



Newsletter

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Vol. VIII, No.17 May 23, 2008

<http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/brown>

Next Newsletter submission deadline: June 5, 2008 at Noon

Dates to Remember

May			
Monday	26	No School	Memorial Day
Tuesday	27	Brown Band, Wind Ensemble & Orchestra Concert	7:30pm in Brown auditorium
Tuesday	27	Brown's Book Fair Café Evening	Books for incoming 6 th , 7 th , 8 th , and soon to be 9 th graders. 6-8pm in the Brown Music Room
Wednesday	28	All Vocal Group Concert	7:30pm in Brown auditorium
Wednesday-Thursday	28-29	Brown's Book Fair	Wed & Thurs 8am-3:30pm Thurs evening 6-7pm
June			
Friday	6	Step Up Day for 5 th & 8 th Graders	5 th Graders visiting Brown. Current 6 th graders dismissed at 11:30am. 7 th graders follow regular schedule. 8 th graders visit Newton South or Newton North High Schools
Thursday	12	PTO Parent/Teacher End of Year Thank-you Coffee	8-9am in Brown Library. All welcome
Tuesday	17	8 th Grade Graduation party	7-9pm – Brown cafeteria & gym – tickets must be purchased in advance
Wednesday	18	8 th Grade to Canobie Lake Park	8:30am-2:30pm – permission slip needed!
Thursday	19	8 th Grade Graduation	9:30am at Newton South High School Field House. Small reception to follow at South
Thursday	19	Last Day of School for Students	Early Release at 11:30am
Friday	20	Last Day of School for Teachers	

From the PTO

BROWN BOOK FAIR IS HERE!

Realistic Fiction, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Humor, Sports, Science, and many more topics, plus suggested summer reading from Brown's librarian, Ms. Italiano, will be available at the Brown Book Fair. Books selected specifically for 6-9th graders and their parents by BookEnds, an independent bookstore in Winchester, recently featured in the Boston Globe article: 'Taking Consumerism out of School Book Fairs!'

Book Fair hours: Tuesday, May 27, 6-8pm; Wednesday, May 28, 8am-3:30pm; Thursday, May 29, 8am-03:30pm and 6-7pm. Incoming 5th graders, friends, staff, and Brown families are invited to come to the Book Fair's evenings.

BOOK FAIR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Please contact Lucia at luciadolan@rcn.com if you are available to help out for an hour or two at the Brown Book Fair (hours listed above).

REMINDER FROM THE 8TH GRADE GRADUATION COMMITTEE

All 8th grade parents should have received a special e-mail with important information about the Canobie Lake Trip, graduation party and graduation ceremony. If you did not receive the email, please contact Robin Zelle at 617-332-8246 or zelle3@verizon.net to ensure you receive subsequent email related to 8th grade events.

Included in the email was a sign-up sheet for 8th grade events as well as a link to a permission slip for Canobie Lake Park. Please send the sign-up portion of the e-mail, signed permission slip and check to school by Friday, May 30. These can be left in the main office or with your child's contact teacher.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FROM ALL GRADES

The 8th Grade Graduation Committee is looking for parents of kids in other grades to chaperone the 8th grade graduation party on Tuesday, June 17 from 7-9pm. We are also looking for help in putting together a graduation DVD of pictures that have been collected over the past year. Please let Robin Zelle at zelle3@verizon.net know if you would like to help.

PTO PARENT/TEACHER END OF YEAR THANK-YOU COFFEE

Please join us on Thursday, June 12 in the Brown library for the Parent/Teacher End of Year Thank you Coffee. Everyone is welcome for coffee and conversation from 8-9 am. Feel free to stay, socialize and share your feedback and suggestions to help us make the PTO even better next year!

BE A PRESIDENT

Brown PTO is looking for a 3rd co-President to join co-Presidents Lisa Frank and Lucia Dolan for the 2008-2009 school year. Co-Presidents help oversee PTO fundraisers and fun-raiser and facilitate school-home communications (such as PTO newsletters, school directories, evening topic forums). It takes about 3-5 hours a week including occasional daytime and evening meetings. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Lucia or Mimi at brownpto@brownpto.org

END OF THE YEAR TEACHER GIFTS

Please remember that Newton Public School policy prohibits teachers from accepting gifts from current students. If you wish thank a teacher or teachers, please consider donating to the PTO Library or Music Funds, or to the Newton Schools Foundation "Honor Thy Teacher" campaign. For details about the "Honor Thy Teacher" campaign, please visit www.newtonschoolsfoundation.org. To contribute to the PTO library or music fund, simply send a check to the school, payable to Brown PTO (Brown PTO, 125 Meadowbrook Road, Newton, MA 02459); include a note with your child's name, teacher(s) being honored, and the fund you wish to support. The PTO will make sure that the teacher is notified about your donation.

