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February 15th, 2015

In The Headlines...

What Do Parents Need To Know About the Common Core?

Annie O'Brien, guest blogging for Edutopia, provides parents with a variety of resources for understanding the Common Core.

To set the stage, Ms. O'Brien makes an argument for why it is important that parents be better informed regarding the important changes the Core will bring to schools.



New Social Studies Unit: Clash of Civilizations

Now that students have learned the basics of medieval life, we will study one of the most influential conflicts in history: the Crusades. As part of the **Clash of Civilizations Unit**, students start by examining the beliefs and spread of Islam. As a result of Islam's rapid growth, a clash with the European world was inevitable.

In the past, parents have been concerned with seventh graders learning about Islam. Yet as ISIS, Charlie Hebdo, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict fill the headlines, I think it more vital than ever that students have an understanding of the world around them.

Just as in our study of Judaism and Christianity, the unit will focus on three questions:

- 1) What events and people caused the start of Islam?
- 2) What are the basic beliefs of the religion?
- 3) How did Islam spread?

Once students have a grasp of Islam, we will focus on the clash that occurred between the Muslim Middle East and Christian Europe. At many points, we will draw comparisons between the battle lines drawn 1,000 years ago and today.

Our study of the Crusades will emphasize the causes and effects of the conflict, rather than on the events itself. As outlined in the [Pennsylvania Social Studies Standards](#), historians often focus more on continuity and change than on dates or dramas.

Parents can preview the facts, questions, and tasks of the unit by viewing [this Learning Map](#).



Unit Four (Society in Middle Ages) Test Returns and Re-Tests

Inspirational Quote

Life is a series of experiences, each one of which makes us bigger, even though sometimes it is hard to realize this. For the world was built to develop character, and we must learn that the setbacks and grieves which we endure help us in our marching onward.
- Henry Ford

The U4 Social Studies test was a challenge. It is not that there were overwhelming writings or readings. There were not even that many truly *hard* questions.

Still, the test was difficult. The unit was long, lasting over a month (including snow delays and cancellations). As a result, the average score was an 80%, a C on our grading scale.

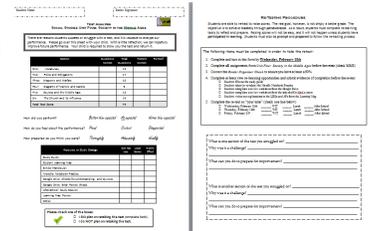
For all that, I think students who earned As or Bs on the test have much to be proud of (parents too).



Even students with slightly lower grades may have worked hard and been disappointed.

For all students, Unit Four is one where the opportunity to re-learn and re-test should be taken seriously. Not only does the exam have a large impact on grades, but the next two units build on concepts covered within "Society in the Middle Ages."

When students bring home tests and forms on Monday, I hope parents will look closely at the results. Especially if your child struggled on one or two specific sections, please encourage them to take the re-test.



Test Forms are due on Wednesday, and the re-tests will take place through Friday.

To help students see the "big picture," it might also be positive to have them log-in to MMS before making their decision. *With only 17 school days left in Trimester Two, we likely will not have another common assessment.*



Upcoming Dates

Monday, February 16th:
Library Book Exchange
7:00pm—CVSD Board Meeting
Tuesday, February 17th:
Reading Calendar Check-In
Reading 4Sight #3
Wednesday, February 18th:
Math 4Sight #3
Thursday, February 19th:
3:00pm Book Fair Parent Night
6:30pm PTO Meeting
Tuesday, February 24th:
2:30pm U4LA Review
Wednesday, February 25th:
Language Arts U4 Exam

Stay on the Scores!

Use [this link](#) to access the Parent Portal of MMS to stay on top of student grades. Students have access as well, so they should always know their scores. MMS is “Live” - meaning as soon as I put the grades in, you can see them!

Parent Feedback

What time do you think is ideal for Mr. Angelini to send his nightly Remind blast with homework updates and other reminders?

Email response to...
angelinia@conewago.k12.pa.us



Have you been on the AngelHub yet today?
[Check in now!](#)

Colonials



Upcoming Events

4Sight Tests

The third round of 4Sight tests will take place this week (reading on Tuesday, math on Wednesday). Despite the snow, cold, and recent wave of tests, it is crucial for students to put forth their best effort on these “benchmarks.” Since these are the final 4Sights before the PSSAs, we rely heavily on the data to make decisions about instruction, WITs, and review topics.

Encourage your child to get a solid night’s sleep, eat a good breakfast, and use all their strategies (such as citing evidence and pre-writing) to truly show what they know.

NOMS Book Fair

The Winter Book Fair begins on Thursday, February 19th. Students will have the chance to browse the shelves early next week, but all are invited to a first-night showing on Thursday (starting at 3:00pm). The “Family Night” is a chance to support the school library and encourage reading through the selection of great titles.

Something to be Proud of...

Parental honesty: How much did you study in seventh grade? I’ll be honest, Mr. Angelini MIGHT have studied for Mrs. Demko (his favorite teacher), but that was about it. Studying is a challenging skill for most middle schoolers.

Yet too many of our students meet with failure in high school and college because they never learned basic study strategies. In the face of such a sad truth, it is inspiring to see so many kids invest the effort into studying.

There were 16 students who stayed after-school for a review session last week, and another 23 who completed the Moodle Review. I know others used Google Drive, Study Guides, and all sorts of other tools to get prepared. Kudos!



New Oxford Middle School

“Doing the Right Things, at the Right Time, for the Right Reasons!”

Secondary Source Analysis—A History of Chivalry

Have you ever wanted to work through a reading task with your child? Although the opportunity does not often arise, I believe parents might be interested in such a learning experience.

I constructed an interactive text on the [History of Chivalry](#). Due to scheduling, not many kids actually did the task. As a result, you now have the chance to see your child’s reading strategies in action!

The reading is a [secondary source](#) that extends students’ learning on a topic they already encountered in class: knights and chivalry.



To complete the prompts, students will need to apply a variety of language arts skills to a social studies subject. In many ways, it is a valid check on student progress this far in the school year.

For parents interesting in using the text as “family learning” time, you can begin by working through [the original document](#) with your child. You should encourage your son or daughter to explain their thinking as they work through the prompts. In the text

To check your child’s answers or help with challenging questions, parents can use [an answer key constructed by Mr. Angelini](#).

The key has detailed answers to each prompt that also provide a model of the level of detail students need to begin to push themselves towards. Too often, children in middle school settle for “good enough” rather than risk a struggle.

If anyone does complete the activity, please have their child email me a finished version of the text. Not only do I want to see how the students do, but I would love to reward them with signatures on their OXSTRONG card for the extra effort!

