



*Passion. Pride. Ownership.  
Balance. Perseverance.*

March 2014



*“Be The Best You You Can Be!”*



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## First Annual Putnam Avenue Literacy Festival

Please join us for the First Annual Putnam Avenue Literacy Festival! On Thursday, April 10 from 5:30-7:30, come for a night of fun, games, student work, food, and prizes. We're celebrating the joy of reading and writing with an open mic, word games, writing challenges, and other literacy-related activities. Enjoy a pizza dinner, and come dressed like your favorite book character to win a chance at a fabulous (and secret!) prize! It's sure to be a great night--we hope to see you there!



# Grade 6

*By:*

Sixth Grade Team

## Sixth Graders – Preparing for Seventh Grade

As we begin our final trimester of this school year, we are honing our skills to prepare ourselves for 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

In ELA, 6<sup>th</sup> graders are thinking about the question, "What do I stand for?" By reading and analyzing examples of people, or groups of people, who have taken a stand to fight for something, we are turning the mirror onto ourselves to think about the things to which we are committed in our own lives.

In math, we have started the unit on decimals. Students are working with adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing decimals, and with applications of these operations. Students are also in the middle of working on a long-term research project, where they look up information on a topic that interests them and make a presentation using data and statistics to the class.

In science, we ended our geology unit by making children's books about fossils. Some students shared these stories with Kennedy-Longfellow students. As we begin the third trimester, we will begin our biology unit with using microscopes to compare plant and animal cells. From there, we will have a few guest speakers come share how their work relates to cells and tissues as we build up to plant and animal body systems. Finally, we will look at ecosystems through a few field trips and our last stop motion animation film of the year.

In social studies, we are going back out "into the field" as young archaeologists to determine whether or not ancient

Mesopotamia qualified as a civilization. We have used our map skills to determine the best place to go to conduct our research and the conditions to expect when we "get there." Now, we are "on site," examining artifacts for evidence of the characteristics of civilization, and recording our findings in field journals. Once our research is complete, we will write a "Civilization Study" to report our findings.

Part of our preparation for 7<sup>th</sup> grade is taking MCAS, which will begin with ELA on Monday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, and Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>. We will also be piloting the PARCC assessments on Thursday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, and Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup>. Our Town Hall this month will focus on how to prepare for this testing in order to "Be the Best You You Can Be"!



# Grade 7

*By:*  
The Seventh Grade Team

## Education and Core Values Inside and Outside the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Classroom

### Literary Non-Fiction Adventures

Students have been delving into the Literary Non-Fiction unit in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. They have read excerpts from selections such as “Oh Rats! The Story of Rats and People” based on rodent history and “Phineas Gage” around brain science and the beginning of scientists discovering knowledge that we take for granted. They had the opportunity to dissect their literary non-fiction texts by writing summaries about their texts and writing letters to partners in class. Higher order thinking was exhibited when students wrote about how they would make changes to the structure, content or style of the text as if they were the author. Students wrote an evaluation by providing an argument on the literary non-fiction text and who they would recommend this book to. Partners had a chance to share their thoughts with their partner’s responses by providing a written response to them.

Furthermore, students were able to access and acquire more literary non-fiction texts when we visited the Main Cambridge Public Library in late February. Students were also encouraged to utilize the library’s materials such as reading devices and various genres. It is our responsibility as a community to encourage our students to become independent learners and foster positive academic habits to enrich their lives.

### Ice Skating Trip - Maha Yaqoob

The trip to Frog Pond in the Downtown Boston was very enjoyable. Most of the people who went on the trip got into a pair of skates and showed off their skills on the ice. It was chilly but worth going. Wonderful part of the trip was going to McDonald’s, but I thought that the spending time with my friends was the best part even though it was pretty cold. Despite the cold, we persevered and

found a way to deal with it and had the opportunity to bond with our peers. 7<sup>th</sup> graders enjoyed themselves overall which made it a great day that we will remember.

Even the teachers were enjoying themselves (since they could skate a lot better than most of us). A lot of people who could skate, were helping the people who couldn’t skate or who hadn’t skated in long time. The people who couldn’t skate persevered, and stayed on the ice holding on the wall or hand in hand with other peers. When people skated into each other (which they did) they took ownership, and apologized. We checked on one another to make sure others were ok. People who could skate, took pride and passion in helping others. They also showed balance by helping others, and having fun themselves. Altogether, it was a great field trip.

### Math Talk

In math class, students have been working hard on continuing work with similarity and proportions. They also have been studying many geometrical and measurement ideas. Everyone has been doing a really good job with problem solving through questions that focus on area, perimeter, volume and surface area of many different shapes. The 7<sup>th</sup> graders are also building skills on how to really articulate what they know in math---they are being pushed not to only explain their reasoning in writing, but also, they are working on being able to verbalize their understanding to their peers. They are doing this through their group-centered stations. Being able to express themselves and their understanding clearly and concisely is a characteristic of all mathematicians! Next up is solving equations and linear relationships...a foundation of algebra!



# Grade 8

*By:*  
The Eighth Grade Team

## Preparing for the Future

Thank you to all the families who completed the end of the year trip survey. Based on feedback from students and families we are planning 3 separate day trips. As of now, will go on a dinner-dance cruise on Friday, June 20th (about \$75 per student), to Six Flags (date TBA, about \$100 per student) and to BU on June 23rd (cost will be T fare and money for lunch). We will need a commitment and a \$40 deposit for the dinner-dance cruise by Tuesday, April 1st.