"HONOR YOUR TEACHER"

Your name: _____ Date: _____

Your child's name: _____ Amount: _____

I'd like to make a donation to the Library Book Fund to honor the following staff member(s):

Please feel free to contact us with ideas, questions, anything!
Mimi Karys (617-964-2908) and Lucia Dolan (617-332-1893), brownpto@brownpto.org
PTO Co-Presidents

Brown News

STEP UP DAY ON FRIDAY, JUNE 6

Please note that on Friday, June 6, 5th graders will be visiting Brown. Current 6th graders dismissed at 11:30am. 7th graders follow regular schedule. 8th graders visit Newton South or Newton North High Schools

PROPOSED CHANGES TO NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAM OF STUDIES AND SCHEDULE

Notes from the Middle School Parent Information Meeting on the **BRIM Initiative**, Tuesday, May 13 at 7:30pm in the Oak Hill Middle School auditorium have been included at the end of this newsletter for parents who were unable to make the meeting. The notes were taken by Lucia Dolan.

NOTES FROM THE SCHOOL NURSE MAUREEN BISAGA

- 6th grade parents, please continue to send in updated health forms. There are still a hundred students not up to date who will not be able to start 7th grade unless these forms are submitted before start of school in September. Students not in compliance will be notified by email in the future.
- Please remember to plan time to pick up your child's medication at the end of school year. Medications cannot be left in health office over summer and must be disposed of if not picked up.
- If your child will not be returning to Newton schools and you need a copy of their health records please let me know as soon as possible particularly students headed for high school. These charts get passed on June 3rd to the high schools and it's difficult to regain access to them after they are transferred.
- Lastly, with the potential for warmer weather-please remember to send your child with a water bottle particularly when they have PE or are doing after school sports to reduce the chance of dehydration. There is no place to buy water except at lunch within the school building.

From Newton Public Schools

NEWTON SOUTH STAGE PRESENTS KINDERTRANSPORT

May 29, 30 and 31 at 7:30pm. Newton South Lab Theatre at Newton South High School. Tickets: \$8. www.southstage.org
617-559-6594. \$8 General Admission

SPACE 2008 IS STILL ACCEPTING STUDENTS FOR THIS SUMMER

SPACE is an enrichment program of the Newton Public Schools for students entering kindergarten through grade 9. Lower School (grades K -4) students are placed in age level groups working on our summer theme of "The Wonderful World of Nature." Upper School (grades 5-9) students are able to take a variety of electives courses in the arts, sports, sciences, academics and other interesting challenges. The program is held at Day Middle School in Newtonville. Our staff is Newton teaching staff aided by graduate school, college and high school students. We have extended day hours. The program runs for 4 weeks. If you haven't made plans yet for the summer, think about joining the fun and learning opportunities at SPACE 2008! SPACE@newton.k12.ma.us or 617-559-6150

NEWTON'S CHILD ASSAULT PREVENTION (CAP) PROGRAM IS SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

We can't do it without you. Each year CAP volunteer Prevention Specialists present 125 workshops to students in Newton's kindergarten, 2nd and 5th grade classrooms. Working in teams of 3, we teach Newton children that they have the right to be Safe, Strong and Free with their friends and peers, with adult strangers, and with those who are trusted to take care of them. Using simple and age appropriate language we address bullying, stranger safety, and sexual assault by known persons.

We are looking for parents who are interested in becoming volunteer Prevention Specialists. Please join us. The next training will begin in October. CAP volunteers include parents, grandparents, retirees and other community members who are interested in child safety, and who can contribute 6 hours per month for one school year, October - May. For more information, please call Gail Sommer, 617-969-5906, ext. 143 or gsommer@ncscweb.org or visit the CAP page on our website at www.ncscweb.org for a description of this very rewarding volunteer position.

