February 2012

PENNWOOD POST

Pennwood Middle School

Cyber Safety/Cyber Bullying Issue

February 2012
Dear Parents,

Marking period number three is now officially underway. Grade 8 students have begun the process of scheduling for high school and we are beginning to think about the transition of 5th grade students in the middle school.

Please mark your calendars, **PSSA testing will take place from March 12-15** for all middle school students (6th, 7th, and 8th) in the areas of reading and mathematics. Testing times are all between 8:30 and 11:30 AM. Please do not schedule appointments for the mornings of testing. Students will be required to makeup any assessments that they miss for any reason. **Please note that this year the middle school campus will be dismissing early at 12:00 PM on March 13th and 14th due to testing.** No lunches will be served on those two days. Stay tuned for additional information in the upcoming weeks. Then following the spring break in April, our 8th grade students will participate in the writing and science PSSA tests.

At the end of the February, Pennwood's Unity Team has organized a two day event to bring the Challenge Day program to Pennwood. On February 28th and February 29th, a 100 students each day in conjunction with staff, administration, and community volunteers will participate in this full-day program to "Be the Change." Challenge Day addresses some common issues seen at the middle school level such as gossip, cliques, teasing, stereotypes, bullying, and the hidden pressures to create an image or live up to the expectations of others. For more information about Challenge Day, please visit www.challengeday.org.

This is also a great time of year to sit down and have an encouragement talk with your middle schooler. Keep them engaged in their education and their involvement in activities, in and out of school, during these long winter months. Children this age thrive on being busy and active. They have amazing energy and, when directed appropriately, can accomplish some pretty impressive things. However, if permitted, they will just as easily choose to vegetate and do nothing. A little encouragement may be a BIG help.

Middle school is the perfect time for kids to explore and try new things. Go over their goals for the balance of the year. Talk about next year. Focus on improving some element of their schooling and give it special attention. Along the same line, the 14th annual district-wide Career Fair will take place on Monday, February 27th at PHS-East Gymnasium (6:30 – 8:30 PM). You should plan to attend to explore opportunities and options for your child's future.

Have a great second half of the school year with your middle schooler!

Fondly,
Mrs. Patricia Steckroat, Principal

This month's issue of the Pennwood Post focuses on cyber safety, cyber bullying and safe Internet use.

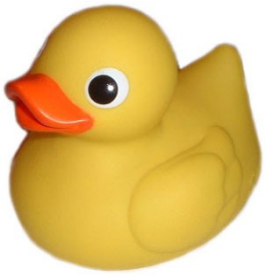
As children and schools become more digitally connected, bullying is manifesting itself in ways beyond the playground. Cyberbullying is a significant issue students can face, causing hurt and harm to school communities. Being bullied can affect children's' performance in school, relationships, and family life.

We have included information, web links and advice on how to deal with cyberbullying and related issues.

Important Dates

February	
2/6	Report cards sent home.
2/9	PTO Meeting 9:30 AM
2/10	Fun Nite 7-9 PM
2/20	President's Day Holiday—No School
2/21	Teacher Workshop—No School for Students
2/29	Interim Progress Reports Sent Home
March	
3/2	Read Across America Day
3/8	PTO Meeting 9:30 AM
3/12-3/15	PSSA Reading and Math Testing - All grades
3/13 & 3/14	1/2 day for Students – Dismissal at 12:00. No lunches served.
3/28	Reading Olympics
3/30 & 3/31	School Play 7:30 PM
3/30	End of 3rd Marking Period

The Pennwood Life Skills Class would like to announce their upcoming Valentine's Sale, to be held during all three lunches on Wednesday, February 8th and Thursday, February 9th. Goodies for sale will include rubber duckies, squishy toys, small stuffed animals, and lots of other fun Valentine items. There will also be a raffle for a Phillies Phanatic Pillow Pet. We would like to encourage our friends at Pennwood to bring a few extra dollars on those days, and come check it out! Proceeds are used to fund our Community Based Instruction program



