Happy 2014! I hope this New Year finds your family re-energized and focused on a productive and exciting time! In the last edition of the “What's Up Warhawk?” I shared the newly revamped State Report Card format and information which highlights the opportunities and successes of our students at Madison Junior High School.

As you know, education is in a state of reform, which we find highly exciting! Many of you read about the implementation of Common Core State Standards and may see new and innovative learning experiences for your children. These standards are just one way we strive to continuously improve to meet the needs of our students and prepare them for the future.

Additionally, Madison is focused on yearly school improvement goals that guide our academic and social/emotional plans for teaching and learning. This year, Madison engaged in a state structured school improvement process called Rising Star.

What is the Rising Star process and what did that mean for Madison? In August of 2013, a team of Madison teacher leaders and the administration met to reflect on the strengths within our school and opportunities for improvement. The formal “Rising Star” process structured our reflections by providing research based best practices in 26 key areas and we came to consensus on the opportunities for growth as a school to increase student achievement and satisfaction in learning.

This reflective process took us many hours over the course of the fall. Ultimately, we identified three areas and developed action plans for implementation as well as key areas of evidence that would demonstrate success. This became our School Improvement Plan. The key areas of focus include “Designing and Implementing Formative Assessment”, “Utilizing Formative Assessment to Differentiate Instruction” and “Designing learning experiences and socialization opportunities that respect and honor Cultural Responsive Practices”. Over the next several months, our staff will be learning, implementing, reflecting and analyzing the work we do in these areas as we simultaneously implement the Common Core curriculum in math and language arts.

In an upcoming Home and School meeting, I will be sharing in more depth the specifics of our process and plan and hope you can join that meeting. That meeting will be on February 13 at 8:45 a.m. in the Brown Conference Room. I look forward to sharing our plan at that time as well as providing you updates in the months and years to come.
PATHfinder

Finish Strong!

As winter blusters us into our second half of the school year, it’s a nice time to refocus. Our students confidently and purposefully entered the marathon of the school year. To finish the course successfully, it is important for all of us in the supporting roles to encourage them to stay strong and above all, finish strong. Here are some ways we can all partner together to keep our endurance. Our mission statement offers a great path on which to focus our support.

Individuals who are successful in life are self-directed learners. A self-directed person takes initiative and gets a job done, not because they have to, but because it's the right thing to do. Initiative is one of the essential 21st century skills that will yield success to those who possess it. The great thing is that we all control our own initiative. Successful people get the job done regardless of the circumstances. Being self-directed will bring success on the athletic field, in the music room, at home, in the classroom, and beyond.

Student work is a reflection of learning but should always have the element of pride. Quality producers live this. Students need encouragement to maximize their efforts: use prewrites or organizers before beginning a task to provide focus, edit work while creating and again before submitting to insure accuracy, and seek opportunities to look beyond the rubric for the opportunity to exceed a standard.

We encourage students to be collaborative workers and branch out of their comfort zone: sit somewhere new at lunch, help a classmate on a tricky math problem, choose a different group for a science lab, read a passage aloud in social science, or share interpretations in language arts. When we rely on our team, the course is always easier.

Question... question...question! Develop complex thinkers. Think of the complexities of our own lives and ask questions about them. Tax time? Ask," Why do you think we pay taxes? Should I tax your allowance?" Try playing both sides: "I won’t tax your allowance if you can come up with a good argument about why taxing your allowance is a good thing." Issues in the news? Ask about how they would handle the situation. Issues at work? Ask for a solution. Sometimes their ideas are more innovative than ours. Try a question a day or a question a week. The more questions you ask, the stronger complex thinker you will produce.

Let’s all work together to follow the path to success. We will diligently sprint into spring with passion that will carry us through summer and into next school year.

Finish Strong.

The PATHfinder Team
Decisions ~ 6th Grade

Have you ever struggled with making a decision? How did you go about finding a solution? 6th Grade students were recently introduced to a problem solving model. Mrs. Rader, sixth grade counselor, and Mrs. Brown, social worker met with sixth grade students in January to share a problem solving model. This model was designed to help students, inside and outside of the classroom, feel empowered to make positive choices and to find solutions to their problems. The model will be posted in all 6th grade classrooms for easy reference. We are piloting the program with our 6th grade students and look forward to receiving their feedback. Our intention is to then roll it out school wide.

The steps in the model are listed below. Each step has a set of prompts to help facilitate the brainstorming process.

1. Clarify the situation
   a. Ask yourself, “What is the problem?”
   b. Focus on specifics: who, what, where, when why
2. Consider the Choices
   a. Brainstorm, look at all your options
3. Choose
   a. What is your best option?
4. Carry out the Plan
   a. Analyze: Did it work?

Please support Madison students as they proudly display their artwork at the Naperville Community School District 203

Art News

Municipal Center Art Show Reception on February 27, 2014 at the Naperville Municipal Center located on 400 S. Eagle Street in downtown Naperville. The evening reception will be open from 6:00-7:30. If you are unable to attend the show you may view the artwork anytime between February 17, 2014 until March 2, 2014.

