

Weekly Calendar

Middle School Student Led Conferences

Tuesday, March 13 th
3:00 - 5:00 pm

Grade 6 and 7 2012-13 Course Registration Information Sessions

Tuesday, March 13 th
3:15 - 4:05 pm
& 4:10 - 5:00 pm in Room 70

K-12 Parent Coffee: Focus on Homework

Wednesday, March 14 th ,
Elementary Hall, 10:00 am

Middle School Soccer Sign-Ups

Mon. & Tues. March 12 th and
13 th at Lunch outside the MS

Track & Field Sign-ups

Mon., Tues. & Wed. March 12-
14 at Lunch - High school Field

Middle School Spirit Week

March 25-29

Schedule at a Glance

Sunday	March 11	3B
Monday	March 12	4F
Tuesday	March 13	5C
Wednesday	March 14	6G
Thursday	March 15	7D

March 8, 2012

Dear Parents,

Thank you for reading this week's edition of the Middle School News and Views. We have just completed our Trimester Two "Celebrations of Learning" assembly. The assembly served to highlight the many authentic learning experiences that our Middle School students have been engaged in throughout the trimester. Poetry, Reader's Theater, and exhibitions of learning in Science and Social Studies were all part of the celebration. We also paid tribute to all of our students who have been involved in our rich and varied co-curricular program over the course of the last twelve weeks as well as those students who have consistently demonstrated good learning traits in the classroom. The assembly was an excellent reminder of the opportunities our students have to pursue life-long learning both inside and outside the classroom here in the Middle School. We are proud of our students and commend the teachers that guide them each day.

Trimester Two Report Cards

As you know students received their Trimester Two report cards today. **A reminder that we have issued our Trimester Two report cards electronically**. Parents were emailed their POLAR usernames and passwords earlier this week and students received their own usernames and passwords in Advisory this morning. Parents and students should log onto POLAR with their username and password to access, download, and print the report card from home. Parents can also save a copy of the report on their own computers at home. Our standards-based report card provides students and parents with valuable information related to learning traits and academic achievement. Narrative comments are provided for all students. We hope that you will take the time this weekend to review your child's second trimester progress and will have conversations with them about their learning. Please feel free to contact us or your child's teachers if you have any questions.

Middle School Student Led Conferences, Tuesday, March 13th

"Student Led Conferences put students in charge of their own learning, give students a better handle on their own progress, and show parents that student achievement is in the student's hands, not theirs (or the teacher's)."

Dr. Dennis Harper

"By furthering the goals of student learning through formative electronic portfolios, Educators realize the true promise of using technology to both improve and showcase student achievement". - Dr. Helen Barrett

As we have previously announced in the Middle School News and Views, we will host our annual Student Led Conferences on **Tuesday, March 13 th from 3:15 - 5:00 pm**. Student Led Conferences are a wonderful opportunity for parents to listen to their children reflect upon their learning and to observe samples of their work. This year, in conjunction with our 1:1 laptop program, much of the student work that will be shared with you will be displayed in electronic portfolios, or e-portfolios, of learning. This is an exciting step forward for us.

Student Led Conferences will be hosted in your child's Advisory teacher's room. These conferences will take place after school from 3:15 until 5:00 pm. There will be two 50 minutes sessions, one from 3:15 until 4:05 pm and the other from 4:10 until 5:00 pm. Students and parents are expected to attend. As parents, you should have received notification from your child's Advisory teacher regarding which of the two time slots they have been scheduled for. If you have yet to receive this information, please contact your child's Advisory teacher.

Following the conference, we will email all parents a link to a Zoomerang survey so that we can get your feedback on the Student Led Conference experience. Please be on the lookout for this email on Tuesday afternoon. Your feedback is valued and appreciated. Additionally, we encourage you to read the article on student-led conferences in the Counselor's Corner section of this week's News and Views. We look forward to seeing many of you on campus next Tuesday afternoon. We thank you in advance for your participation and support of your child's learning. Please contact your child's Advisory teacher or call the Middle School Office if you have any questions.

For Grade 6 and Grade 7 Parents - Course Registration for 2012-13

Also on Tuesday afternoon, in addition to the Student Led Conferences, our Counselors, Ms. Schulte and Ms. Duke, will be offering up two informational sessions related to Middle School course registration for 2012-13 for our current Grade 6 and Grade 7 parents. These sessions, one from 3:15 - 4:05 pm and another from 4:10 - 5:00 pm will take place in Room 70. We hope that our Grade 6 and 7 parents attending the Student Led Conferences will also make time to attend one of these two informational sessions about our Middle School program of studies for 2012-13. Ms. Schulte and Ms. Duke will be explaining the course registration process for our Grade 6 and Grade 7 students, which will begin later next week. This is a valuable information session for you, as parents, to learn about the Middle School program of studies for the 2012-13 school year, which will help you help your child make informed decisions about their schedule.

