

Panther News

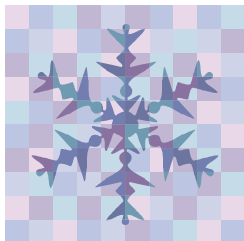
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“To study is not to consume ideas, but to create and re-create them.”

Paulo Freire (1985) author of The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation.

HAPPY WINTER BREAK!



The staff and administration at PHS would like to wish our students and their families an enjoyable and safe winter break. Spend quality time together... as these are the moments we will remember in years to come. Students and staff members will return to school on Tuesday, January 3rd. Until then, stay warm!

From The Principal

As we approach the holidays and the New Year, it is appropriate to take the time to reflect on our accomplishments as educators. Our staff continues to take pride in teaching students the skills necessary for success in today's world. As parents, take a moment to reflect on a recent article you might have perused in the New York Times or a local newspaper. Did you take a moment to think about whether the issue the writer was presenting was accurate? Was he or she biased toward any one philosophy or group of people? What was left out of the argument? How reliable was the data? Was it misleading? How did you seek out reliable information beyond the text? These are the kinds of questions our students ask themselves as they approach contemporary texts, messages, and symbols in the modern world.

As I will be presenting at an upcoming Board of Education presentation, one of our goals at PHS continues to center on facilitating critical literacy – moving our students toward critical thinking in all content areas using language skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing. Our students do well academically in core subject areas such as math, science, reading and writing. Recent 2011 Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) data showed that 95.8% of our students scored at/above proficiency in writing, 94.5 % at/above proficiency in reading, 94.6% at/above proficiency in



science and 94.8% at/above proficiency in math. While there are always areas in which we continue to improve, a two-year study showed that our post-graduates had average college GPAs of 3.12 as college freshmen.

Although this is good news for our school, we continue to explore new venues for equipping all students with 21st century skills: technology, critical and creative thinking, communication, innovation,

global citizenship/ethics, and collaboration. These are the skills that will support our students in meeting the demands of college, career and life in the future. John Wilson, Chairperson, Partnership for 21st Century

Skills noted that, “High schools must be designed, organized and managed with a relentless focus on the results that matter in the 21st century.”

In our efforts to reform high schools to maximize learning, we hope to inspire all Pomperaug High School learners to think deeply about ideas and issues relevant to the world in which they live, investigate and solve problems

independently and collaboratively, demonstrate their creativity, use technology wisely, and communicate their ideas with logic, reason and clarity. By honing critical literacy skills, students approach all texts – classical and contemporary literature, textbooks, news, advertisements, film, and other media – with the goal of “digging” deeper (and more skeptically) into the language and meaning behind all communication.

For example, as historians, students could engage in a Socratic discussion that explores gender bias that exists in different groups of registered voters. In math, students might evaluate publicized trends on SAT scores and create a visual and written report to the Superintendent. Perhaps our science students could research and evaluate a local case where forensic techniques proved useful in solving a high profile crime. Students in health classes could work in teams to expose the propaganda used in marketing dangerous fad diets (appropriate for a post-holiday assignment). The possibilities are limitless...

One thing is certain. Our greatest accomplishments as educators and parents will occur when students demonstrate their passion for learning, continue to question all that they still want to know and understand, work diligently to find answers, and graduate from PHS with the skills that will help them change the world.

Wouldn't that be a Wonderful Life?

The National French and Spanish contests will be administered in late February and March, 2012. It is open to students who desire to compete across the country to demonstrate their language skills. This can be a prime opportunity to demonstrate one's language aptitude and talent all while enhancing one's curriculum vitae for college.



CTE CLASSES UNITE FOR TECHNICAL WIZARDRY

Two of the most technically intense and demanding CTE classes will unite, for the first time, for a truly amazing spectacle of technical wizardry and collaboration. Mr. Mielcarz's computer design students will be designing advanced 3d models for Mr. Vlahos' 3d animation students. The complete professional work flow will spotlight a product from previsualization and engineering to 3d modeling, rigging, animation, texturing, and rendering. Beta testing is almost complete and the adventure will commence at the end of December, 2011. Stay tuned.

Foreign Language News

Make your home part of the global community and reap benefits!!

As a parent of a child in Region 15 who has participated as an EF traveler, you already know how rewarding and enriching international travel can be. I propose an opportunity to invite you and your family to experience the world in a truly unique way.

EF Foundation for Foreign Study, the sister company of EF travel, the agency sponsoring our foreign trips to Europe over the years, invites you to host an international exchange student for the upcoming second semester – January, 2012. Not only will you get the personal reward of bringing the world into your home, you will also receive a \$500.00 rebate on your 2011 or 2012 EF Educational Tour Program fee just for welcoming a young world traveler into your family. Undoubtedly this will be a life-changing experience for both student and host family. Many a long-lasting friendship has been forged from these experiences over the years. If you are interested in more information, please call or email Andrea Birkel at andreibirkel@ef.com or contact Dr. Yolande Bosman – 203-262-3231.

Two trips being sponsored this year during April vacation:

- Building one's portfolio in Art with emphasis on visits to museums in Paris, Florence, and Rome, escorted and organized by Florin Firimita and Yolande Bosman.
- Immersion in Spanish organized by John DeRosa, with a study/home stay at the institute of Salamanca, Spain and visits to Madrid and its environs.
- A European Carousel – a 15 day summer trip is being proposed by Dr. Bosman, which includes Amsterdam, Heidelberg, Munich, Venice, Lucerne, Colmar (Alsace), Paris and London.

