



BLACK BEARS

NEWSLETTER

Friday, May 24, 2024

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

The students are continuing to read their WWII/Holocaust historical fiction novels. They are having some great discussions about the adversity and discrimination people faced during this time in history. Our final Summative of the year will be a thematic essay on the book.

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

We continue researching specific World War II topics. The topics range from how the War affected dancing, cheerleading, women and people of color to the psychology of Naziism and the development of the atomic bomb. Next week students will complete a summative report in which they will explain the research process they followed, cite any difficulties or adjustments made in their research, and report what they learned. This report will be graded as a double weighted summative because of the extent of the work required.

Answer to last newsletter's trivia question: The Tizard Mission from Great Britain sent America ALL of Britain's secret plans and technological experiments and scientific information so the Nazis wouldn't get them.

This issue's trivia question: What is her name?



Science - Mr. Menard

Next week students will be wrapping up our electricity and magnetism mini unit and will then move into a brief flight and rocket science unit. Here, students will learn the basics of flight of both airplanes and rockets. They will then learn about the basic parts of a rocket and will design and build their own rockets. These rockets don't use a burning engine, but rather utilize high air pressure to propel them. This has always been a fun way to end the year; I hope students are excited to show you what they have built after we fly the rockets in June.



Math - Ms. Zaharis

The students have been enjoying their explorations into the volume of various three dimensional figures. They will be having an interim over finding the volume of cylinders, spheres, cones, rectangular prisms and square pyramids today. Next week we'll start combining shapes, and the students will need to find the volume of these compound figures. We will wrap up this module by the end of next week or early the following week.

In Algebra we are wrapping up our polynomials unit. The kids are now quite good at adding, subtracting, multiplying and factoring polynomials of all different degrees! I'm so proud of how hard they have worked! We'll be wrapping up the year with a look at quadratics.

Songo River Cruise

The Saco Middle School eighth graders will be enjoying a trip on the Songo River Queen on Monday, June 10th. We will leave SMS promptly at 9:15 a.m. to head to Naples, so be sure your student arrives at school on time. This is a rain or shine event, it is important that your child dresses appropriately for the weather of the day. Students should bring their own lunch for the trip or request a free bag lunch from the school. Their snackbar will NOT be open for our trip. We will be asking students if they would like a bag lunch for the trip. Feel free to reach out to your child's advisor to ensure your child has made a request, if you're worried they might not sign up. We'll return to SMS around 1:45 that afternoon.

Important Dates

May 27th - No School - Memorial Day

May 29th - Step-Up Morning to TA - be sure your child arrives at school on time

June 6th - Sea Dogs Game - School-wide Field Trip

June 7th - SMS Field Day

June 10th - Songo River Cruise - 8th Grade Trip

June 11th - Rain Date - SMS Field Day

June 12th - Last Day of School (Early Release) & Promotion (evening)



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NEWSLETTER

Friday, May 10, 2024

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

We have started our WWII book study. The students got to choose between four historical fiction novels and will be writing a 5-paragraph thematic essay at the completion of our unit. This is the last quarter of the Membean Competition!

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

We are preparing to select topics for a World War II research assignment by watching an anthology "World War II From Space". Following the video, students will generate a research question to answer. This unit will continue into next week and beyond.

Answer to last newsletter's trivia question: Silk

New trivia question: When it looked as though Great Britain was going to be conquered, what did the British send to America?

Science - Mr. Menard

Students have finally completed the Energy Unit. The remainder of the school year will focus on several mini-units, giving students some background info and experience with electricity & magnetism, waves, and flight & rocket science. The year will conclude with the design and construction of air-powered rockets that students will have the opportunity to launch in the fields behind SMS.

Math - Ms. Zaharis

This week we've continued our work with parallel lines and transversals as well as an exploration into angle relationships within triangles. Students have an interim today, and will have a summative assessment over this material as well as the Pythagorean Theorem next week. We'll then move on to a study of volume.

Algebra students have been really getting into the fun of algebra! We've been adding, subtracting and multiplying polynomials. We'll be factoring polynomials next! Factoring is a fun challenge that I'm sure they will enjoy! I expect us to have a summative before our next newsletter heads your way.



