvement
    - FFMS extracurricular activity success achieved

Felix V. Festa Middle School

Welcome to the Counselor's Corner
"Home of Guidance Information and Tips for Students"

🍂 **October Focus: MOTIVATED**

- By October, students are settling into their middle school routines. Encourage your child to stay organized, keep track of assignments, and develop habits that support success. Small, consistent efforts can make a big difference throughout the school year.

💬 Middle School Skill: Organization

- Help your child find a system that works for them, whether it's using a planner, checking Google Classroom, or setting aside time each day to review assignments.

🌟 Try Asking: "What is one habit that could make your school day easier?"

🏫 School Counseling Spotlight

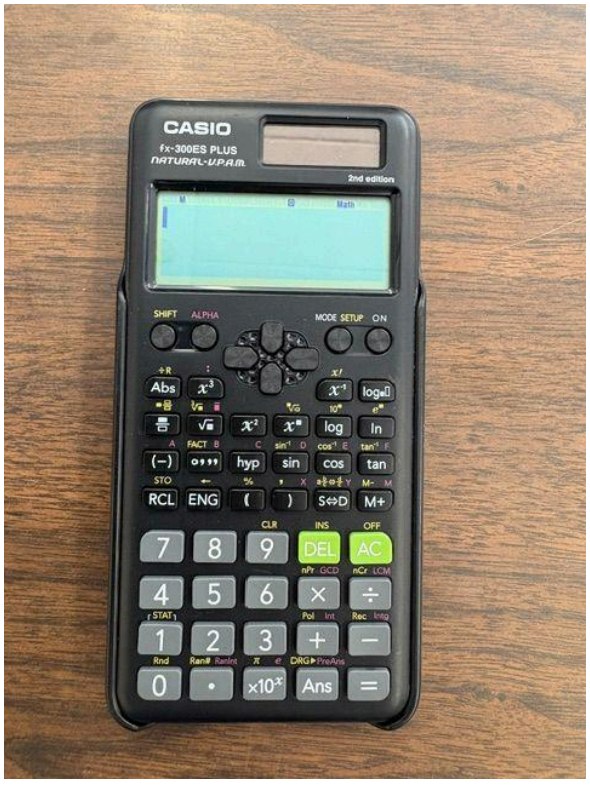
- The School Counseling Department is here to help students build the skills they need to succeed academically, socially, and personally. Encourage your child to reach out whenever they need support.

- The School Counseling Department

Felix V. Festa Middle School
September/October 2026 Building Wide Academic Newsletter



Math Supplies (Math 6R, Math 7R, Math 7A, Math 8R)



- Students should use the **Casio fx-300ES Plus** pictured here.

- Instruction will focus on this model; students using another calculator will need to learn its functions independently.
- If cost is a concern, please contact your child's math teacher privately.

Social Studies Opportunities

- **Please see the link below for an essay writing opportunity for students to compete in through the VFW.**
- **VFW Essay Writing Flyer**

Physical Education (Building Wide)

- We have had a great start to the school year in Physical Education! Students across all three grade levels have been developing their skills, staying motivated, working collaboratively, and learning the importance of teamwork, communication, perseverance, resilience, and sportsmanship.
- **Our 6th and 8th grade classes have been developing the fundamentals of football while learning how to work together as a team.**
    - Students have been working on:
        - Throwing and catching
        - Passing routes and offensive/defensive positioning
        - Communication and teamwork
        - Understanding basic rules and gameplay
        - Demonstrating good sportsmanship

As students progress, they will have opportunities to apply these skills in increasingly complex game situations. In some of our 8th grade classes we have incorporated flags and reviewed techniques/strategies to a flag football game which is rising in popularity in our area for both boys and girls.