Friday, March 2nd - Read Across America Day

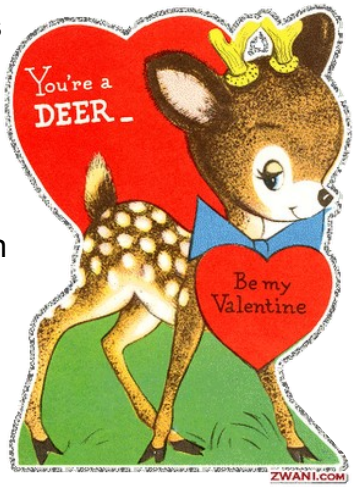
March 2, 2012 marks the anniversary of the birth of the world renown children's author, Dr. Seuss. In recent years, this anniversary has spurred an ever growing celebration of reading throughout the country.

On Tuesday, March 2nd students are asked to carry a free reading book with them to class and will have opportunities to DROP EVERYTHING AND READ. Let's jump into the fun of Read Across America Day here at Pennwood!

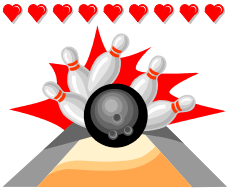
A.C.T.ivities (All Coming Together)

The A.C.T. group (**A**ll **C**oming **T**ogether) is looking for students and faculty who want to star in the **"We Are Pennwood" video montage**. The goal is to give students and staff an opportunity to state in 3 words what makes their group unique, while allowing them to see how they are all parts of the puzzle that make up Pennwood Middle School. Students and staff may sign-up in the main office. Photographs and videos will **begin February 22nd** and **end March 2nd**. Don't miss out on your opportunity to be a star! See Mrs. Rudesyle (D183) or Mrs. Parraga (D264) with any questions.

Be Mine! **Valentine's Day** is on **February 14th** and the **A.C.T. group** is hosting a **Bake Sale** before homeroom at the ramp with lots of sweet treats! Delicious baked goods and candy grams can be purchased for only 75 cents. The Bake Sale will also include a "*Guess how many*" Candy Jar for 25 cents per chance. One lucky person will go home with the Candy Jar. Let's make this sweet Bake Sale a huge success! Don't forget to bring your money on Tuesday, February 14th.



Five Very Important Questions and Answers About….



What? Pennwood's Intramural Bowling Part II

Who? Interested Pennwood students (no experience necessary)

When? Mondays and/or Wednesdays beginning March 5 to May 21

Where? Morrisville Lanes

Why? Have fun with friends, meet new friends, enjoyable physical activity

Learn a lifetime sport with a Starlight Bowling Party at end of season and guaranteed excitement!

PTO NEWS – FEBRUARY 2012

PTO OFFICER ELECTIONS

Two positions on the PTO Board will be open for the 2012-2013 school year: PTO Vice President and PTO Corresponding Secretary. Elections will be held during the April PTO meeting. If you are interested or have any questions regarding the positions please contact the current sitting board members below.

If you are interested in or have questions about the position of PTO Vice President please contact Jennifer Priestley at scottpriestley@verizon.net. Thank you!

If you are interested in or have questions about the Corresponding Secretary position please contact Geralyn Chapuis at gchapuis@verizon.net. Thank you!

PTO COMMITTEES

The following are a list of the PTO Committees and the chair person(s) coordinating the event. **Those marked with an asterisk will be in need of a chairperson for the 2012-2013 school year.** If you would like to get involved in the school and meet other parents the PTO is a great way to do this. If you would like information regarding any of the events or have interest in chairing a committee please email the sitting chairperson.

Book Fair (Scholastic)	Jennifer Della Grotte	jdellagrotte@verizon.net
***Barnes & Noble Night**	Jennifer Priestley	scottpriestley@verizon.net
***Box Tops**	Geralyn Chapuis	gchapuis@verizon.net
***Field Day**	Marilyn Bydalek	mmbydalek@earthlink.net
Fun Nite	Karen Browndorf	k.browndorf@comcast.net
Hospitality	Annette Young	ayoung29@verizon.net
McCaffrey's Receipts	Kim Conti	geonik7@aol.com
Magazine Drive	Annette Young	ayoung29@verizon.net
Spirit Wear	Lisa Pellegrino	lmpell@verizon.net
	Allison Paul	apeacockpaul@comcast.net
Terracycle	Lori Rabiger	rabiger@comcast.net
***8th Grade Happening**	Becky Gabriele	beckygabriele@verizon.net

