

CONVERSE MIDDLE SCHOOL
24 Converse Street
Palmer, MA 01069-1797
(413) 283-8109 (413) 283-2655 (FAX)

David G. Stetkiewicz
Principal

Jacqueline A. Haley
Assistant Principal

August 7, 2009

Dear Student and Parent:

As we approach the end of summer our thoughts turn toward the new school year. We anticipate an exciting and productive year at the Converse Middle School for all students, staff, and parents. Each team is requiring the use of our standardized agenda book, which this year will include six pages of helpful information from the CMS Student Handbook. The cost of the agenda books is \$4.00 (payable in cash or check made payable to the TOWN OF PALMER); replacement cost is also \$4.00.

As we start the new school year, we encourage parents, community groups and individuals to become involved in the life of the Converse Middle School. Active involvement can be very rewarding and challenging, as well as fun. It is a great way to get to know our staff, students and programs. Please make every effort to visit the school often, to participate in programs and to get to know us. The P.T.O. is a great place to start and all are welcome to participate in our monthly meetings. There are currently leadership positions open on the P.T.O., so please consider getting involved in this organization. We do have a vacancy (parent representative) on the School Council. Please contact the school if you are interested in serving a three year term.

Budget cuts have resulted in the loss of ten (10) teachers from Converse; two from retirement, five that have been reassigned to either OMP or PHS, and three that are no longer employed by the district. I am pleased to welcome two teachers to the Converse faculty; Ana Dobson (MCAS Math) from OMP, and Kathleen Regan (7th Grade English/Reading) from PHS. Despite a difficult budget process and significant changes to the staffing at Converse, I am confident that all students will receive their instruction from a highly qualified and well-prepared teaching staff. We will have two 5th grade teams, two 6th grade teams, and one 7th grade team:

5th Grade / Red Team *

Sandra Riley, Math
Elizabeth O'Brien, English
Cristina Tatlock, Science

5th Grade / Orange Team *

Mary Doty, Math
Sarah Mignault, English
Cheryl McCarthy, Science

6th Grade / Purple Team *

Linda Perry, Math
Karyn Marciniac, English
Christine Druckenmiller, Science

6th Grade / Yellow Team *

Amy Herring, Math
Todd Kellaheer, English
Ann Royce, Science

7th Grade / Blue Team

Sheryl DeCataldo, Math
Tina Young, English
Dawn Palmateer, Science
Sandra Noonan, Social Studies
Kathleen Regan, English/Reading

* Team teachers in the 5th and 6th grade will teach Reading and Social Studies.

LUNCH PRICING Please note that the price of a regular school lunch will be \$2.50 and the cost for a regular breakfast will be \$1.50. The price of milk is .50 cents. The cost for the 'reduced' lunch and breakfast are not yet available. Please note: **You MUST re-apply for free or reduced lunch each school year. This is not automatic. Forms will be available the first week of school and must be returned prior to October 1, 2009.**

OPEN HOUSE Open House will be held on Thursday evening, September 10th. **This is for parents only.** Parents will be given the opportunity to follow their student's schedule and meet with teachers. The staff will be available to explain programs and expectations and answer any questions about Converse Middle School. Specific information about the Open House schedule will be available once the school year starts.

SUMMER VISITATION The building will be open for student/parent visits Monday, August 17 through Thursday, August 20, 2009 from 8:00 A.M. – 2:30 P.M. **Students must be accompanied by an adult. Please check with the office upon entering the building.**

IMPORTANT - GRADE 7 HEALTH INFORMATION

For all students entering grade 7, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health requires:

- 2 doses of MMR
- 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine
- 1 booster dose of Td if last DTP was given before 9/1/04
- 1 dose of varicella vaccine or physician certified reliable history of chicken pox disease (2 doses if age 13 or older)
- current physical examination – please use the form mailed home by school nurse

PARENTS MUST PRESENT WRITTEN PROOF FROM THEIR PHYSICIAN OF THESE IMMUNIZATIONS ON OR BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL.

If your child has had the immunizations, please obtain immunization certificates from the physician and forward them to the school office.

STUDENTS WILL NOT BE ADMITTED ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL WITHOUT WRITTEN PROOF OF PROPER IMMUNIZATION.

Note: Please call Mrs. Maloney, the School Nurse, with any questions at 283-8109.

TEXTBOOK AND FINES

If your student has an outstanding bill for a lost or damaged textbook, please note that new textbooks will not be issued until the account is settled with the office. Please take the necessary steps so that textbooks can be issued on the first day of school. Students owing monies at the end of the school year will not be allowed to participate in field trips including the seventh grade Step-Up ceremony.

LOCKERS Students will be assigned a locker to safeguard their personal belongings such as books, supplies and clothing. Students will be allowed to use their lockers before homeroom, prior to lunch and dismissal. Lockers should be kept clean and locked at all times. School lockers are school property and are subject to examination by school officials at any time. Students should not bring valuables and large sums of money to school. The school cannot be held responsible for materials missing from lockers. Students should keep locker combinations private and make sure that locks are properly secured. Students should not slam locker doors or kick them shut. Because of the renovation work taking place during the summer, the lockers are not available for assignment at this time. Locker assignments will be made the first day of school.