We also want to thank all of the Grade 8 parents who turned out last Monday evening for the Grade 8 into 9 Parent Information Night. Thanks as well to Grade 9 Counselor, Ms. Cuthbert, and High School Principal, Ms. Basnight, for providing parents with important information concerning High School course registration. Grade 8 parents and students are reminded to complete and return the High School course registration card (it's pink!) to the Middle School Counseling Office by Wednesday, March 14 th .

K-12 Principal's Coffee, Wednesday, March 14 th in the Elementary Hall

We remind all Middle School parents to mark your calendars and join us on **Wednesday, March 14 th at 10:00 am** in the Elementary Hall for a K-12 coffee focusing on the issue of homework.

If you have been reading the News and Views, you know that this semester the faculty and staff of Cairo American College have been reading about "best practice" in the use of homework and have been reflecting on their own practice. In the Middle School (and in the Elementary and High Schools) we have been discussing the development of a homework philosophy. The end result of these meetings and discussions will be the publishing of a K-12 Homework Philosophy along with division specific guidelines.

Next Wednesday's K -12 parent coffee will ask parents who attend to reflect on the same topics our faculty are currently discussing related to homework. We ask that you come to the coffee having already read the article reached by this link - Rethinking Homework: Best practices that support diverse needs by Dr. Cathy Vatterott.

<http://www.cacegypt.org/HS/PDF/vatHWarticle.pdf>

The article is a synopsis of the reading we have required of our faculty and will help to give context to our time together. Other articles related to homework can be found on the front page of the CAC parent intranet <http://parents.cacegypt.org/> .

During the coffee we will ask parents to react to and discuss various statements of belief from the reading. Your thoughts will help us to understand the issue of homework from yet another perspective while the reading, itself, will familiarize you with the current research in homework "best practice." We look forward to seeing many of you in attendance.

Change to Community Advisory Team (CAT) structure

The administration K-12 has spent some time evaluating the effectiveness of our current CAT system in disseminating information to the wider community. We have discussed this at our two previous Middle School CAT team meetings. Going into next year, it was decided that we will try something new in the hopes of increasing communication and transparency. Beginning with our April CAT team meeting, we will conduct open forums for anyone from the community who wishes to attend. To prepare the agenda, we will do the following:

- The Principal will publish an agenda two weeks before the upcoming CAT/Community Forum meeting in the weekly News and Views.
- Community members wishing to add other items to the agenda are asked to contact their CAT representative within a week to share their agenda items. The CAT member, in turn, will collect and collate the agenda items to share with the Principal. Please note that only general agenda items are

appropriate to a Community Forum. Please do not submit agenda items that only pertain to your child or a small group of students. Your CAT team member can help identify with whom you should raise those concerns. (e.g.: teacher, administration, etc.).

- The Principal will publish the extended agenda (including the items raised by the community) in the weekly publication immediately preceding the CAT/Community Forum meeting.

Once again, we will initiate this process at the April CAT Community Forum, which is scheduled for Wednesday, April 18 th . We will follow the process outlined above prior to the April meeting. In the meantime, should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Ferguson or any of the Middle School CAT members:

Allison Howes	(Grade 6)	016-264-2184	tahowes@gmail.com
Julie D'Attoma	(Grade 6)	010-555-6197	jdattoma@mac.com
Annette Schrama	(Grade 7)	019-645-9774	schrannette@hotmail.com
Margot Martherus	(Grade 7)	018-104-0021	margotmartherus@hotmail.com
Amiee House	(Grade 8)	018-001-7770	cougarsinthehouse@hotmail.com
Claudine Rodrigues	(Grade 8)	016-998-5317	kctmar@gmail.com
Dalia Radwan	(PTO)	012-312-3480	dmradwan@hotmail.com

We wish you all an enjoyable weekend and thank you again for reading this week's Middle School News and Views.

Andrew Ferguson

Principal

aferguson@cacegypt.org

Courtney Bailey

Assistant Principal

cbailey@cacegypt.org





Community Activities

From the Middle & High School Library

The Hunger Games - This is your last chance to read the novel before the movie comes out! The Cross-Generational Book Club will meet in the MHS Library at lunchtime to eat pizza and discuss the first book in Suzanne Collins's Hunger Games Trilogy on Wednesday, March 21. That still leaves you two weeks to read this intense YA novel. If you plan on attending, please sign up at the library circulation desk or send an email to Beau Cain at bcain@cacegypt.org so we will know how much pizza to buy! Students, staff, parents, teachers - all are invited to participate.