- **Our 7th graders have been getting exposure to a variety of activities, including lacrosse, pickleball, and soccer.**
    - Within these units, students are developing fundamental skills such as:
        - Cradling
        - Passing and catching
        - Ground balls
        - Offensive and defensive positioning
        - Communication and teamwork
        - Serving
        - Forehand and backhand strokes
        - Court positioning
        - Scoring
        - Rallying with a partner

- Strategy
- Dribbling
- Shooting
- Spacing
- Applying skills during gameplay

The variety of activities gives students the opportunity to discover different ways to be active while developing skills that transfer across many sports. Classes will rotate through these units (10 classes) so everyone gets the opportunity to explore these sports.

Music (Building Wide)

- **Band**
  - The band students are off to a tremendous start this year! The 6th graders are focused on the fundamentals, while our 7th graders are continuing to build their ensemble skills. 8th grade students have begun the new pull-out lesson program, allowing them to focus on individual skills and accomplish even more as musicians. Students across all grade levels have started preparing music for our winter concerts in January. We are also excited to welcome Mrs. Kimmel and Mr. Bartlett to the band program this year. We look forward to a wonderful year of making music together!
- **Orchestra**
  - The Orchestra program is off to an energetic and productive start this school year! Our 6th graders are building a solid foundation by reviewing essential note-reading skills and discovering the excitement of improvising basic harmonies. Stepping up to new challenges, our 7th graders are tackling dynamic, multi-part compositions featuring complex four-part harmonies. Meanwhile, our 8th grade musicians are taking their craft to the next level through individual pull-out lessons, where they focus deeply on advanced, instrument-specific techniques and refined musicianship. Across all grade levels, our orchestra students are demonstrating impressive dedication and making wonderful harmony together!
- **Chorus**
  - Chorus students have been singing since the first day and are only getting stronger! Students are focused on developing rhythm reading skills as the foundation of our music literacy skills while developing age appropriate singing skills. Our 8th graders are starting their pull-out lesson program for the first time. All 3 grades have started working on the music for their January concerts.

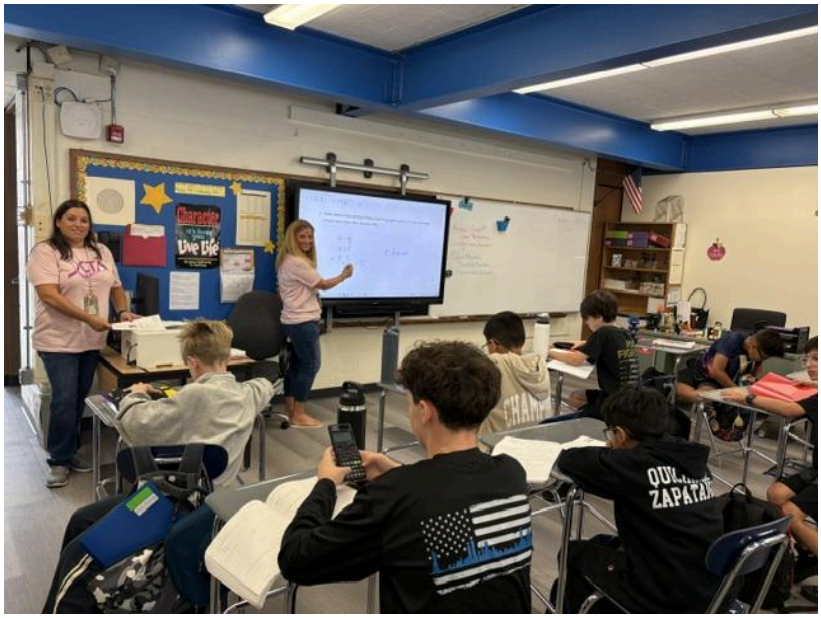
- **General Music**
    - Our General Music students have been learning about the basic elements and genres of music. Students are focused on developing an understanding of musical rhythm, form and tone. 8th grade students have started their first project of the year and are doing excellent work.