Upcoming field trips for students:

- The most popular musical, Les Miserables by Victor Hugo will be celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Some 20 students have this rich,

formidable presentation available to them in March at the Bushnell in Hartford. It is never too early to plan to make lasting memories.

- As a prelude to the study of Antoine St. Exupery's *Le Petit Prince*, there will be an excursion for French IV students in January to visit the New England Air Museum in Windsor Locks to broaden their knowledge of aviation and to visit the permanent exhibit of L'Escadrille Lafayette, from which the film *Fly Boys* was made. Our recent school exchange with Toulouse, France in February of this year, allowed for a tour of the Airbus. It's all about connections.
- In celebration of the 125th anniversary this year of the Statue of Liberty – a gift from France of our Franco-American ties and friendship will bring students in late spring to visit Liberty Island. Lady Liberty represents the ideals we hold dear. It is always a special event. New York – New York – it's a wonderful town!!

CONTESTS

are opportunities to showcase our best and brightest!!

The National French and Spanish contests will be administered in late February and March, 2012. It is open to students who desire to compete across the country to demonstrate their language skills. This can be a prime opportunity to demonstrate one's language aptitude and talent all while enhancing one's curriculum vitae for college.

After school enrichment language classes began mid-October. There was sufficient enrollment to offer introductory Italian with our native speaker and PHS teacher, Helen Falcone. Regrettably, due to conflicts in schedule with after-school sports, we were unable to offer Russian with Mr. Miller, a multi-lingual and talented instructor.

Fine Arts Corner

MUSIC DEPARTMENT NEWS

Linda Hughes and Bob D'Angelo and their students are in full swing rehearsing repertoire for the Winter Concert. The Symphonic Band, Chorale and Orchestra are scheduled to perform on December 16th in the PHS auditorium at 7:00pm. Do be sure to mark your calendar for this evening of musical delight. This is the third year that PHS will be hosting the Audition Festival. The adjudications are scheduled throughout the day on December 19th. Our Tri M students are also very busy preparing for holiday concerts at various locations throughout our community. Also scheduled for the month of December is a Play-a-thon, which raises money for charity.

VISUAL ARTS NEWS

Students in Mr. Santa Maria's ceramics classes are tackling concepts of symbolism in the visual arts. Both cultural symbolism and personal symbolism are explored through works of sculptural art. Students created koi fish sculptures. These koi fish symbolize strength, courage, and perseverance in eastern cultures. The koi fish is legend to swim up river, fighting currents and waterfalls to finally become a great dragon. Later, students work with the concept of symbolism on a more personal level creating a bottle which deals with textures, symbols, and texts, with deeper personal meaning to the individual student. Students use poetry and passages from books and stories, along with song lyrics, to enrich and embellish their surfaces and further emphasize their concept of self. Through these assignments, students are exploring visual arts as a tool of communication, self-exploration and discovery, and story-telling, along with artistic concepts of craftsmanship, composition, color and form.

Students in Ms. Rosenberg's photo classes have entered their digital photos in the first annual photo contest sponsored by the After School Art Programs. This year's theme is *Perspectives on Home* and celebrates young photographers. Entries will be judged and outstanding photos will be exhibited at Arethusa Farm in Litchfield in a professional gallery setting on December 3, 2011 from 2:00-5:00pm.

Students in Andrea Jakiela's art class recently completed a reflective writing piece that was based on their artistic processes used in completing their non-objective sculptural pieces. Some excerpts from their reflections are:

"I noticed that the shape of mine created a swirl that came together at the bottom, where both sides came together at the base. Looking at this shape, I knew that I wanted to use two different types of media."

"The beads add texture and shine, as well as a touch of glamour. I absolutely love this sculpture and am proud of what I was able to do."

"I got a little frustrated and put circles on it to go with a Fauve look. At first I wasn't happy with the way it turned out, but after I made small adjustments like adding some black, the circles and the dots with the black base, I actually liked it."

"I wanted my sculpture to be tall, thin on one side, and thick on the other. I feel that I accomplished this."

In Mr. Firimita's Advanced Drawing and Painting, students are working on a postmodern art piece in which they are using multiple references from art history and pop culture. They are trying to convey a message about contemporary culture through depiction of postmodern cultural values/icons, combined with classical imagery.

There is a lot of irony, and sometimes humor, in postmodernism. (For example, one could think of Van Gogh's "Starry Starry Night" as a background for a still life set up on a table: there is a



"I noticed that the shape of mine created a swirl that came together at the bottom, where both sides came together at the base. Looking at this shape, I knew that I wanted to use two different types of media."

Coca Cola can on the table, and the person who is drinking it is President Obama, who is having lunch with Leonardo da Vinci in a Starbuck's Café.)

Postmodernism is about borrowing, about appropriating previous ideas/concepts/images. Postmodernism, particularly as an academic movement, can be understood as a reaction to modernism in the Humanities. Whereas modernism was primarily concerned with principles such as identity, unity, authority, and certainty, postmodernism is often associated with difference, plurality and skepticism.