Pennwood's Fun Nites The next Fun Nite is scheduled for Friday, February 10, 2012.
You must email Karen Browndorf at k.browndorf@comcast.net if you would like to chaperone or help out at Fun Nite. All volunteers are placed on a contact list and assigned a duty, and approximately 20 volunteers are needed. Please do not just show up to volunteer the night of the event, the volunteer list is prepared and approved the week before the scheduled Fun Nite. Thank you.

The **BOX TOPS' CONTEST** started the week of January 16th and will run thru February 24, 2012. The winning homeroom will enjoy a Muffin and Hot Chocolate party. Please send in with your student clipped box tops in an envelope or bag marked with your student's homeroom or section number for the homeroom collection envelope. Thank you to all students, teachers, staff and Pennwood families who so enthusiastically participate and who continue to make our Box Tops Program a success.

8th GRADE HAPPENING COMMITTEE.... The 8th Graders have chosen the theme for their 8th grade Finale. The theme will be HOLLYWOOD. **Many volunteers will be needed to make this event a success.** If you would like to volunteer, donate food, decorations or have game donations or suggestions, please contact the Happening chair person Becky Gabriele at beckygabriele@verizon.net. Thank you!

PTO CONTRIBUTIONS……$500 was given to the 6th Grade to help offset the cost of the McCarter Theatre Assembly.

Big THANK YOU to Mary McGill, a PTO Pennwood parent, who so graciously drove all 16 boxes of donated magazines and Halloween candy collected by the NJHS students for our troops at Ft. Dix. With Mary's help the boxes found there way to our soldiers.

NEXT PTO MEETING THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2012…9:30 a.m.
in the Student Dining Room. All Parents Welcome
Note: Save the date for the April 12 PTO Meeting which will be held at 6:30 PM.

Innovator's 8th Grade Declaration of Independence Puppet Show

Counselor's Corner

Internet Safety for Students

Exposure to inappropriate materials

Accessing inappropriate material (by accident or on purpose) is easier for children than it has ever been. And blocking, filtering, and monitoring software can be overcome by a determined child. Clicking the wrong link or misspelling a web address can lead an unsuspecting child to websites with inappropriate content. Adult supervision is the best way to guard against your child's exposure to this material.

Protection from online predators

Keep your identity anonymous when using social networks, chat rooms, message boards, etc.

Never meet face-to-face with someone you meet on the internet. You may not be meeting the person you were planning on.

Do not reveal too much personal information (phone number, address, demographical clues).

How much information is too much?

Demographical clues: phone number, address, name of school, etc. are things that should always be kept private. By providing this information, it allows strangers and potential predators to identify, connect with, and/or manipulate children.

Think before you post revealing photos, videos, descriptive information, etc. Always ask yourself how you would feel if your family, teachers, coaches, or neighbors ended up seeing this.

Reminder

Internet safety is extremely important and should be taken seriously by parents and students. Think before you act and be sure to take all precautionary measures when using the internet. Remember, once you post information online, you cannot take it back.

Submitted by: Caitlin Seckinger Sarah Fiore

Until recently, parents, teachers, and news accounts have focused on the relationship between the bully and his or her target. But experts say that there are usually more kids involved in a cyberbullying scenario, making it a much more complex organism than previously thought. In fact, one of the side effects of how public bullying has become is that potentially everyone in the bully's circle of friends -- both online and off-line -- may be involved.

Studies show that kids' relationships in the real world are mirrored online. When drama brews or aggressive behavior erupts among a group of friends, it passes seamlessly from the lunchroom to the chat room. Everyone in the social circle knows about it and participates in various ways to varying degrees on the social network.