Felix V. Festa Middle School
September/October 2026 6th Grade Academic Newsletter



Math

- October is all about math in the real world! Students will explore rates and percents while learning how these concepts show up in everyday situations. They'll practice converting units of measurement, comparing unit prices, and figuring out which option is truly the better buy.
- From comparing prices at the store to making sense of measurements and percentages, students will see how the math they're learning can help them make smarter decisions every day. No tricks here—just plenty of math skills that are a real treat! 🎃



Science

- In Science, students have been taking a microscopic journey into the fascinating world of cells. Through hands-on investigations, they have learned to use the tools of scientists, including beakers, graduated cylinders, triple-beam balances, and rulers. Engaging activities have helped students explore and reinforce important concepts such as diffusion and osmosis while developing their skills as young scientists.
- In October, students will expand their exploration to the **human microbiome**—the incredible community of microorganisms that live on and inside the human body. Scientists estimate that trillions of bacteria call our bodies home, and research continues to explore how these microorganisms may be connected to a variety of aspects of human health.
- Students will step into the role of researchers as they investigate the intriguing anchor phenomenon for this unit: **fecal transplants**. While the topic may initially elicit a few laughs, it provides a fascinating opportunity to explore real-world science and emerging research.
- From eyelash mites to the use of fecal transplants in treating certain illnesses, students will discover that science is not always neat or predictable—and that some of the most unusual questions can lead to the most fascinating discoveries! Through this unit, students will be encouraged to ask questions, examine evidence, and develop explanations as they deepen their understanding of the remarkable microbial world within and around us.



English

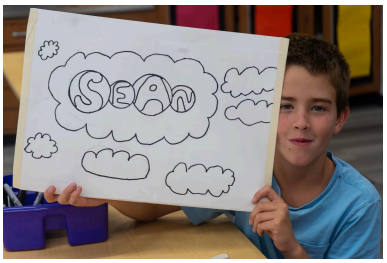
- Sixth graders are deep into their personal narrative units. Following this, they will complete a short grammar unit to reinforce foundational skills before beginning a whole-class novel study.

Social Studies

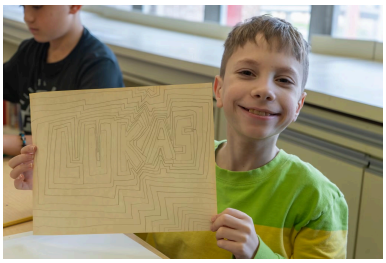
- In September, our middle schoolers build a strong foundation for historical thinking across all grades. Sixth graders begin the year by exploring how historians use evidence to understand Early Humans and the shift from hunter-gatherers to the first farming communities—a change that reshaped culture, technology, and daily life.
- In October, sixth graders dive deeper into early River Valley Civilizations such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China, examining how geography shaped settlement, government, belief systems, and innovation.

Art

- Sixth Grade Artists have been working on a variety of art projects as they get to know their teachers this month, using colored pencils, markers and crayons. Some have created Name Designs with various font alphabet styles like block lettering, bubble letters, and graffiti lettering, or a Portfolio Project incorporating a fully completed illustration. In October, some students will be starting to explore the Seven Elements of Art through a hands-on project that will demonstrate each Element visually or a Dragon's Eye drawing as we head towards October.







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Family and Consumer Sciences (Home and Careers)

- Our 6th graders will be learning about safe handling of food and kitchen safety. They will complete their Food & Kitchen Safety Test to determine their eligibility for participation in the food labs. They will then enter kitchen boot camp, where they will be able to identify common kitchen equipment & their use, read a recipe and measure ingredients appropriately. They will wrap up the month starting the Nutrition Unit and having their first kitchen food lab.

Health

- 6th grade health students have been learning about the Health Triangle and how physical, mental/emotional, and social health work together to create overall wellness. Students are also beginning to explore effective communication, including what makes someone a good communicator and how communication breakdowns can occur. Students are beginning STEPS (Skills Training and Emotional Problem Solving for Adolescents), focusing on practical skills that support mental and emotional well-being. Students are learning about mindfulness, emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and healthy relationships. Through discussions and interactive activities, students are learning how to manage challenging situations, stay present, and recognize that two things can be true at the same time.