Collecting box tops and sending them in is one of the vocational jobs that our mult-needs students complete on a weekly basis. We use the funds from the box tops to purchase big items that we need for the classroom. We recently purchased a computer cart to store our classroom laptops and IPADs. There is a drop off container on the greeter desk by the front entrance to the school; as well as by the trophies in the library. The box tops can also be dropped off in room 145.
Does your son or daughter plan on visiting Raging Waves Waterpark this summer?

Raging Waves is providing students with an opportunity to earn 1 free ticket! Students interested should see Mrs. Lawler for a Fitness Log. Students will need to complete 30 minutes or more of cardiovascular exercise outside of school for 50 days. All completed Fitness Logs are due to Mrs. Lawler by April 14, 2014.

Synergy

As a beginning to the new Common Core Standards, teachers and students alike have been asked to use a new set of Academic Vocabulary. Students have been handed this vocabulary in each of their classes. Many of the terms have been in use for a long time. An example would be the word “analyze.” To analyze is to break an idea, event, or data set down into parts. We are asking students to really know how to analyze more than we are asking students to be able to use the word in a sentence.

In 8th grade math, students analyze graphs, tables, and equations as they look for and make sense of structure. The skill of analyzing visual representations allows students to construct viable arguments in their science and social science classes. In social studies, students analyzed information about Western Expansion in a group activity called Four Corners. In one corner, student groups had to analyze a primary source, the "Monroe Doctrine", and write down two messages sent to the European powers in the actual speech. Also, students analyze political cartoons as part of their daily “warm-up.” Science covers analysis with looking at data sets, and breaking problems like the rubber band cars into parts so that we can use a technological design model to solve the problems. In LA students are asked to complete character analyses and to analyze the structure of the literature they are reading.

As a parent you may find a teachable moment when there is a small dilemma in the household that needs attention. It may be a squeaky door jam, an accounting of the Girl Scout cookies, or a conflict with the car pool. Ask your student to help you break down the problem. Ask them what are the most important aspects of the problem that need to be addressed. Ask your student how they might resolve the issue. Showing students that the skills they learn in school are important in the world outside of school encourages your student to want to learn more.

Wrestling News

We finished in 2nd place at the Naper-Prairie Conference Tournament on Saturday, January 18th. We had one Conference Champion, three second-place finishers, and 7 other wrestlers who placed 4th or better.

The team finished the regular season with a record of 10 wins with only 2 losses.

Go Warhawks!
Madison Home & School

Hard to believe it is February — I knew this school year would go quickly. We are starting the planning process for the Home & School Board for next year. If you are interested in serving on the board as in any capacity please let me know — it is a great way to meet new people and be involved at the school.

Some of the events we work on are teacher appreciation, which includes a luncheon before school starts and a soup lunch buffet in February; 8th grade Moving On Ceremony, for which the planning is just getting started for this years 8th graders and the one fundraiser we do, the magazine drive.

Would you like to receive the Daily Announcements your child hears every day? Email tmunroe@naperville203.org to start receiving a daily e-mail.

Jamie Nelson

President, Home & School

8th Grade Math Addition

Starting with this edition of 8th Grade Addition, each issue will highlight a couple of the math practice standards as understood by current eighth graders. A Pathfinder tackles describing the first two standards:

“Math practice standard number one, make sense of problems and persevere in solving them, is used in math class when we are given a new topic. We use this efficiently because the class is given thorough information on the new topic that will help us to understand it. This standard relates to students’ lives right now because there are always social, mental, and emotional problems circulating around the school. All we have to do to solve these difficulties is think in a logical step-by-step order that makes sense and then we are able to persevere.

“Practice standard number two, reasoning abstractly and quantitatively, is used in math class when we are solving a problem. We use this to solve the problem with shortcuts and proper digits that will solve the equation as efficiently as possible. This standard relates to students’ lives because when we need to be able to understand something better in class or outside of class, all we have to do is think abstractly and this will generally solve the problem for us.” — N.O.

Both pre-algebra and algebra students continue to work on using the math practice standards when solving problems. Recently, pre-algebra students re-examined the practice standards as they created word splashes and concept cartoons. Ask your student which practice standard was the focus of their word splash or concept cartoon. Algebra students continue to apply the math practice standards as they explore exponential functions.

Dr. Lukawski and Mrs. Richardson
Keep Talking to Your Child about Drugs and Alcohol...They Really Are Listening--Parents often believe that their pre-teens are not listening and don’t care what they have to say. The Power of Choice recently asked several 6-8th grade students from Districts 203 and 204, “What advice would you give parents of future 6th, 7th & 8th graders?”

Their overwhelming response was, “Keep talking to your kids even when it looks like they’re not listening. They need you to keep talking...we really are listening.”

The truth is, young people ARE listening to their parents. Read the Parents Use Your Power January Newsletter for tips about how to have those very important conversations with your child about drugs and alcohol at:

http://thepowerofchoice.info/newsletters/

GO WARHAWKS!!