

Sparks Middle School Winter Newsletter

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Sparks Middle School Business

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Dec 24-Jan 8: Winter Break
Jan 20: End of Grading Period 2
Jan 16: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Jan 28: Writing Workshop
Feb 4: Writing Workshop
Feb 11: Family Day
Feb 20: Presidents' Day
Mar 10: Family Day
Mar 23: End of Grading Period 3
Apr 7-15: Spring Break
May 19: Family Day
May 28: Memorial Day
June 6: Last day of school
June 7, 8, 11: Contingency Days

Attendance Data:

The Sparks Middle School administrative team would like to thank all the students and parents who make a strong effort in making, not only consistent attendance to school, but also for the efforts of the students that consistently get to class on time. As a result of these efforts, last quarter we were able to reward 262 students who were not only to class on time, but never had a single tardy to class the entire quarter, with a pizza party.

This may sound like a small feat, but when you consider that every student has 6 periods a day and we had a 45 day quarter, this equals 270 classes per student, for a grand total of 70,740 times that classes that were not interrupted by students arriving late to class!!

Arrival to class on time is very important. The students' learning can be maximized by uninterrupted instruction for the entire class period.

Additionally, to date, we have 118 students who have not missed a single day of school so far this school year for any reason. We congratulate those students for their efforts and the parents for your support!!

Daily student attendance is vital to the students' success. Research data shows that if a student is consistently late to class or attendance is poor, then the chances for a successful school year are greatly diminished.

Please encourage your student to be at school, be prepared, and be to class on time.

With the holidays quickly approaching, we'd like to wish the entire Sparks Middle School family... including students, parents, faculty, and support personnel, the most happiest of holidays and best wishes for the New Year.

Principal's Corner

From the Desk of Mr. Carroll:

Hello Sparks Middle School Families: It is hard to believe that we are entering the holidays and upon returning from winter break, we will be finishing up the first semester of

school. It has been a busy fall at Sparks Middle School with many activities taking place. We have had Family Days, a Literacy Night, Parent/Family classes, basketball games, and a Title I Parent Night. I would like to thank everyone for

Principal's Corner Continued...

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attending these events and making the Sparks Middle School community that much more cohesive.

Upcoming Student Testing

When we return from Winter Break, we will be heading into our “testing season”. MAP testing will be administered throughout the month of January in the areas of Reading and Math. Students will be rewarded with a free dress day if they meet targets on this test or if they improve from their Fall test scores. Just after MAP testing, 8th grade students will be taking their state writing assessments.

It is important that students are well rested to be prepared for these tests, so any help at home would be much appreciated.

Bell Schedule Changes

The Washoe County School District is looking at changing the start and end times for all schools next year. I am fortunate enough to be on this committee and we are seeking parental and community input on this topic. All information is available on the WCSD website just by clicking on the “Bell Schedule” banner. If you have any questions or comments, you can contact me as well and I will pass on your input.

As we head into the holidays, I just want to say thank you to all students and parents for making this first semester of school successful. I am proud to tell people that I am the principal of Sparks Middle School, as I truly believe that we have the best students, parents, and staff. I wish all of you a wonderful holiday season and look forward to a fantastic 2012.

Signature Academies

WCSD is launching “Signature

Academies” across the district this summer to provide students with additional academic opportunities at the high school level. These career- and industry-based programs will provide specific academic pathways that focus on areas of future job growth, provide opportunities for students to earn college credit or industry-recognized certifications, and learn transferable skills that are important to the workforce they will enter later in life. The goal is to have at least one Signature Academy at each of our high schools, which truly will help us prepare our children for college and highly-skilled careers. These programs give our children a jumpstart on the knowledge they will need to be prepared for future careers.

The Signature Academies will be magnet academies (variance rules apply). Academies will be available in Media Arts & Communications, IT, Digital Technologies, Performing Arts, Sustainable Resources and Health & Human Services. These will build on the successes of Wooster’s International Baccalaureate program, AACT and TMCC High schools. These new academies will open August 2012 (applications will be available in January, with a February deadline to apply). There are however, sneak previews available now at Robert McQueen (Global Studies Academy) and Edward Reed (H.O.P.E. Medical Academy) high schools.

Additional information about the High School Signature Academies program can be found on the WCSD website. WCSD will also be hosting a Parent Presentation Night. We hope that you will join us at this event to learn about these new opportunities for your children.

In Other News...

Athletic News

I hope this update finds you healthy and happy as the New Year approaches.

Sparks Middle School has been abuzz lately with many exciting things occurring involving our amazing students.