Songo River Cruise

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Important Dates

May 10th - PTO sponsored Dance @ 6:30 p.m.
May 14th - MEA State Science Assessment
May 16th - MEA State Science Assessment
May 17th & 18th - Beauty and the Beast SMS Play
May 27th - No School - Memorial Day
May 29th - Step-Up Morning to TA
June 6th - Sea Dogs Game - School-wide Field Trip
June 7th - SMS Field Day
June 10th - Songo River Cruise - 8th Grade Trip
June 12th - Last Day of School (Early Release) & Promotion (evening)



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NEWSLETTER

Friday, April 26, 2024

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

The students just finished the ISearch unit with an Exhibition Day where they were able to show off all of their learning. Their visuals and presentations were very impressive! Our next unit will be a book club on WWII/Holocaust historical fiction books, which will coincide with the learning they will be doing in Mr. Driscoll's class.

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

Social Studies is entering one of the more popular topics of study: World War II. We have begun looking at the totalitarian dictators and regimes of the 1930's. We are looking at Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and the Japanese military. We are connecting the effects of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles with the Great Depression and the advent of World War II and the ability of such radical people to take control of their nations. Students will explore potential research topics about the war and then select an area to examine closely. As we proceed in this unit, students will be asked to compare those times with today's times. A two-day Holocaust lesson will be the end of the World War II unit. This lesson is a video presentation of the "Genocide" episode of 1973's documentary "World At War". This video is approved for middle and high school students and does contain some scenes of death and violence. Anyone wanting to opt out of this two-day lesson will receive an alternate assignment.

Answer to last newsletter trivia question: Poison Gas

New trivia question: The Great Depression hit Japan very hard because the main product they exported crashed. The world stopped buying what Japanese material?

Science - Mr. Menard

Amidst our Energy unit now, students this week are transitioning from learning about phase change and the methods of heat transfer to working on a hands-on project to insulate a can of hot water for an extended period of time using basic insulation materials. This activity will take a couple of days of prep to design and construct their device and then will culminate in a test day where all groups will test the performance of their insulation device at the same time in class.



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NEWSLETTER

Math - Ms. Zaharis

We're right back into the swing of things after a nice April break with an exploration of right triangles and the Pythagorean Theorem. We'll use the theorem to find unknown side lengths of right triangles, determine if triangles are, in fact, right, and find distances on grid paper. Next week we'll start exploring other angle relationships.

Students who did not do well on our Module 6 Interim over Systems of Equations, have the opportunity to have a retake. They have been given a Relearning Plan with many options for extra practice. Students can find this on the Black Bear Homework page or in their Google Classroom. I'm also happy to help students during our Enrichment time. Students must turn in corrections by Wednesday, May 1st and finish their retake by May 3rd.

In algebra class we've been wrapping up our Exponential Functions unit with a look at geometric sequences and recursive formulas. Students will take a summative on this unit on Tuesday of next week. We, too, will play with the Pythagorean Theorem briefly before moving on to polynomials.

Important Dates

April 29th - NWEA State Math Assessment

May 2nd - NWEA State Reading Assessment

May 4th - Mattress Fundraiser @ SMS

May 10th - PTO sponsored Dance @ 6:30 p.m.

May 14th - MEA State Science Assessment

May 16th - MEA State Science Assessment

May 17th & 18th - Beauty and the Beast SMS Play

June 6th - SeaDogs Game - School-wide Field Trip



Friday, March 22, 2024

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

The students have been working hard on their I-Search projects! They are really becoming experts on their big I-Search question and four sub-questions. We will be synthesizing all of this information into an I-Search paper, which will be due on Wednesday, April 3. We will then begin working on our tri-fold poster boards to share all of this knowledge with our 8th-grade peers. I can't wait to see their final products!

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

As we maneuver through World War I, students have learned how this conflict had far-reaching effects as the first "modern war". We are just finishing the conduct of the war itself, the different battle fronts that made this a world war, how America became a combatant, the homefront and the war's unsung heroes. This was done through small collaborative groups. The summative for this group work is today.

Next week we shall see how the war ended and what peace will bring. Students will learn about the Treaty of Versailles, Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points, and the creation of the League of Nations. We'll see how Europe was reshaped and the establishment of the first communist nation, The USSR.

Given the 3rd Quarter ends next Friday, it might be a good idea to remind your students to check PowerSchool for missing assignments, etc.

Answer to last newsletter's trivia question: Queen Victoria of Great Britain (King Charles' great-great-great grandmother)

New trivia question: What World War I weapon was so horrific that it was outlawed after World War I?



Science - Mr. Menard

Please join us to learn about our school construction projects and cast your vote.