Cyberbullyling Resources for Parents

http://www.commonsensemedia.org/advice-for-parents/bullying-everybodys-business

http://www.commonsensemedia.org/advice-for-parents/5-things-you-need-know-about-cyberbullying

http://www.commonsensemedia.org/cyberbullying

More Internet Safety Information

Use of technology has grown drastically over the past decade. Children are becoming more computer literate at a younger age and have more accessibility to the internet now than ever before. With this new way to connect, the internet also offers new risks. These new risks include but are not limited to cyber bullying, exposure to inappropriate material, online predators, and revealing too much personal information. Learning to recognize these potential risks will allow adults to intervene and lessen these potential negative impacts.

What parents do to ensure internet safety at home.

Keep the computer in a **high traffic area**

Talk to your children about internet safety and household rules regarding computer use

Monitor cell phones, gaming devices, and laptops

Surf the internet with your child, **allowing them to show you** what they like to do online

Share an e-mail account with your child so you can monitor messages

Utilize online safety features to **block inappropriate sites** from your child's use

Check online history to make sure you know what sites your child is visiting

How to share information while maintaining privacy.

Protect yourself: use privacy settings to restrict who can see and post on your profile

Protect your information: some information should stay private (address, phone number, etc.) Make sure to keep your password private - do not share your password with anyone, even your best friend.

Protect your computer: be cautious about opening attachments or suspicious e-mails. Install protective software on your computer to guard against viruses. Also, remember that free downloads (ringtones, music, screensavers) oftentimes can spread viruses.

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is bullying that happens online, through e-mail, messages, gaming sites, video chat, and other social networks. Cyber bullying occurs when individuals use technology to embarrass, harass, threaten, or target another person.

How students can deal with cyber bullying.

Do not respond to rude e-mails, messages, or comments. This gives the bully power and control over the situation.

Save the evidence: do not delete any messages, comments, or conversations, so you have them to show an adult.

Block the bully: you can block anyone on Facebook, AIM, twitter, etc. Bullies can also be blocked from sending e-mails to your account. If needed, you can delete your account and create a new one.

Make a report to www.cybertipline.com if you feel threatened, bullied or something illegal has occurred.

Tell a trusted adult.

For more information and links to cyber safety issues, please see the Pennwood Internet Safety web page on the left under Quick Links or click here: http://www.pennsbury.k12.pa.us/pennsbury/Pennwood/Quick%20Links/Internet%20Safety/

Facebook and Bullying

- Facebook has more than 500 million registered users (Facebook, 2010).
- 73% of 12- to 17-year olds have at least one social networking profile (Pew, 2010).
- Facebook isn't supposed to be used by kids under 13, but approximately 7.5 million kids under 13 in the United States are on Facebook (*Consumer Reports*, 2010)
- Is your child under age 13? Do they have a Facebook account?
- Are you a Facebook friend (FF) of you child?
- Since the inception of Facebook, bullying has increased by 75%, which includes Pennwood Middle School.

Tips for talking to teens about Facebook

First of all, if your child has a Facebook account, you should have one also. Then friend your child and make sure they friend you.

Talk to your teens about controlling their information. Encourage them to be selective about what they share by customizing the recipients of their posts. Activities on Facebook, including the applications teens use and games they play, can be viewed by others.

Use strict privacy settings. Review all of the options on your privacy settings page. Facebook's default settings tend to keep information public until a user makes it private (although Facebook is a little stricter with minors' accounts). "Friends Only" is a good choice for most items, but you can be even more selective.

Pre-approve tags. Choose the settings that allow you to see everything you've been tagged in (including photos) before the tag links to your page.

Use notification settings. You can tell Facebook that you want to be notified of any activity performed on your name, including photo tags.

Don't post your location. Facebook lets users post their location on every post. Teens shouldn't do this for safety and privacy reasons. Teens can also "tag" their friends' location but you can prevent anyone from tagging your location in the How Tags Work section.

Set rules about what's appropriate to post. No sexy photos, no drinking photos, no photos of them doing something that could hurt them in the future. Teens also need to be thoughtful about their status updates, wall posts, and comments on friends' posts. Remind them that once they post something, it's out of their hands.

If in doubt, take it out. Use the "Remove Post" button to take down risky posts.

Encourage teens to self-reflect before they self-reveal. Teens are very much in the moment and are likely to post something they didn't really mean. Work with them on curbing that impulse. Teach them to ask themselves why they're posting something, who will be able to read it, and whether it could be misunderstood or used against them later.