PTO Egyptian Culture Committee Field Trips March is Field trip time for the PTO Egyptian Culture Committee .

Come join us on one of these great trips. All trips are open to all CAC ID holders.

- **Tuesday March 20th from noon-back at CAC at 3pm** for school pick up: Visit St. Mary's Church on the Maadi corniche followed by pick-nick lunch on a Felucca.
- **Saturday March 24th from 4-10pm** Visit of the Azhar Park, dinner there, followed by the whirling dervishes show at Wikalet el Ghouri.
- **Saturday March 31st from 7am-9pm** Day trip to Alexandria, we start with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, seafood lunch, and visit Greco-Roman Alex.

In order to go on a field trip you must sign-up by March 15th. Trips are on a first come first serve basis. Prices for each trip will be determined on March 16th and will be emailed to those who signed up.

For info, questions, comments, please email, SMS or call sherine.elbanhawy@gmail.com or +201002114215

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 2012

Food, Games & Entertainment

Organized by

the PTO & the Country Representatives

at CAC

Saturday March 17th
11am- 3pm

TICKETS FOR INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL WILL GO ON SALE

Sunday, March 11- Thursday, March 15

2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Elementary pick up area.

Entrance Ticket : 15 L.E. (includes 5 L.E. coupon)
Coupon book of 10 coupons : 50 L.E.

Buy early and save, tickets on the day of the festival will cost 20 L.E.

COUNTRY BASKET

should be items from your Country that will be attractive and have people buy raffle tickets to win it. The items should be placed in a Basket of your own and wrapped the way that will represent your Country, preferably a clear wrap would be better so people would see through. It is totally will be your taste.

Please bring the baskets wrapped and ready for display the day of the Fair.

Thank you,

Samia Wadman, 0122-103-7880 or e-mail samiaw@aol.com

Andrea Smithinsky, 0122-000-1460

BOOK FAIR BOOTH FOR THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Don't miss the Book Fair at the International Festival, not only will you get this great chance to buy books for the upcoming holidays, you will also get a chance to purchase "The Atomic Weight of Secrets" and get your book signed by our very own CAC parent/author Eden Bowditch. Remember to pass by and not miss this last chance at buying some great titles for ES, MS, HS & Adults.

For any queries or suggestions please contact:

Suzanne Harrison 0120 100 1007 ssamoharrison@gmail.com

or Sherine Elbanhawy 0100 211 4215 sherine.elbanhawy@gmail.com



PTO CAC International Fair 2012
Saturday, March 17 th 2012, 11am to 3pm.

THREE CHEERS

Three Cheers to all of our Middle School students for a successful trimester of learning. It was great to celebrate your accomplishments today.
Three cheers to all Middle School students as you prepare for the upcoming student-led conferences. We know that your parents look forward to learning about your learning.

Three Cheers to all of the Middle School students who have excelled at their Learning Traits, while earning marks of "Consistently" or Usually" throughout the school year. A list of these students can be found by accessing the link below. Well done.

<http://www.cacegypt.org/ms/PDF/LearningTraits.pdf>

Three Cheers to those Middle School students who had Perfect Attendance during Trimester Two. Impressive stuff. A list of these students can be found by accessing the link below.

<http://www.cacegypt.org/ms/PDF/PerfectAttendanceTriII.pdf>

Counselors Corner

Student-Led Conferences

Assessing and Reporting Progress Through Student-Led Portfolio Conferences

Adapted from an article by Carol Smith

Students hold the key to much of what they know and are able to do. They understand their strengths and they can identify the things that challenge them. Too often however, they are the last people consulted in developing procedures or practices for the assessment of their own learning. Too often the procedures and practices we do employ to measure student learning focus on instant recall of prescribed information. Rarely do they measure what students truly understand about themselves and their learning. Rarely do students have the opportunity to reflect on their own learning and growth, and rarely are they asked to use what they know and are able to do to demonstrate that growth and understanding.

Assessment practices must create opportunities for students to connect and make sense of the pieces of their learning as well. Students must have opportunities to use their skills and knowledge to demonstrate their understanding of issues and ideas. Multiple assessment strategies are needed to validate the multiple ways students make sense of their learning. Students need time to reflect on the work they do and to make the connections between and among tasks. This personal understanding, this personal integration of knowledge, is at the heart of the best assessment practices.

“Students hold
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"Assess:" The word comes from Latin and means "to sit beside." The original meaning conjures up an image that could serve us well in our search for assessments that truly get at the heart of what is learned and understood by students. It suggests an attitude about assessment that moves away from standardization of learning and test score averages, and puts the assessment focus where it truly belongs - on the students themselves. The student-led portfolio conference gives parents the perfect opportunity to "sit beside" the student in a most purposeful way.

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means "to sit beside."