March 26, 2024

Saco Middle School ~ 6:00 pm

[Project Summary](#)

6:00-6:30: Walkthrough

- *View plans*
- *Q&A*

6:30-7:00: Presentation

- *Welcome and Overview - Superintendent Ray*
- *State Construction Process Update- Oak Point Associates*

7:00: Vote: Saco residents will be able to cast their vote, in person only, to support or oppose the project

Visit our [website](#) to view a recording of this meeting and other important documents

Math - Ms. Zaharis

Students have been working very hard in our functions unit. Not only can they distinguish between functions and non-functions, they can analyze various functions to make comparisons between the rates of change and initial values of these functions, and solve problems using these pieces of information. Students did very well on this week's summative assessment! I'm so proud of their hard work! Next week we'll start taking a look at systems of equations.

In algebra class we've been working with exponents and radicals. They have impressed me with how well they are able to solve some pretty complex problems! They will be taking their summative on Monday, March 25th. We'll continue our work with exponents by exploring exponential functions.

Important Dates

March 26th - 4 p.m. - 7 p.m. - Parent Teacher Conferences*

March 29th - Close of Quarter 3

April 4th - 3:30 p.m. - 7 p.m. - Parent Teacher Conferences*

April 10th - Read-a-Thon Day



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* Reach out to your child's advisor to sign up for a parent-teacher conference

From the Superintendent:

Please join us to learn about our school construction projects and cast your vote.

March 26, 2024

Saco Middle School ~ 6:00 pm

[Project Summary](#)

6:00-6:30: Walkthrough

- View plans
- Q&A

6:30-7:00: Presentation

- Welcome and Overview - Superintendent Ray
- State Construction Process Update- Oak Point Associates

7:00: Vote

Saco residents will be able to cast their vote, in person only, to support or oppose the project

Visit our [website](#) to view a recording of this meeting and other important documents



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NEWSLETTER

Friday, March 8, 2024

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

The entire 8th grade is off and running with the I-Search project. This project allows the students to pick a topic they are passionate about and become experts on that topic. They came into class ready to go with their index cards and tri-fold poster boards!

The students have been focused on finding sources that will answer their four sub-questions. They have also been reaching out to experts in the community to conduct original research, which could be in the form of an interview, job shadow, site visit, etc. Their excitement is contagious when they set these meetings up! Stay tuned for more I-Search updates!

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

I am pleased to report that the Black Bears/Dirigo Social Studies Trivia contests were a clean sweep for the Black Bears. Three games were decided by a single point, and the last game was won by four points.

We have started studying World War I, often labeled the first "modern war". We have looked into the causes of the war and are now learning how miserable trench warfare was. Next, we will see America's path towards war, then work in groups examining five specific aspects of World War I.

Answer to last newsletter's trivia question: Hawaii

New trivia question: What queen of England was the grandmother of the King of England, the Kaiser of Germany and the Tsarina of Russia?

Science - Mr. Menard

Students are well on their way into the Energy unit now. We have begun with an investigation of Mechanical Energy (Kinetic E and Potential E). The first Energy



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Summative is coming up in about one week's time. Students will receive a study guide soon that they should work on to prepare for this summative.

Recess Trivia Question: What do students most often complain about to the teachers on recess duty?

Answer: The number one student complaint at recess in the past two weeks has been that their feet are wet. This is likely due to the fact that we are in the middle of mud season but many students continue to wear crocs and sandals outside every day.

Math - Ms. Zaharis

We returned from February break with an exploration into functions. Ask your student(s) about the Function Auction. They had a lot of fun bidding on functions! This week we've continued our work with tables, graphs, and verbal descriptions of linear functions. Students should be able to identify the rate of change and initial value in a relationship and interpret what they mean in terms of the context of the problem. Finally, they have been writing their own equations in slope-intercept form. We will end the unit with a quick look into nonlinear functions and qualitative graphs, before we move on to systems of linear equations.

Our algebra friends have been reviewing exponent rules and simplifying some pretty tricky monomials! They even took a quick break to have fun with the Function Auction, too! Next week we will work with rational exponents and simplifying radicals. We'll end the unit with an exploration into exponential equations. Next up? Exponential functions!

Important Dates

March 11th - [TA Sign-Up Form](#) is due

March 13th - Original Research Day



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NEWSLETTER

Friday, February 16, 2024

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

We just wrapped up our speech unit, where the students had to write and present a speech on, "A person, event, or thing that has had an impact on their lives." Ask your kids about them! They were absolutely incredible!!! They were all petrified to do this, but they all rocked it!