Watch out for ads. There are tons of ads on Facebook, and most major companies have profile pages. Marketers actively use Facebook to target advertising to your teen.

Create your own page. The best way to learn the ins and outs of Facebook is to create your own page. A great way to start talking to your teens about their Facebook experience is to ask them to help you create your own page.

"Friend" younger teens. If your kids are in middle school, it may be a sound policy to know what they're posting, since teens that age don't necessarily understand that they're creating a digital footprint. Keep in mind that kids can block you from seeing things, so check in with them, too.

Talk to your high school-aged teens about whether they're comfortable letting you "friend" them. Many will be. But if you *are* your teen's friend, don't fill her page with comments, and don't "friend" her friends. Many parents say Facebook is the only way they know what's going on in their teens' life, so tread cautiously.

Choose your battles. You'll see the good, the bad, and the truly unfathomable. If you don't want your teens to unfriend you, don't ask them about every transgression. Keep it general.

Be a model friend. Remember that your teens can see what you post, too. Model good behavior for your teens, and keep your own digital footprint clean.

Review Facebook's Safety Center. Several FAQs, from General Safety to Safety for Teens, provide detailed information on how to use Facebook safely.

For more information see A Parent's Guide to Facebook http://www.connectsafely.org/pdfs/fbparents.pdf
This is an excellent guide for parents to learn how Facebook works and how to help protect your teenager.

SPONSORED BY Pennsbury Middle Schools

"Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Youth Depression"

A presentation for adults by John Halligan

MAY 17, 2012
7 – 8:30 pm
Pennwood Middle School Auditorium

Any questions? Call MOLLY GRAY @ 215-428-4244

Parents will be empowered with strategies to take preventive actions with their own children.

John Halligan's son, Ryan, died by suicide on Oct. 7, 2003 after being bullied by classmates at school and online. He was 13 years old.

Halligan's presentation will cover the lessons learned too late for his family regarding how to deal with bullying, cyberbullying, and teen depression.

RyanPatrickHalligan.org

Cyberbullying

By Michael Hogan

Megan Meier sometimes suffered from low self-esteem and was on medication at the time of her death. But her family said "she looked forward to her 14th birthday and having her braces removed" (ABC Good Morning America, 2007). Megan often frequented the website known as MySpace ®. On one occasion she made friends with a person named Josh Evans. Megan and Josh hit it off quickly; however, what seemed to be a promising relationship turned in to an onslaught of threats and insults. Josh was not who he presented himself to be; in fact, Josh was not even a boy. Josh was the mother of a former friend of Megan's. The mother, Lori Drew, created the MySpace® profile to fool Megan into revealing her most private thoughts about her friends and classmates. Once Megan revealed her true self, Lori began publically posting the information on the internet. She also began harassing Megan and slandering her reputation. In her last exchange with Megan, Lori wrote, "the world would be a much better place without you" (Maag, 2007, ¶ 3). On October 16, 2006 Megan's mother, Tina, found her daughter unconscious, hanging in her bedroom. Megan died a day later.

> Megan's death gained the attention of school districts nationwide because she was the victim of an online hoax, otherwise known as cyberbullying or electronic bullying. Maag (2007) reports that technology such as:
> Cell phone cameras and text messages, as well as social networking Web sites, e-mail and instant messaging, all give teenagers a wider range of ways to play tricks on one another, to tease and to intimidate their peers. And unlike traditional bullying, which usually is an intimate, if highly unpleasant, experience; high-tech bullying can happen anywhere, anytime, among lots of different children who may never actually meet in person. It is inescapable and often anonymous. (¶ 7)

Megan's death has placed a spotlight on the effects that have been brought about through cyberbullying. Her case "has now inspired the Megan Meier Cyberbullying Prevention Act, the first proposed national cyber bullying crime legislation in the United States" (McQuade, Colt, & Meyer, 2009, p. 5). Unfortunately, Megan's story is not a solitary incident. Thousands of students experience cyberbullying everyday yet educators, lawmakers, researchers, and parents have been unable to find a way to stop cyberbullying from occurring.