Students hold important information about what they know and what they are able to do, as well as what they don't know and are unable to do. Given the opportunity, students can discuss their learning and their growth competently with others. A portfolio of work contains concrete evidence of that learning and growth, and offers the perfect vehicle for discussing progress.

The portfolio offers students a way to organize the work from all parts of their school life, as well as important experiences outside of school. It allows them to connect both the pieces of work and experiences into the larger context of their learning, and to see how each piece and experience impacts the others. Creating the portfolio and preparing for the conference asks students to re-examine past work and to think about the strengths and the challenges of that work. It demands reflection and evaluation and offers students an opportunity to report their progress in a way that engages them in purposeful conversation about learning with their parents.

Organizing Portfolios

Many schools are moving toward offering a more global organizational structure for a student's portfolio of work. For example, the portfolio can be divided into the vital results sections: Communication, Reasoning and Problem Solving, Personal Development, and Civic and Social Responsibility or Learning Outcomes sections: communicating, thinking and caretaking/caregiving. This division offers students a wider view of their accomplishments. It allows work from a variety of disciplines to be included in the same category, again reinforcing the connections among the disciplines and the universality of particular skills and attitudes. A multiple bar graph becomes less of a math assignment, the persuasive essay less of an English assignment, and both are seen more correctly as ways to communicate information and ideas. This reorganization of work away from the disciplines and into more global categories validates the relevance of the work in a larger context.

Student portfolios contain work samples from all areas of a student's school life, as well as documentation of other learnings and accomplishments outside of school. All work, including that previously assessed by both teacher and student, is reexamined and sorted for inclusion in one of the Vital Results sections. For some students this is a difficult process since it is hard to look critically at work accomplished and then place it somewhere in the bigger picture of understanding what was actually learned. Even more difficult is to see this sorting, categorizing, analyzing, and generalizing as an integral piece of the learning process itself.

Student, Teacher, and Parent Roles

The student's main responsibility in the portfolio process is to create a portfolio of work, making serious decisions about how and why a particular piece fits into a particular section. It is at this time that the connections between and among the separate subjects become clear and the universality of some skills and processes is highlighted. Upon completion, students "rehearse" the portfolio conference with a peer and then with a teacher, discussing the body of work as evidence of learning, before taking the portfolio home for parent review. At the conference, the student is clearly in charge of the conversation and ready for any difficulties that may come up. Students set new goals based on the challenges they have identified.

The teacher maintains the organizational framework for the portfolio process: storage, folders, forms, checklists, as well as providing class time and support for the portfolio organization and rehearsal. Teachers help schedule the conference times and are present to greet parents. During the conference, teachers are available to support students if needed but, for the most part, stay in the background.

The focus of the conference should be on learning and growth, not a "show and tell" display of work. The conference is a time for parents to "sit beside" their child, listen to and trust their child's assessment of his/her own learning, and ask good questions. The parent works with the child to set new goals based on the discussion during the conference. When asked to share their opinions about the portfolio process with those new to it, parents and students familiar with the process had this to say during a 1995 Alpha Team parent forum in Shelburne, Vermont:

- Students value the ability to critically analyze their work. This ability has proven valuable in high school.
- Student-led conferences offer students a real voice in the assessment of their learning.
- The first portfolio conference can be overwhelming...for the student and the parent.
- The portfolio conference is a "performance"...students are nervous and need support.
- The primary job of the parent is to listen.
- Parents should step back and let the student do things his/her way. They should save concerns until the portfolio presentation is over.
- There is sometimes a struggle between parent expectations and the student's own understanding of quality, quantity, and presentation.
- Shortfalls in the portfolio are good motivators for improvement the next time.
- Questions should be open-ended. ("Why is this a good example of...?" or "Tell me about this piece.")

- Refinement in subsequent conferences is of particular value.
- Mutual respect is emphasized and nurtured.
- Students view the portfolio conference as a "day of reckoning."
- The portfolio conference is part of the process of learning. Both its successes and weaknesses are valuable in informing the next steps in that process.

Summary

Portfolio conferences offer students, parents, and teachers the opportunity for a sustained and focused conversation about learning. They honor the student as knowledgeable about his/her accomplishments and offer students the chance to set goals to address areas that challenge him/her. The portfolio itself becomes a treasured collection of work samples that shows growth and expertise in a variety of areas, connecting content, concepts, and skills from the disciplines in an integrated and natural way. By granting students an active and meaningful role in assessing and interpreting their own learning, we provide an authentic context for self-evaluation, a context that fosters accountability and the honest appraisal of both successes and challenges.

<http://www.amle.org/Publications/WebExclusive/Portfolio/tabid/650/Default.aspx>

Ms. Schulte (A-K)

Ms. Duke (L-Z)