When we return from February vacation, we will be starting our I-Search Unit where the students get to pick a topic they are passionate about and become experts on that topic. Just a heads up that the kids will need two things shortly after they return from break - a package of index cards and a tri-fold poster board (both of which you can get at The Dollar Store).

Have a great February break!!

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

We are continuing to study American foreign policy as the U.S. became a World Power in the latter part of the 19th Century. Students have either finished or are finishing a mini-research assignment on several acquisitions or trade expansions made during this period: Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, The Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Japan, China, Panama Canal, and the Dominican Republic. Your student worked in groups researching two of these places and reporting their information to the rest of the class. Ask your student to show you their group's presentation and their contribution to the presentation. After vacation, we will finish the expansion of American influence with the Spanish-American War and the Panama Canal, we will begin our study of World War I.

On Friday, 2/16, the Black Bears' Social Studies will compete against the Dirigo Team's Social Studies classes in a trivia contest.

Answer to last edition's trivia question: Security/Prosperity/Make the World a Better Place

Today's trivia question: Queen Liliuokalani was overthrown as the queen of what country?

Science - Mr. Menard



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On Valentine's Day students FINALLY completed their Chemistry Unit. We are on to an Energy unit of medium length that will bridge the gap between Chemistry and Physics. As we saw in the last few weeks of chemistry, we will also have quite a few hands-on demonstrations and activities to do as we work with the concepts of Kinetic Energy and Potential Energy.

Math - Ms. Zaharis

Students have wrapped up their initial exploration of linear relationships. We reviewed proportional and direct variation relationships, and we started to take a look at relationships that are not proportional. We have even begun to dabble with slope-intercept form for linear equations. Ask your students about $y = mx + b$.

When we return from break we will be taking a benchmark assessment over all we've learned before moving into our work with functions. We'll continue to work with slope-intercept form to represent relationships and write equations too.

As we've moved into third quarter, I've noticed not all students are keeping up with their daily homework. Please remind your student that this is an essential habit to have as they move on to Thornton Academy next year.

Algebra students have just finished up their work with systems of equations. They can solve a system of equations by graphing, substitution, and elimination and can even solve a system of inequalities with two variables. They did a great job with this unit! After break we'll take a deep dive into exponents, exponential functions and polynomials.

Important Dates

February 17th - 25th - February Break

February 26th - TA Guidance Counselors come to chat with students about signing up for next year's classes

March 7th - MLTI Virtual Conference @ SMS

March 7th - NAEP Testing

March 13th - Original Research Day - more info to come



Friday, February 2, 2024

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

The students have been working on writing their speeches on, "A person, event, or thing that has had an impact on your life." They learned how to write an interesting hook, tell their "stories" in the body paragraphs, and we just started writing a conclusion. We will begin editing/revising and practicing our speeches next week. I would DEFINITELY encourage you to ask them to share their speeches with you! Some of them are very impressive! Our ISearch Unit is coming up after February vacation so be on the lookout for details on this! It's a really fun unit!

Have a great weekend!

Sara (:

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

Today we begin studying American foreign policy. Students will be learning about how our country expanded to the Pacific Ocean and then beyond. We'll look at how the United States became a world power and at the responsibilities associated with such a role. We'll study how America dealt with nations in the past and also what our relationships with other countries are now. Unfortunately, this unit is where we study America's wars. The approach will be a variety of tasks, from slides/videos worksheets to individual and group research assignments.

Answer to last edition's trivia question: GDP or Gross Domestic Product.

This publication's social studies trivia question: What are the three goals of foreign policy?

Science - Mr. Menard

Nearing the end of our chemistry unit now, we are in the middle of a series of lab activities and in-class demonstrations. Once we complete this hands-on portion, we will spend a few days reviewing for our final chemistry unit assessment. A study guide will be sent home with students when this review period begins in a week or so. Students should make sure to use all applicable notes and practice assignments in their science binders to help them complete the study guide prior to the test.



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NEWSLETTER

Math - Ms. Zaharis

Ms. Zaharis' math students have been exploring proportional relationships by investigating slope, unit rate, constant of variation, and rate of change. We've looked closely at graphs, tables, verbal descriptions, as well as equations. Students have even started to write some of their own equations. We'll wrap up our work in Module 4 before February break with an exploration of $y = mx + b$. Students will be graphing and writing equations for non-proportional relationships.