Instant communication has increased the range of bullying behavior (Li, 2007). Prior to the internet and cellular phone, bullying behavior stopped at the victim's front door. However, with instant messaging, text messaging, multimedia messaging, and blogs, the victims are left with little escape from the bullying behavior. This new outlet for bullies is known as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying may be defined as speech that is "defamatory, constitutes bullying, harassment, or discrimination, discloses personal information, or contains offensive, vulgar or derogatory comments" (Willard, 2003, p. 66). It is the latest and most advanced form of bullying behavior.

Due to the fact that cyberbullying is a recent development, and that traditional programs have been ineffective in curbing this phenomenon, educators and researchers have had to try to develop new methods for ending this problem. Hinduja and Patchin (2009) argue that cyberbullying has created a greater need for prevention programs. They state that their research has "uncovered a link between suicidal thoughts and online victimization" (p. 69). Their findings suggest that "youth who are bullied in cyberspace are at an increased risk for suicide and should be treated as such" (p. 70). Hinduja and Patchin (2009) have labeled this reaction to cyberbullying as "cyberbullicide" (p. 66). Megan Meier died of cyberbullicide. She "suffered from low self-esteem and depression and was on medication when she took her life" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, p. 70). Megan already faced a difficult situation and was being treated for her issues. According to Willard (2007), at risk youths are:

> vulnerable to predators. They may also align themselves with other hurt, angry, disconnected youth and adults to form dangerous online communities and are vulnerable to the contagion that can occur within such groups. They may also be much more likely to follow through with harmful real-world activity when encouraged to do so by their online community. It is very difficult to get these at-risk youth to disengage from dangerous online communities because it is with these communities that these young people have-perhaps for the first time actually found what they perceive to be caring and acceptance. (pp. 57-58)

At times the Internet may seem like a friend, time filler, or a way to connect with people who are in similar situations. Unfortunately, "the toll that daily struggles, stresses, and relative hopelessness take on some adolescents is exacerbated when Internet-based harassment is added to the equation" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, p. 70). The internet can be misleading. The walls or safeguards that students typically create are lowered when a student feels he/she has made a connection. These lowered safeguards create an opportunity for a bully to strike, often inflicting critical damage to the students self esteem.

It is expected that these percentages will continue to grown as advances in technology and communication increase without adult supervision and as students and adults continue to view this behavior as childish fun, a phase, or as harmless.

Parenting Suggestions for Using Technology With Your Children

Become involved in your child's cyberspace. Sit at the computer and let them teach you how they use the Internet:

• Ask them to take you places they frequently visit and show you what they do.
Three types of sites children commonly utilize are:

- Instant messaging services (e.g. Yahoo, AOL IM and Messenger)
- Social networking sites (e.g. Face Book and MySpace)
- Video Posting (e.g. You Tube, AOL Video)

• Open up your own accounts where they have accounts. Have your child guide you through the process.

- If your child is under 13, you do have the option to have these accounts deleted since most of these services have an age and/or parental consent requirement.

• Have them share with you all their user account names and passwords. If this is creating a trust issue, perhaps a good compromise is to have your child write down all the user account names and passwords on a sheet of paper and place this in a sealed envelope to only be opened by the parent in case of an emergency.

- Make certain they have never and will never share their passwords with anyone, even a friend. Explain the risk of someone impersonating them and ruining their reputation.

- Have them show you what they have in their profiles/pages. How do they describe themselves? Is it all accurate and appropriate? Does it show too much detail about your child? Are they protecting and sustaining a positive reputation?

- Scrutinize their friend lists on these accounts. It is very important to recognize the identity of each person. If they don't know the real name of an on-line friend, then consider that person a stranger. Request they delete and block that person.

- Ask your child if they have ever been ridiculed, intimidated and/or humiliated on the Internet (cyber bullied). Encourage them to come to you for support if they are being bullied. Both of you should learn how to use the print screen option to save evidence of the cyber bullying.

- Ask whether they have bullied anyone. It’s important for them to appreciate how much emotional pain can be inflicted by unkind words or images, and that the reach of the Internet makes it far more destructive. Use Ryan’s story to make the point.

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