Community News

CITY-WIDE 2008 SUMMER BASEBALL SEASON

Registration now underway. This program for 10-12 year olds is being run by Newton East Little League, but all are invited to take part. This league serves eligible boys and girls who were born on or between May 1, 1995 & April 30, 1998. All new applicants must reside in Newton OR attend the Newton Public Schools. The season begins in early July and runs through the middle of August. Player evaluations take place Saturday June 14 from 10-12 at Jay Gordon Field. (Rain date Sunday June 15, 3-5). Applications and program information at: www.eteamz.com/newtoneastll/news/index.cfm?cat=267730. All registrations must be done on-line at the web site. Registration deadline is Monday June 16. Coaching info is also available on-line. If you do not have on-line access, please call: Jodi Detjen at 617-312-2733.

FALL REGISTRATION FOR NEWTON GIRLS SOCCER IS NOW OPEN

All--Intramural and Travel--should register now. Those planning to take part in the Fall 2008 Travel program are urged to register right away, because the placement process is about to begin. Register even if you signed up for and attended the travel tryouts. You will not be placed on a team without registering. Travel registration is now for the entire year: Fall '08 and Spring '09. Please Note - Due to the late registration start, the official deadline for Travel registration has been moved back to May 23rd, but that's just days away. Go to www.newtongirlssoccer.org to register on-line. Questions? registrar@newtongirlssoccer.org or 617-527-7728. Newton Girls Soccer, P.O. Box 610333, Newton, MA. 02461.

AN EVENING WITH BELOVED AUTHOR, JUDY BLUME

Imagine an evening with Judy Blume, author of "*Are you there God? It's me Margaret*", the "*Fudge*" books and the new "*Pain and the Great One*" chapter book series about a brother and sister. A conversation with Q&A session followed by a book signing reception with famed author will take place on Friday, June 6, 5-6:30pm at the Pine Manor College, 400 Heath St, Newton. Books will be on sale for signing, or you may bring your own copy to be signed. The cost is \$20/person. The event is a fundraiser for the Ward Elementary School. Seating is limited. Advance tickets purchase is suggested. For more information visit www.wardpto.org/judyblume or call Allison Donelan at 617-332-3355.

DEPENDABLE CLEANERS READ TO RIDE SUMMER READING PROGRAM

Beginning Monday, May 19, Dependable Cleaners will begin accepting entry forms. This summer 12 bikes will be given away over the course of 6 weeks. We would love to invite your teachers, staff and students to visit Dependable Cleaners' website to print out an entry form and start reading! www.dependablecleaners.com/read_to Ride_2008.html

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HIKE-A-THON

Mark your calendars for the 13th Annual "Take a Hike for Humanity" hike-a-thon, sponsored by Habitat for Humanity Greater Boston. This year's hike takes place on Saturday and Sunday, June 7-8, at Blue Hills Reserve in Milton, MA. Register as an individual or as part of a team (\$25 per hiker) for either day, then set a goal and start collecting pledges from friends, family members, neighbors, etc. Walkers of all ages and ability levels -- and their dogs -- are welcome! Registration forms are available at the school office or on-line at www.habitatboston.org/events.html, or call 617-423-2223 to request one. All proceeds benefit the Newton Habitat project. When you register, make sure to specify that you are raising money for Habitat Greater Boston, as there are many other Habitat offices participating.

Classified

GUITAR, DRUMS, AND RECORDING ARTS LESSONS

Syracuse University music industry major and songwriter available now through August to teach drums and guitar (without having to read music) and computer recording arts in my home recording studio. All types of learners welcome! Newton South 2007 graduate lives in Newton Highlands. Email Nate Stein at nhstein@syr.edu

SPORTS AND BALL SKILLS COACH

Syracuse University freshman (Newton South Varsity Basketball player, NAA Coach, and former head of referees) available now through August to coach your child on motor-planning, ball skills, and basketball. All types of learners welcome! Email Nate Stein at nhstein@syr.edu

BRIM Initiative Meeting Notes

NOTES FROM THE MAY 13TH PARENT INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON THE BRIM INITIATIVE

The 4 middle school principals and Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Keegan, meet with Middle School parents at Oak Hill's auditorium to discuss the proposed changes to Newton's Middle Schools.

****The schedule is a draft subject to changes from the final budget, teacher union negotiations and parent input****

Overall Goals

- Create professional learning communities among faculty
 - more time for teachers to collaborate
 - create common student assessments that assess students along the way not just at the end of a lesson
 - create solid curriculum benchmarks
- Create more interdisciplinary learning

Four Guiding Questions to BRIM Process

1. What do we want all students to know and be able to do?
2. How do we assess that knowledge or skill?
3. What do we do if students have not reached that goal?
4. What do we do for those students who have?

