January 30, 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The second academic quarter ends today, January 30, 2015. After the holiday recess, everyone was eager to get back to work, except when Mother Nature drops a few feet of snow on you. Thank you to our buildings and grounds and custodians for digging us out and making things safe. Please take a look at all items contained in the letter as I hope that they are informative and helpful to all.

Scheduling for next year: We are already preparing for the next school year. All middle school courses are required, which means that students really do not select courses. All current 7th graders will be scheduled for Math, Science, English, Social Studies, Foreign Language, Technology, Home and Careers, Physical Education and Computer Technology. Some students will be eligible for accelerated Math and Science and will be notified late in the spring. Students in band, chorus or orchestra will continue in those programs. If you have any questions about your child’s courses for next year, please call the guidance office at 673-2022.

Drama Production: Get ready actors, actresses and stage crew. Our drama club is getting ready for auditions for the production of “You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown” in May. We would like to welcome back Mrs. Helen Murdock-Prep as our director and Mrs. G. Molvaut as our assistant director. Information on meeting and audition dates will be posted to the J. Taylor Finley Middle School PTA Facebook page. Students will hear announcements in the morning and the guidance office window contains all information. Good luck to all!

Student Support Staff Recognition: Student support personnel are our School Psychologists, School Social Workers and School Counselors (Guidance Counselors.) This group of dedicated professionals is responsible for providing support for students who experience any number of emotional, behavioral or medical needs. Predictions were made several years ago by mental health professionals on the national level which forecasted a huge increase in childhood mental health issues across the nation which would have a significant effect on their school progress. Phi Delta Kappan, a national journal of educational research, dedicated its December/January edition to supporting the mental health of children in schools. School professionals have clearly seen an increase in both the number and scope of these emotional/mental health needs in school-age children and teens. Our student support is outstanding at Finley and district wide.
New High School Graduation “Alternate Pathways:” Recently, the NYS Board of Regents approved new graduation “alternate pathways” for students. This new option has been endorsed by many education professionals, parents and business leaders. The regulations allow students to take concentrations in technical courses or other areas of study during high school and obtain waivers from taking a passing one of the History Regents exams. The idea behind this new option is that students can show talent and knowledge in many areas and this should be encouraged in high school. You can visit the New York State education website for more information on the new “alternate pathways to graduation.”

HUFSD Budget Meetings: The Board Trustees along with the Superintendent have prepared preliminary 2015-16 school budget. While the district is generally in good fiscal shape, state aid is a big question mark as the governor has made it clear that he will release no state aid figures until he gets what he wants from the legislature. Please stay informed by either attending board meetings or viewing the presentations located on the district website.

Student Yearbooks: Parents and students may order Finley Yearbooks online at www.jostensyearbooks.com. Middle School is a wonderful time. Cherish the memories with a beautiful professionally done, hard covered yearbook.

Rohan Murphy: Finley is excited to have back, Rohan Murphy, a renowned professional motivational speaker. Mr. Murphy was here several years ago to tell his remarkable life story and impress upon the students that there should really be “no excuses” when it comes to effort in school and in life. Parents are encouraged to Google Rohan Murphy and see his videos. He will be here on April 2nd and both grades will see his presentation. Thank you Arts in Education.

National Junior Honor Society: All 7th grade students are eligible for induction into the NJHS, which is a stepping stone to the NHS in high school. The academic requirements are as follows: Students must earn an average grade point average of 95 or higher for the first three quarters of 7th grade. They must not have any grade lower than 80 in any class and be of high moral character. Parents and students will be notified by letter after the third quarter grades are complete.

Stop and Shop A+ Plus for Schools Program: I have registered Finley in the A+ program which means that parents can earn financial support for their school. The PTA has posted directions on how to register as a parent. Thanks for your support.

JOIN THE FINLEY PARENT EMAIL GROUP: Send an email to jgurrieri@hufsd.edu.

Very truly yours,
John Amato