In Algebra students have wrapped up their work with inequalities and will be exploring systems of linear equations in the last two weeks leading up to February break. Students will explore three different ways to solve a system; using a graph or solving algebraically using substitution or elimination. They received brand new books in class today and were quite excited!

Important Dates

February 17th - 25th - February Break

February 26th - TA Guidance Counselors come to chat with students about signing up for next year's classes

March 7th - MLTI Virtual Conference @ SMS

March 7th - NAEP Testing

March 13th - Original Research Day - more info to come



Friday, January 19, 2024

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

After a LONG illness, I am finally back with my favorite people! They completed a super fun grammar unit on pronouns and just submitted a 5-paragraph thematic essay on A Christmas Carol. So far these essays are looking great!

We are starting our speech unit next week. The students will be required to write and present a 3-5 minute speech on a person, event, or thing that has had an impact on their lives. The students get VERY nervous about this at the beginning of the unit, but by the end, they are pleasantly surprised by how painless it was! I will be inviting our best speakers to present in front of the whole Black Bear team before February vacation!

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

Our government unit is winding down. Students are finishing a summative on Reaganomics this week and will start the last leg of the unit: From Reaganomics to Today. We will consider the administrations of Clinton, both Bush's, Obama, Trump and Biden. We'll look at both the liberal and conservative approaches these leaders employed. We'll be looking at the role government has been playing in taking care of its citizens while trying to be fiscally responsible. Students will be looking at Medicare, Social Security, taxation, the ACA, and other areas pertinent to the period.

Answer to last Newsletter trivia question: Ketchup

This edition's trivia question: What is the term that is used to describe America's economy? It is the dollar sum of everything we make in America in a year.

Science - Mr. Menard

Students now have a thorough understanding of how different elements on the periodic table can react and combine to form larger molecules. With this knowledge, students will now have the opportunity to conduct several small-scale chemistry lab activities using common household chemicals.



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NEWSLETTER

*Recess related note: with the temperatures consistently cold now, please remind your child(ren) to dress appropriately for being outside at recess. Many students are still going outside unprepared for the cold and, as a result, are having an unpleasant time outside.

Math - Ms. Zaharis

Our students are wrapping up their work with solving multi-step equations this week. I'm so proud of how well they have been doing with this topic! On Monday, we'll start third quarter with a look at slope! Students will be working with tables, graphs, equations and verbal descriptions of scenarios throughout this unit and becoming experts at making comparisons between relationships..

Algebra students are finishing their work with linear equations, scatterplots, and inverse functions. They are now pretty efficient in using slope-intercept form, standard form, and point-slope form of equations. They seemed to enjoy using technology to explore scatter plots, too! Next week we will begin our work with linear inequalities. This is a quick unit and then we will be moving on to systems of equations.



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NEWSLETTER

Friday, January 5, 2024

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

Well, 2024 is off to a great start with a yucky illness for Mrs. Burgos! I can't WAIT to see the kids next week! I have missed them so much! The students had a week of "Super Fun Grammar," taking notes on pronouns and practicing using them on IXL. They also completed a lot of Membean, which will count towards their 45 minutes due on Tuesday at midnight.

I will be teaching them to write a 5-paragraph thematic essay starting on Monday using A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. I will walk them through each step so that by the end of the year they will be experts!

Happy New Year everyone! (:

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

We are now getting into the history that many of us can remember ourselves. We began the week with Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society and have moved to Ronald Reagan and Reaganomics. Students have viewed slides depicting going from Johnson to Nixon to Ford to Carter to Reagan. Students have been asked to judge these presidents based on their accomplishments and failures. Working around NWEA testing, we'll be starting a summative next week on Reaganomics: "Were Reaganomics Good For America?", where they will read primary sources that will help them answer that question.

Last trivia answer: Relief, Recovery and Reform.

This newsletter's trivia question: What condiment did Ronald Reagan want declared a vegetable for school lunches?

Science - Mr. Menard

This week in science class we are learning about simple chemical reactions by drawing Lewis Dot Structures on paper. This teachers students how atoms of different elements combine to form larger molecules. In the coming couple of weeks we will move into conducting hands-on chemical reactions with common household compounds. Students will be looking great wearing our fancy new safety goggles!



Math - Ms. Zaharis

Happy New Year, Black Bear families! We've resumed our work with solving equations, moving beyond basic two step equations and solving more complex, multi-step equations. We'll even learn about equations that have no solutions or infinitely many solutions.