All Middle Schools

- Go to a 5 day schedule with 'Flipped Fridays'. On Fridays the morning and afternoon schedules rotate (flip) every other week, so that one class is not always the last class of the week.
- Will be on a trimester schedule.
- School day still not fixed due to bus limitations. Proposed 8:30 am to 3 pm day for all Schools. Tuesday's 8:30 to 2:15 with all classes shortened slightly to fit the shorter day (42 mins. Per class versus 50 min. per class on a regular day).
- 2 breaks of locker time (1 morning, 1 afternoon) built into schedule to help students stay organized and reduce backpack weight.
- 25 min. lunch blocks.

6th Grade Program

- Math, Science, Social Studies and English daily
- World Languages 4 times a week (French, Spanish and Chinese at all schools; Italian at Day and Bigelow)
- Physical Ed. 3 times a week
- Meets 3 times a week. Rotation is one 7 week program of Music, Art, Tech/Engineering, Drama or Health. By the end of the school year students will have had 7 weeks of each course.
- Community period once a week (school assemblies, study skills programs, community work, a time for teachers to connect with students in a developmentally appropriate way)
- Math and Reading Seminars (MaRS) 4 times a week*
- Band, Orchestra, and Chorus electives 2 times a week*

*Students will be able to take 2 of the 3 music electives but will give up 2 MaRS periods for each elective. For example if a student took Band, they would have Band 2 times a week and MaRS 2 times a week. MaRS is a direct instruction program. MaRS will focus on expository reading, note taking, vocabulary building based on Latin roots, challenge and support in math. The Math and English Curriculum Coordinators are building the MaRS program. Special Ed pupil services will happen during MaRS time.

7th & 8th Grade Program

- Math, Science, Social Studies and English daily
- World Languages 5 times a week (French, Spanish and Chinese at all schools; Italian at Day and Bigelow)
- Meets 3 times a week. Rotation is one 7 week program of Music, Art, Tech/Engineering, Drama or Health. By the end of the school year students will have had 7 weeks of each course.
- Physical Ed. 2 times a week
- Community period once a week (same as 6th grade)
- Band, Orchestra, Chorus and Latin electives 2 times a week*
- Extensions 4 times a week*

*Students can take 1 or 2 of these electives. If they take 1 elective, students have 2 Extensions periods a week. If they take 2 electives, students have 0 Extension periods a week. Extensions period is not fully determined (a work in progress), possibly a time for students to speak with teachers, receive academic support or challenge, public services (SPED) and possibly guidance programs.

Parent/Student Questions:

1. Is MaRS required? MaRS is similar to team time. Families will have to make individual choices between music electives or MaRS time.
2. Several questions about adding Journalism to the 6th grade electives. Parents noted that producing the Daytimer taught more than writing skills. It also taught editing, layout, advertising, time management. Brenda Keegan replied that studies have shown the academic benefits of music instruction and that journalism may be worked into the MaRS program.
3. Will Journalism be a 7th and 8th grade elective? They are looking into it.
4. How will students in 2 electives, who miss MaRS or Extension time, be able to seek help from teachers? Still under work.
5. How will challenge curriculum be created? They are working with Curriculum Coordinators to create challenge curriculum. Curriculum Coordinators will be doing days of residency in each of the 4 middle schools.
6. Can you switch a World Language between grades? No, students can switch in High School. 7th and 8th graders will not be able to switch into Chinese until High School.
7. Will new schedule affect Parent/Teacher Conferences? No, P/T conferences negotiated with Teachers Union. Some schools experimenting with teacher team/parent conferences, so parents can meet with more than 2 teachers.
8. Will all Middle Schools be losing same amount? Tried to balance losses fairly.
9. Is the draft schedule on-line? E-mail principals for a copy.
10. Will schedule be affected by override result? If override passes NPS will keep as many electives as possible, if not the Middle Schools (together) lose 4 teachers.

BROWN PTO NEWSLETTER. The newsletter will publish, at the sole discretion of the PTO, articles and other information of interest to the Brown Middle School Community. SUBMISSIONS: by email to editor@brownpto.org, by US mail to Brown Middle School PTO, Newsletter Editor, 125 Meadowbrook Road, Newton, MA 02459, or by drop off in the Brown Office Mailroom. Deadline Thursday, noon. See the latest newsletter at www.brownpto.org.