ENTERING AND LEAVING THE BUILDING

Students arriving at school by means of private transportation or walking should use the Rathbone Street or west entrance to the cafeteria. Students arriving by school bus will enter the building through the east entrance in the cafeteria. The main or front entrance is not to be used by students unless they are tardy.

Parents dropping off and picking up students should use the driveway on the west side of the building. Students should be dropped off near the cafeteria door. Cars may then continue to Rathbone Street to exit onto Converse Street. This should prevent any traffic congestion on Converse Street and provide a safe process for students to enter and leave the building. Students are not to be dropped off or picked up in the east parking lot as this is for bus drop-off and pick up only! Walking students, and students being dropped off, should not arrive before 7:20 a.m.

Please note that parking in front of the school building is prohibited. This regulation is strictly enforced. Short-term visitor parking is available in the driveway on the west side of the building. All visitors must enter via the front door and immediately check-in at the office for security reasons. The handicapped entrance is the cafeteria door on the WEST side of the building.

INFORMATION SHEETS – Office/Nurse

Information sheets will be sent home the first week of school. It is very important that these be filled out accurately by the parent or guardian and returned to school as soon as possible since we will be updating office/health information on our computer system. Please provide the office with a parent/guardian email address to facilitate school-home communication. If changes occur during the school year, please contact the school office to update this information as it is essential that all emergency and health information be accurate.

DRESS CODE

When doing your “back to school” shopping please keep the dress code in mind. It is expected that students will take pride in their personal appearance. Students should come to school well groomed; wearing clothing that is neat, clean and in good taste. Student safety is of great importance; therefore, dressing for school should be done with safety as a priority. If clothing is disruptive to the school environment and/or the learning process, the student may be asked to change at the discretion of the principal. Hair must be neat, clean and well groomed. Any potentially dangerous item of dress will be prohibited for safety reasons, such as long dangling earrings, untied sneakers, and baggy pants. Sandals must have a heel strap. Provocative items of clothing, including pajamas, are inappropriate as school attire. All shirts must be waist length. NO undergarments are to be exposed. Tank tops (thin straps) halter tops are not allowed. Shorts and skirts must be no shorter than mid thigh. Hats are not to be worn during the school day and should be left in the locker.

SEXUALITY EDUCATION In accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71 Section 32A, the Palmer Public Schools Policy for Parents/Guardian Notification Pertaining to Sexuality Education is on file in the office of the Superintendent of Schools. This policy allows parents access to instructional materials and allows for exemption of their children from portions of the curriculum dealing with sexuality, without academic penalty.

STUDENT ABSENCES If a student is to be absent on a given day, the parent/guardian must call the school the day of the absence to notify school officials. It is best to call between 7:00 and 7:30 a.m. The school telephone number is 283-8109. A signed note by the parent/guardian should be sent with the student upon returning to school. The note must specify the reason for the absence and should be presented to the homeroom teacher.

TARDINESS If students arrive at school after the 7:35 a.m. bell, they must report to the office for a late pass. Students must bring in a note stating the reason for the tardiness or be accompanied to the office by a parent who can verbally provide the reason for tardiness. Each unexcused tardiness will result in a detention. Repeated excused tardiness- more than two (2) in a quarter- will result in repeated detentions. A continuance in a pattern of tardiness (6 or more per quarter) will result in a parent conference.

INDIVIDUAL PICTURES - Individual pictures will be taken on Tuesday, September 16, 2009.

INTERNET The Converse Middle School has access to the Internet. We use the Internet as a valuable tool for learning by linking it to the curriculum whenever possible. Though we cannot guarantee the Internet will not be abused, please rest assured that every effort will be made to make certain it is used only for our intended purposes. We will accomplish this via software programs and adult supervision. If you have any questions, please contact the school for further information. All students in grades five, along with their parents, will be required to read the district’s Acceptable Use Policy, along with the Administrative Procedures for Implementation, sign the User Agreement for Participation in an Electronic Communications System and return to school during the first week of school.

FIELD HOCKEY Attention seventh grade students!!! Anyone wishing to play Junior Varsity Field Hockey for Palmer High School should please get in touch with Ms. Korzec at 413-626-2556 or by email, phsfieldhockey@gmail.com. Here is your chance to play a high school sport as a middle school student! You must have a physical exam completed (forms in the PHS nurse’s office), and pay the high school sports fee. Practices start August 27th after school at PHS.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL The veterans -- sixth and seventh graders -- will report to their homerooms at 7:35 a.m. Instructions and expectations for the first day will be explained at that time.

Fifth graders will report to the gym at the 7:35 a.m. bell. The fifth grade homeroom groups will be formed at this time and a short orientation will take place before the homeroom teacher shows the individual groups and teams their designated areas and homerooms.

Thanks for your cooperation and see you on **Tuesday, August 25, 2009.**

Sincerely,

David G. Stetkiewicz
Principal

Jackie Haley
Assistant Principal