In algebra we continue to work with various forms of linear equations. We have added point-slope formula to our toolbox and have been converting equations to other forms to help us work more efficiently in solving problems. Next week we will start exploring scatter plots and regression lines.

Important Dates

January 9th - Reading NWEA

January 11th - Math NWEA

January 15th - No School - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 19th - Quarter 2 Ends



Friday, December 15, 2023

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

We just finished reading A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens! The students should be so proud of themselves for reading and comprehending this classic novel. They will be taking a Summative over the book and turning in their comprehension questions on Tuesday (Interim). We will be watching the movie before they leave for break! We will be writing 5-paragraph thematic essays when they return and then we will be starting our Speech unit! Have a great holiday!

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

Mr. Driscoll is out on medical leave. He is healing, and we'll be excited to see him when he returns in the new year.

Science - Mr. Menard

Our first chemistry test went very well last week. Students now have a solid understanding of atomic structure and the layout and patterns on the Periodic Table. We will use this knowledge to now learn about the different ways that elements can chemically bond together to form molecules and compounds.

Math - Ms. Zaharis

We're wrapping up our work with squares and cubes and will be taking a summative next Wednesday. When we return from break we'll be taking a closer look at solving more complex equations.

In algebra we've continued our work with linear functions and have dabbled with piecewise functions this week. We'll also be taking a summative next week. When we return from break we'll be writing linear equations using various forms.



Friday, December 1, 2023

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

We are excited to start our unit on A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens when we return from break. Ask your kids what they think of Ebenezer Scrooge and the many themes Charles Dickens tries to teach us about life. The students will answer comprehension questions while reading the novel and write a 5-paragraph thematic essay once we have finished the book.

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

We are finally ready to leave the Great Depression and begin looking at Post-War America and the 1950's. America's evolution to become the most powerful nation on the planet will be examined. The rise of Communism, the Red Scare, McCarthyism, nuclear weapon proliferation were all challenges of the time. Students will complete a vocabulary assignment, prepare notes from various media sources and evaluate the era.

Answer to last newsletter's trivia question: polio

Today's trivia question to ask your student: What are the "3 R's" of the New Deal?

Science - Mr. Menard

This week's science update is sponsored by Recess: We are going out for recess nearly every day (unless precipitation or extreme cold won't allow for it). The majority of students have been fairly cold this week during recess as they are still dressing for pleasant autumn weather. Please encourage your child to dress appropriately for winter conditions. A reasonable winter coat and hat, at minimum, should be worn to school and used at recess.

Math - Ms. Zaharis

This week we've been having some fun with scientific notation! We are becoming very proficient in converting from standard form (regular numbers) to scientific notation and back again. We've also been adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing all in scientific notation. SO FUN! Next week we'll take a look at squares and cubes and start exploring irrational numbers, too!



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NEWSLETTER

In algebra we have been taking a closer look at linear relationships. We've been graphing using tables, x- and y-intercepts, as well as slope-intercept form! Next week we'll be exploring arithmetic sequences and linear transformations.



Friday, November 17, 2023

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

The students just finished their Responding to Literature unit and now we are working on answering constructed response questions over, "Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl. This is a summative assessment that the students are currently working on. After break, we will be starting A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. LOTS of themes to talk about with this whole-grade novel!

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

From the 1920's and Jazz Age to the 1930's and the Blues: the nation moves from a prosperous, modern decade (the 1920's) to a sullen, discouraged America of the Great Depression of the 1930's. We are studying how the people were in such dire straits that, for the first time in our history, the government had to try to rescue the whole country from economic collapse. We learned how Herbert Hoover didn't know what to do about the Depression and how he was blamed for not dealing with it. Franklin Roosevelt arrives on the scene, and America starts to turn to the better. We will continue to look at the government's growing role in our country. Students are watching videos, viewing slides and reading text (all with worksheets) that explain what happened during this troubled time.

Answer to the last Newsletter's trivia question: The radio

Today's trivia question to ask your students: From what affliction did Franklin D. Roosevelt suffer?

Science - Mr. Menard

Students have been OVERJOYED to receive their very own copies of the Periodic Table of the Elements (PTOTE). Ask your child what they have learned so far both about their Golden PTOTE and their Green PTOTE. We'll spend the coming weeks familiarizing ourselves with the basic layout and patterns hidden in the Periodic Table as we work deeper into our Chemistry unit.