Physical Education (Building Wide)

Music (Building Wide)

- **Band**
    - The band students are off to a tremendous start this year! The 6th graders are focused on the fundamentals, while our 7th graders are continuing to build their ensemble skills. 8th grade students have begun the new pull-out lesson program, allowing them to focus on individual skills and

accomplish even more as musicians. Students across all grade levels have started preparing music for our winter concerts in January. We are also excited to welcome Mrs. Kimmel and Mr. Bartlett to the band program this year. We look forward to a wonderful year of making music together!

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Felix V. Festa Middle School
September/October 2026 7th Grade Academic Newsletter



Math

- October is shaping up to be a busy and exciting month in 7th grade math! Students will strengthen their understanding of rational numbers and integer operations, with an emphasis on applying these skills to real-world situations. They'll also explore the laws of exponents and learn to simplify expressions by combining like terms.
- We'll finish the month by diving into scientific notation, giving students a powerful way to represent and work with extremely large and small numbers.
- With all these new skills brewing, our 7th graders will be scaring up some serious math knowledge this October! 👻🎃



Science

- 7th grade science students are wrapping up their introductory unit from September and are ready to dive into the exciting world of chemical reactions.In this upcoming unit, students will explore how chemists observe unique chemical properties—such as boiling point, melting point, and texture—to identify different substances. They will discover that these distinct properties exist because substances are made of unique types and arrangements of repeating atoms, allowing scientists to tell them apart.

English

- Students started off the year writing literary paragraphs, followed by a brief grammar unit. Following this, they will plan and write realistic fiction stories

Social Studies

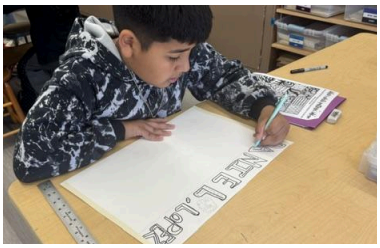
- Seventh graders examine the rich diversity of Native American societies, analyzing how geography shaped culture, government, and social structures long before European arrival.
- As we progress through September and move into October, seventh graders continue their study of Colonial America, exploring how geography, economy, and cultural interactions influenced the development of the British colonies

Art

- In seventh grade art, students have been learning about the art room and getting to know their teachers through a variety of projects, including working on a Portfolio Project that integrates their Name in a design and illustration using a

theme of their choice. As we head into October some artists will be beginning a Neurographic Landscape using watercolor and black marker, or they may be using chalk pastels to work on a contemporary landscape using analogous colors.





Family and Consumer Sciences (Home and Careers)

- Our 7th graders are continuing their work on Career Exploration. Self Assessment Summaries will be completed and students will choose a career to research in the library. Several days will be spent in the library using research skills to learn more about different aspects of a selected career. Students will use the information researched to complete a Career Project. This project will outline job duties, educational requirements, salary averages and ranges, working conditions & skills required.

Health

- 7th grade health students have also been reviewing the Health Triangle and how physical, mental/emotional, and social health are connected. Students are currently learning about alcohol, its effects on the body, addiction, and the consequences of alcohol use. Through interactive activities, simulations, and real-life scenarios, students are developing the knowledge and decision-making skills needed to make healthy, informed choices.

World Language

- **Spanish**
  - Our 7th graders have had a wonderful start to the school year in Spanish class! We kicked off September by learning personal introductions and descriptions, as well as practicing common classroom commands, questions, and phrases to use throughout the year.
  - To celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15th – October 15th), students also completed a special culture project where they researched one of the 21 Spanish-speaking countries around the world. Each student decorated a tissue box with key facts and imagery representing their assigned country. These activities help our students get to know each other while building confidence and comfort speaking the target language!
- **Italian**
  - This month in Italian 7, students familiarized themselves with the course syllabus getting to know what the expectations for this school year bring.