The girls' basketball teams have concluded yet another successful season. This is the first season in recent memory where games started at 5:00 PM. Initially, we thought that would lead to decreased student and parent involvement. I am happy to report that I have never, personally, witnessed such an outpour of support for our amazing young scholars. The stands have been filled with cheering fans of all ages and parental involvement has been at an all-time high.

On a side note, the boys' basketball season will start on Monday, January 9th. Please encourage your son to try out. Athletics build pride and a sense of accomplishment within our students and studies have shown a positive correlation between athletics and academic achievement

Keep up the great work Golden Bears!!!

Cold Temperatures

Bitter winter cold is unfortunately upon us and I would like to take this time to inform you of something we are accustomed to doing for students during the school week. In times of bitter cold (typically below 20 degrees) we open up our cafeteria, library, and gymnasium to our rosy cheeked students in the morning prior to the start of the school day.

The same typically applies for incimate weather during lunch break.

Aside from academics, please know our young scholars health and safety is of great concern to us.

That said, please continue to send your Golden Bears to school with an outer layer to keep them warm this winter.

If you should ever have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the health and safety of your child, or any other issue for that matter, please call Sparks Middle School at 353-5770.

Have a great holiday season and we look forward to seeing you soon!!!

Artistic Creations



Sparks Middle School students work hard to fine tune their artistic creations for our Student Art Competition. Students in Victoria Wellman's art class are entering their art work for a chance to win cash and prizes for themselves and their school. Selected art will also be displayed in the new Children's Inpatient Floor of Renown Children's Hospital when it opens in early 2012. For contest information, visit www.renown.org/studentart.

News 4's Excellence in Education Award

Sparks Middle School Teacher is Named News 4's "Excellence in Education Award" Winner for the Month of December, 2011

Our very own Mr. Clark was awarded the "Excellence in Education Award" for the month of December, which will air on News 4 on December 28th at 5:00. Mr. Clark was born and raised in Reno and graduated from Bishop Manogue High School in 1987. He majored in American history at the University of San Francisco where he graduated in 1991. He received his masters degree in American political history from Villanova University in 1995 and is in the process of completing his Ph.D. in 19th century American political history through Arizona State University.

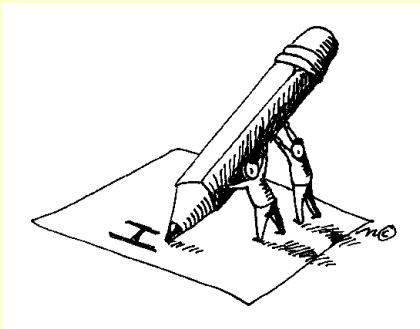
Mr. Clark is a lieutenant colonel in the military and has served in the Nevada Air National Guard for 20 years. He has deployed with the military numerous times and has completed three tours of duty to Iraq. He currently serves as the Deputy Group Commander of the 152nd MXG. He has completed numerous courses

in professional military education including Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, and Air War College.

Mr. Clark has been teaching both Social Studies and American History at Sparks Middle School for 15 years. After completing his teacher education, Mr. Clark had planned to teach at Galena High School, but changed his mind after interviewing at Sparks Middle. "The minute I walked into the building I knew I was destined to teach here," Clark says. "It had such a great feel to it and the people were so welcoming that I immediately accepted the job." Fifteen years later he still feels the same way. "This is my dream job," he says. "I wake up every morning excited to come to work. We have the best staff and student body in the county and I feel extremely blessed to be here."

Mr. Clark has been happily married to his wife, Alison, for 10 years. They are raising two daughters, Josie and Grace.

Help for Your Student



Writing Workshop

WHY: To prepare for the state writing test

WHO: EVERYONE welcome, 7th or 8th graders, parents as well.

WHEN: January 28th and February 4th

- Pancake breakfast from 8:30 - 9:00
- Writing Stations from 9:00 - 11:00

WHAT: Practice keyboarding skills, Refine your writing skills, Work on the writing traits

***** Students who attend the workshop will be awarded a "free dress day" the following Monday *****

Study Island

Are you interested in helping your child be successful in school? One easy way is to have them log onto studyisland.com for a couple hours each week at home. Sparks Middle School has already paid for your child's ability to access this fun, educational web site. Study Island provides reinforcement and reiteration of the Nevada reading and math standards that your child is learning about in school.

To access this website, head to studyisland.com, on the internet. You will be asked to enter a "user name" and a "password". This information has already been set up for your child. Your child's "user name" is the first letter of their first name and their last name, @bears. For example, if your child's name is Jose Garcia, his user name is jgarcia@bears. (**NOTE:** The last name is spelled exactly how we have it in our database, including spaces or hyphens.) Every child's "password" is "bears10".

Please contact Sparks Middle School if you have any questions about this terrific opportunity.