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Math - Ms. Zaharis

We are wrapping up our work with exponent rules, and students will be taking a summative (test) over this on Monday. When we return from break we'll be exploring Scientific Notation as well as squares and cubes.

In Algebra we've been exploring functions. We can identify which relations are functions and which are not. We've also been analyzing key features of graphs. We will finish our work on this with a summative right before our Thanksgiving break.

We hope you all enjoy time with family and friends over the break!

Important Dates

November 21st - Early Release

November 22nd through 26th - No School - Thanksgiving Break

November 28th - Order Deadline for PTO Poinsettia Fundraiser → [Order HERE](#)

November 30th 5 - 7 p.m. - Poinsettia Pick-Up @ SMS



Friday, November 3, 2023

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

The Black Bears are starting a new short story unit where we will focus on irony, comprehension skills and writing constructed response answers. Our first story is "Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl, which the kids always find entertaining! We are continuing to learn grammar skills during Super Fun Grammar Wednesdays in addition to completing 45 minutes of Membean each week.

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

By Friday, we'll be finished the section of the Government Unit covering the 1920's. The summative students are working on is to create a Netflix series on the 1920's with descriptions of four episodes to their 1920's series. This summative will be the first grade of Quarter 2. Next week we begin looking at the 1929 Crash and the 1930's.

Here's the answer to last newsletter's question: The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire

This edition's question: What device brought the World into people's homes in the 1920's?

Science - Mr. Menard

A new quarter means a new unit for us this November! Students have just completed our Measurement & Motion Unit and we are now moving into our sizable chemistry unit. We will spend the rest of the autumn and part of winter studying chemistry. Students will soon learn a great deal about the Periodic Table and will also have some hands-on experience with simple chemical reactions.

Math - Ms. Zaharis

We've been playing with exponents in math class, and the students are really getting the hang of it. They can convert a number with an exponent (a power) into expanded form and know how to evaluate expressions with exponents. They can also multiply and divide powers too. Next we will explore negative exponents and powers of powers.

Our algebra students have just wrapped up their equation solving unit. PHEW! They



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have been solving some tricky ones, including complex multi-step absolute value equations. We'll be exploring functions in our next unit. We'll study domain and range, learn how to map a function, and describe the key features of a graph.

Important Dates

November 6 - 9th - SMS Book Fair - [Online Shopping Link](#)

November 7 - Parent/Teacher Conferences 3:30 - 7 p.m.*

* reach out to your advisor, if you haven't received sign-up information



Friday, October 20, 2023

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

We are wrapping up our Responding to Literature unit where students have been reading their independent, self-selected books and completing four assignments on these books. The fourth assignment is due on Thursday, Oct. 26. We will be starting a short story unit, reading "Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl. Our focus will be on identifying irony and answering comprehension questions using evidence from the text.

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

The Progressive Era was America's answer to The Gilded Age. We are finishing a summative assessment on the Progressive Era at this time and will move into how our government handled the 1920's. The 1920's are often called the first "modern" decade. Much of today's culture has its origins in the '20s.

Question to ask you student over dinner: "What tragic 1911 event in York City took 146 lives and resulted in many safety laws being passed to protect workers?" They should pretty much have this down cold.

Science - Mr. Menard

We have almost completed our Measurement and Motion unit. We will have a Summative Assessment next week. We have done some experimenting with speed using a car track and motion photogates to practice calculating the speed of moving objects. Students typically have fun using these car tracks in the classroom. In addition to this fun, students are also showing great excitement in logging into PowerSchool to check their grades as quarter one closes on October 27. Please let us know if you or your child is having trouble accessing PowerSchool.

Math - Ms. Zaharis

We wrapped up our unit on Expressions and Equations this week with our first summative (test) of the year. This week we also began taking a closer look at powers as we started our unit on Exponents and Scientific Notation. We talked about the difference between a power and an exponent. Be sure to ask your eighth grader what that difference is.



Algebra students continue their work with multi-step equations with a focus on absolute value equations. Next week we'll take a look at proportions as well as literal equations. Students will be wrapping up this unit during the first days of November. Next up? Functions!

Important Dates

October 5 through 23 - Raise Craze PTO Fundraiser → Sign Up [HERE](#). It's not too late!