We then started with an introduction to the alphabet which led us into beginning communication using certain phrases/expressions. Students just completed skits with their groups in front of the class practicing their speaking skills.

- **French**
  - This month 7th grade students have been learning about “le monde francophone,” the French speaking world. Did you know that French is the fourth most spoken language in the world?
  - After reviewing some essentials like letters, numbers, and greeting, we will also dive into “la rentrée scolaire,” back to school season in French! We will discuss our favorite classes and teachers, go shopping for school supplies and more!
- **Japanese**
  - 7th grade Japanese students celebrated “Otsukimi” (Moon Viewing) with making origami rabbits and performing entertaining skits which creatively used vocabulary we have been reviewing on the topics of greetings and classroom Japanese. They also just started learning about the different types of Japanese writing and began studying their first hiragana characters through storytelling, picture drawing, and silly mnemonic devices.

Felix V. Festa Middle School
September/October 2026 8th Grade Academic Newsletter



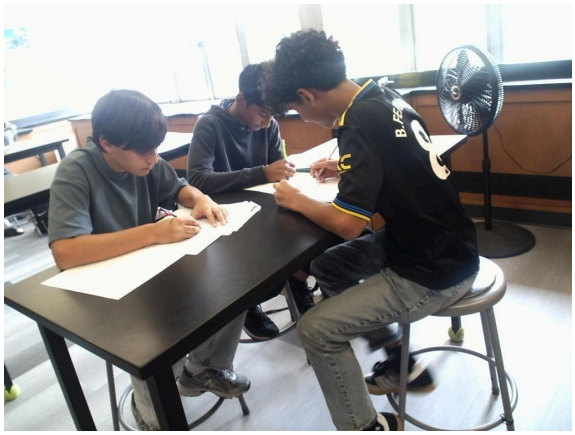
Math

- In October, eighth-grade mathematicians will explore transformations and similarity. Students will investigate how figures can be translated, rotated, reflected, and dilated on the coordinate plane while examining which properties remain the same and which change. They'll use these transformations to determine whether figures are congruent or similar and strengthen their understanding of geometric relationships.
- By the end of the month, students may be seeing geometry from a whole new angle—no tricks, just transformations! 🎃

Science

- Our **eighth grade science** students have been building a strong foundation in scientific thinking by reviewing the scientific method and then journeying through our solar system. Along the way, they examined Mars and explored the motions and interactions of the Earth, Moon, and Sun.
- In **Honors Earth Science**, students have been looking beyond our solar system to explore the origins and motion of objects in space. Topics have included the Big Bang theory, rotation and revolution, Kepler's Laws of planetary motion, and how these concepts help explain the changing seasons. It has been an exciting start to the year as students connect observations, patterns, and scientific laws to

better understand our universe!

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English

- We kicked off the year with a study of memoir, and we will soon transition into novel study and book clubs to investigate characterization in depth.

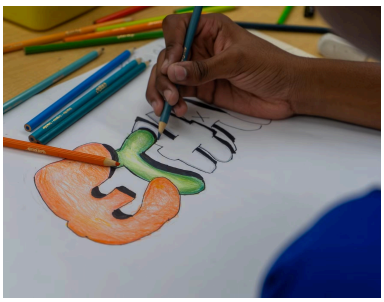
Social Studies

- Eighth graders study Reconstruction, focusing on how the nation rebuilt politically, socially, and economically after the Civil War, with special attention to citizenship, rights, and struggles for equality. Across all grades, students practice close reading, sourcing, and evidence-based writing aligned with the NYS Social Studies Framework to prepare them for deeper inquiry as the year unfolds.
- As we move into October, eighth graders complete Reconstruction and begin analyzing America's transformation during the late 1800s, including industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. Across all grades, students strengthen their analysis of primary sources, learn to identify cause and effect, and practice writing clear explanations grounded in evidence.