In our most recent town hall meeting core value awards were handed out. The passion core value award went to Jennifer Louis-Juste, Pride went to Nihal Dillon, Ownership went to Traevon Mosely, Balance went to Javier Bonilla and Perseverance went to Bethany Zircher. All of the recipients demonstrated these core values over the past month. We also reviewed the district/school policies around electronics, food and transitions. Students were reminded of the protocol surrounding these policies that appear in the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook as well the Student Handbook. At the end of the town hall meeting we had a word game competition between the advisories. Advisory 305 solved the most word puzzles correctly and was awarded the Championship Belt for the 2nd time in a row. Congrats 305!

A few weeks ago in social studies, eighth graders entered the "Shark Tank." Students spent weeks researching a historical figure who challenged the status quo during the Renaissance, Reformation, Scientific Reformation, and/or Exploration era. Using on-line databases students conducted research and created historical resumes and

cover letters, then personified the person making a pitch to the Shark Tank for funding.

Some creative ideas included a new lie detector for Machiavelli and an engineering and innovation school for Leonardo da Vinci. Thank you to all the many adults who came in to participate as "sharks."

On March 13th and 14th we celebrated Pi Day! Students engaged in an activity where they had to discover pi by measuring the circumference and diameter of several round objects. Students then enjoyed a pi(e) treat!

8th graders participated in a summer planning workshop on Friday, March 14. The goal of this workshop was provide students with information about available opportunities and to have students think about how they would like to spend their time this summer.

## What's Happening



### Putnam Ave. School Council

The School Council of the Putnam Ave. Upper School will meet on the following dates this school year.

- Thursday, 4/17/14
- Thursday, 5/29/14
- Thursday, 6/12/14

Meetings are held from 6:00pm to 7:30pm. These meetings are for school staff and families to work together to plan for improvements for the school. All families are welcome and encouraged to attend.

If the date for any of these meetings is changed, an e-mail will go out to this list with the new date.

### Putnam Ave. Family Association

The Putnam Ave. Family Association will meet on the following dates this school year.

- Wednesday, 4/9/14
- Wednesday, 5/14/14
- Wednesday, 6/11/14

Meetings are held from 6:00pm to 7:30pm. These meetings are for school staff and families to collaborate on school improvements and plan community events. All families are welcome and encouraged to attend.

If the date for any of these meetings is changed, an e-mail will go out to this list with the new date.

# The Importance of Bulking Up the ‘Muscle of Perseverance’

By: Saras Chung

Have you seen the recent “Treehouse” episode of *Modern Family*? In this episode, Claire Dunphy is encouraging her daughter, Haley, to write her application essay for college. In a huff, Haley complains to her mother that she never gave her opportunities to fail, to grow up and to experience life and therefore has nothing interesting to write that would get her accepted. Claire, in response, encourages Haley to get in the car, drives her to a remote location and asks her to step out of the car to examine a tree. When Haley gets out, Claire speeds away shouting “You want a challenge?! Good luck getting home!”

This episode on *Modern Family* comically alludes to an interesting trend today where parents either coddle their children or completely leave it up to themselves to figure out life. In the end, both methods do not help kids grow. By setting the bar unrealistically high and not providing supports to help kids realize those goals (similar to Claire abandoning Haley in *Modern Family*), we set up kids to feel completely inadequate and thus debilitate them in their efforts. On the other hand, by coddling kids and teens, we do not allow them to build the theoretical muscles that they need to persevere. It cannot be one extreme or the other. We as parents and practitioners must help nurture this trait of perseverance in teens.

Teaching teens to “keep on going” in the seemingly insignificant moments is what helps them to press on when it really matters. Though we may not have been taught to persevere in the same way or to the same extent in our own lives, the promising aspect of the trait is that it can be taught. Perseverance is a muscle that can be stretched, magnified and utilized to achieve great success when exercised again and again. Likewise, when the ‘muscle’ of perseverance is not exercised, it becomes easily fatigued, ineffective and goes into a state of atrophy. Underutilized, a lack of perseverance can lead to greater difficulties when it comes to friends, school and one’s employment.

The findings published by researchers Joe Allen, Ph.D and Claudia Worrell Allen, Ph.D, in *Escaping the Endless Adolescence* (2009) speak greatly to the parenting affect on perseverance. Drawing on their extensive research and practice, Allen and Allen show that most teen problems are not hardwired into teens’ brains and hormones but grow instead out of a “Nurture Paradox” in which our efforts to support our teens by shielding them from the growth-spurring rigors and rewards of the adult world have backfired badly. In their work, they show how we as parents, in an effort to protect our children, have done a disservice to them by hovering over them and not encouraging them to ‘keep on’ in the face of hardship or practice the qualities that we as adults must utilize on a day to day basis.

Though sometimes it may be easier to allow our children/teens to take the easy way out, let’s consider the greater goal of allowing them to struggle and be uncomfortable—not by abandoning them, but by coaching and cheering for them along the way. Not only will they get to exercise those muscles that will give them strength for the next goal, but they will gain character, achievement, and self-esteem in the process. These are the qualities that we must continue to nurture in this generation of adolescents to create better prepared adults who are ready to succeed in every area of their lives.

## Model United Nations

Congratulations to Maya Parry who was awarded the most prestigious award possible, Best Delegate, at the Middle School Model United Nations Invitational Conference on Friday, March 7th. Maya represented France on the Security Council discussing the situation in Israel/Palestine.



## Have you attended a Putnam Ave. Parent Coffee?

Please stop by and join us for coffee! This is a great time to speak with admin and speak with various Cambridge Public School workers. Parent coffee is held in the third floor library from 8:00am-8:30am. Below are the next two Parent Coffee date:

April 11, 2014 with Dr. Jessica L. Huizenga Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction



Putnam Avenue Upper School

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### Family Newsletter

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