October 27 - Quarter 1 Ends

November 2 - Parent/Teacher Conferences 4 - 7:30 p.m.*

November 7 - Parent/Teacher Conferences 3:30 - 7 p.m.*

* reach out to your advisor, if you haven't received sign-up information



Friday, October 6, 2023

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

The students are continuing to read their self-selected, independent reading books (many have finished one or more books!) and are now choosing four out of eight assignments to complete on their books. Their first assignment was due Thursday, Oct. 5 and their next due date is Thursday, Oct. 12. They are continuing to complete 45 minutes of Membean weekly and participate in Super Fun Grammar Wednesdays! They are an awesome group of kids!

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

We are beginning a large unit on the American Government. We began with the Gilded Age and Progressivism and how pure capitalism necessitated the involvement of government rules and regulations. Students will learn about the daily lives of people and the events that changed America during that time. People like Andrew Carnagie, Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller, and Thomas Edison will be evaluated on their contributions to society. Progressivism will show the steps the government took to reform the nation.

Science - Mr. Menard

Over the past couple of weeks we have investigated the merits of the Metric System compared to the Customary System of measurement commonly used in the United States. Students are now calculating the motion of objects using metric units as this is standard practice in the sciences around the world.

Math - Ms. Zaharis

We have continued our work with algebraic expressions and have started working with one- and two-step equations and will be moving into more complex equations later in the year. We'll also be translating verbal expressions into mathematical expressions as we wrap up our unit. Students should see their first summative assessment in mid-October.

Algebra students have also been exploring equations, solving complex, multi-step problems. We'll be moving on to solving absolute value equations, proportional relationships, as well as literal equations over the next two weeks.



Curious what math class looks like? Ask your child about boards!

From the PTO

Please join us for our 1st annual SMS Family Day at Schooner Mini Golf! Play Mini Golf and Bring the family! 25% of all mini golf proceeds will be donated to the Saco Middle School PTO on Sunday, October 8th, from 11 am - 4 pm.

Funds raised help support academic enrichment opportunities for our students, supplies for our school and appreciation events for our teachers.

Raffle basket at the door! Win a family 4-pack for mini golf and Schooner Swag!

For more information, please message us on Facebook or get in touch via SMS PTO at sacomiddlepto@gmail.com Thanks for your support!!

Important Dates

October 5 through 23 - Raise Craze PTO Fundraiser → Sign Up [HERE](#)

October 8 - SMS Family Day at Schooner Mini Golf

October 9 - Math NWEA Assessment

October 27 - Quarter 1 Ends

November 2 - Parent/Teacher Conferences 4 - 7 p.m.*

November 7 - Parent/Teacher Conferences 4 - 7 p.m.*

* watch for sign-up information in our next newsletter



BLACK BEARS

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Friday, September 22, 2023

ELA - Mrs. Burgos

Reading Workshop has been the focus of the first few weeks of ELA class. The students have been enjoying their independent, self-selected reading books while focusing on comprehension strategies. We have also started our Super Fun Grammar Wednesdays and our Membean Challenge! We're off to a great start!

Social Studies - Mr. Driscoll

We have just finished our first unit, Economic Systems. Students examined the world's economic systems and evaluated them. We have also been getting to know each other and getting used to how our relationships will develop. There will be few homework assignments in Social Studies, mostly finishing - at home - lessons started in class. Our next unit will be Government, examining liberal vs. conservative, taxation, legislation, and trends that have shaped over the years. The Government Unit will be quite a long one, stretching from roughly 1880 to today. A lot of changes in that time. Please discuss topics with your kids, how you feel about issues, and other events in our world.

Science - Mr. Menard

Hello all and thank you for checking out our Black Bear Newsletter. We will use this document to keep you updated on what is going on in our classrooms throughout the year. In science, we have used these first few weeks of school to get to know each other, establish classroom rules and expectations (students have been ever so happy to practice this part with me!), and to review and practice with some basic scientist skills and vocabulary. In the next few weeks, we will be doing a little more practice with measurement and motion calculations and will then move into a much bigger unit on chemistry.

Math - Ms. Zaharis

Black Bear math students are off to a great start this year. We kicked off the year getting to know one another and learning how to work with one another by collaborating to solve several challenge tasks. Ask your child about the Tax Collector.



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Students in eighth grade math have been reviewing how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide integers; those pesky positive and negative whole numbers! We've also been simplifying algebraic expressions. Next up? The Distributive Property! Students should see their first interim next week.

Students in Algebra have been very busy translating expressions, simplifying complex expressions, and justifying their work with mathematical properties. We've explored absolute value and descriptive modeling. Students will see their first summative this week.

We're all looking forward to a great year!