Art and Studio Art

- **Art 8** - To start off the year, eighth grade artists in some classes have been working on a mixed media Portfolio Project, using a name design and creating an illustration in the background using a theme of their choosing. In October, others will be starting an Op-Eye Project using graphite and colored pencils, or a Pop Art illustration, creating a dynamic composition illustrating their favorite food, with a focus on Wayne Theibaud.






- **<u>Studio Art</u>** - Studio artists started the year with a collaborative project where each created a part of a flower using markers. Ninety three artworks will come together into a beautiful banner to add color to the art room. They are currently finishing up Cartoon Self Portraits, after exploring exaggerated proportions and learning the pen and ink crosshatching technique to create value. In October, they will begin working on drawing from observation in an oil pastel still life.

<u>Health</u>

- 8th grade health students are off to a great start! Students have been reviewing the Health Triangle, setting personal SMART goals, and learning how physical, mental, and social health work together to support overall wellness. Our current Mental Health Unit focuses on characteristics of good mental health, self-image, self-esteem, and personality. Through discussions, group activities, videos, and interactive assessments, students are developing greater self-awareness and understanding of how their choices and mindset can influence their overall well-being.

<u>World Language</u>

- **Spanish -** Our students have had a busy and exciting quarter exploring how technology and social media shape our daily lives. Here is a look at what they have been learning:
    - **Navigating Social Media & Tech Usage:** Students began by learning how to describe their own technology habits as well as those of their classmates.
    - **Building Essential Vocabulary:** They are learning key action verbs needed to communicate throughout our social media unit—such as *to look for* and *to share*.
    - **Boosting Reading Comprehension:** Putting their new skills into practice, students worked on reading comprehension by analyzing social media infographics, using visual cues and real-world texts to strengthen their understanding.
    - **Putting It Into Practice:** Students are now starting to use what they've learned to hold paired conversations with their partners.

- **Italian**
    - Our 8th grade Italian students have been actively engaged in a variety of creative and culturally meaningful activities as they begin the school year. Students created a **“Su di Me” (“All About Me”) picture collage** to introduce themselves and express their interests and personalities in Italian. They also created authentic Italian identification cards, which were laminated to add an authentic and interactive element to their learning.
    - We are now beginning a unit focused on **describing ourselves and famous people**. Students will practice using Italian vocabulary and descriptive language to communicate information about themselves as well as well-known individuals.
    - In October, students will begin a **Social Media Unit**, where they will create simulated Instagram and Facebook posts in Italian. Through these activities, students will develop their language skills while exploring how social media is used to communicate and share information.
    - October is also **Italian Heritage Month**, and students will participate in a special cultural project celebrating Italian heritage. Each student will select an Italian or Italian-American famous person of their choice and create and decorate a tissue box featuring pictures, facts, and descriptions about that individual. Students will follow a project rubric while also having opportunities to make their own creative choices and personalize their projects.
    - These activities provide students with opportunities to strengthen their Italian language skills while incorporating **creativity, cultural connections, student choice, and real-world communication** into the classroom.
- **French**
    - This month 8th grade students have been learning about “le monde francophone,” the French speaking world. Did you know that French is the fourth most spoken language in the world?
    - After reviewing some essentials from last year, we will begin discussing “les réseaux sociaux,” social media in French! Students will listen to podcasts, watch videos, and read articles about the pros and cons of social media, and then create an infographic about online safety.
- **Japanese**
    - 8th grade Japanese students began a unit entitled, “Back to School”, which includes everything from conducting everyday business in our class in Japanese, to identifying and asking to borrow various classroom objects, to describing our school. They also practiced having introductory conversations and writing their self-introductions to prepare for “Bunri Day” in November where students from the Bunri School in Japan will visit FFMS!