

February Newsletter

Dear Students, Parents, and Community Members:

I would like to congratulate our students for an amazing first semester. Our sixth graders made a smooth transition to the junior high, our seventh graders are comfortable in the middle, and our eighth graders are showing their leadership abilities. Just a few weeks ago our eighth graders attended Career Day at the I Hotel and they have spent time with Ms. Grussing planning for their high school careers. Time does fly by quickly! Before we know it, testing dates will be here and we will be focused on our state assessments. I have used the following information in past newsletters, however, I believe it is worth passing along to you and your child.

Standardized tests have been used to measure student achievement and ability for many years. Over the past few years, these tests have become more important than ever. Illinois has defined specifically what students should know and be able to do, grade by grade. They use standardized tests (ISAT) to measure how well students achieve these goals. Teachers are focused on aligning our curriculum to the Common Core Standards so our students can compete with students across the state on these tests. We continue to stress good test taking strategies and study skills.

I believe that our students are better prepared for the upcoming ISAT's because they have been goal setting and they performed well on the Measures of Academic Progress. Ask your child if they made or exceeded their goals on MAP.

Why and How Are Standardized Tests Used?

Testing can help the school:

- Evaluate a school program.
- Report on a student's progress.
- Diagnose a student's strengths and weaknesses.
- Design an instructional program to meet an individual student's needs.

Testing can help parents:

- See how their child's school achievement compares with other students locally and statewide.
- Learn more about your child's aptitude in various areas.

Testing can help students:

- Better understand their strengths and weaknesses.
- Consider possible options for further education.
- Think about career choices.

ISATs will be given March 6 through March 9, 2012. Write these dates on your calendar. Avoid scheduling appointments or trips during these dates.

Tests are one important tool to help you and the school measure how well your child is learning.

The ISAT assessment in addition to the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) will be utilized to determine class placement for your child next year. We will be giving MAP in late April and early May in order to have specific information to develop our school's master schedule and your child's individual schedule. This is a time for your child to show us what he/she has learned this year. Please encourage your child to always do his/her best.

Our value of the month for February is CARING. This is a perfect value to focus on as we celebrate our friendships and relationships with others on Valentine's Day. Remember to ask your child what type of activities he/she participate in to show his/her "caring" attitude at school and at home. Encourage your child to participate in our Spirit Week which will be a visible reminder of the things we care about.

As always, thank you for your support of our students, teachers, and programs.

Sincerely,

Mary Hettinger, Principal

A Week of Caring

To reinforce this month's value of caring, Triple S will be sponsoring a week of caring from February 13-17. Please encourage your student to participate.

Monday, Feb. 13: **We care about our school!** Wear maroon and white to show you care about UJHS!

Tuesday, Feb. 14: **We care about our servicemen!** Wear camouflage to show you care about our troops. In March we will be collecting items to send to Afghanistan to two servicemen who are stationed there: Josh Millsap (Ms. Hettinger's son) and Scott Gidcomb (Mrs. Gidcomb's husband).

Wednesday, Feb. 15: **We care about animals!** Wear any clothing that features animals—an animal hat, a shirt featuring an animal, animal print pajama bottoms, animal slippers, or anything else you have with animal print! This month Triple S is collecting newspapers, old blankets and towels, and pet supplies that will be donated to the Humane Society. Items can be dropped off in the library, and tickets will be given out to those who donate items. Also, Triple S will hold a bake sale, and the money raised will be used to send our care packages to Afghanistan and to make a donation to the Humane Society.

Thursday, Feb. 16: **We care to make the world a better place!** Wear blue and/or green to show you care about the environment. Recycle empty ink cartridges, cell phones, mp3 players, digital cameras, and laptops here at school.

Friday: **We care about our family and friends!** Show the love by wearing red. The week will close with a dance from 6:30-8:30 in the Rocket Center. Admission is \$2.00.

News from Nurse Causey

Fuel Up to Play 60 is a nationwide program for students. Students can register at <http://www.FuelUptoPlay60.com> and keep track of healthy food choices and minutes of physical activity. We allow students to walk in the gym before school in the morning. They can count PE and sports minutes or any physical activity. After registering they will see examples of activities that count. It would be great to see children choose healthy foods and increase their physical activity to maintain healthy bodies. I hope you will enjoy some healthy snacks from the list of twenty-five healthy snacks for kids.

25 Easy, Tasty (and) Healthy Snacks for Kids

When a snack attack strikes, refuel with these nutrition-packed snack suggestions from the American Dietetic Association.

- Peel a banana and dip it in yogurt. Roll in crushed cereal and freeze.
- Spread celery sticks with peanut butter or low-fat cream cheese. Top with raisins. Enjoy your “ants on a log.”
- Stuff a whole-grain pita pocket with ricotta cheese and Granny Smith apple slices. Add a dash of cinnamon.
- Mix together ready-to-eat cereal, dried fruit and nuts in a sandwich bag for an on-the-go snack.
- Smear a scoop of frozen yogurt on two graham crackers and add sliced banana to make a yummy sandwich.
- Top low-fat vanilla yogurt with crunchy granola and sprinkle with blueberries.
- Microwave a small baked potato. Top with reduced-fat cheddar cheese and salsa.
- Make snack kabobs. Put cubes of low-fat cheese and grapes on pretzel sticks.
- Toast a whole grain waffle and top with low-fat yogurt and sliced peaches.
- Spread peanut butter on apple slices.
- Blend low-fat milk, frozen strawberries and a banana for thirty seconds for a delicious smoothie.
- Make a mini-sandwich with tuna or egg salad on a dinner roll.
- Sprinkle grated Monterey Jack cheese over a corn tortilla; fold in half and microwave for twenty seconds. Top with salsa.
- Toss dried cranberries and chopped walnuts in instant oatmeal.
- Mix together peanut butter and cornflakes in a bowl. Shape into balls and roll in crushed graham crackers.
- Microwave a cup of tomato or vegetable soup and enjoy with whole grain crackers.
- Fill a waffle cone with cut-up fruit and top with low-fat vanilla yogurt.
- Sprinkle grated Parmesan cheese on hot popcorn.
- Banana Split: Top a banana with low-fat vanilla and strawberry frozen yogurt. Sprinkle with your favorite whole-grain cereal.
- Sandwich Cut-Outs: Make a sandwich on whole grain bread. Cut out your favorite shape using a big cookie cutter. Eat the fun shape and the edges, too!
- Spread mustard on a flour tortilla. Top with a slice of turkey or ham, low-fat cheese and

lettuce. Then roll it up.

- Mini Pizza: Toast an English muffin, drizzle with pizza sauce and sprinkle with low-fat mozzarella cheese.
- Rocky Road: Break a graham cracker into bite-size pieces. Add to low-fat chocolate pudding along with a few miniature marshmallows.
- Inside-Out Sandwich: Spread mustard on a slice of deli turkey. Wrap around a sesame breadstick.
- Parfait: Layer vanilla yogurt and mandarin oranges or blueberries in a tall glass. Top with a sprinkle of granola.

Mrs. King's Eighth Grade Language Arts Classes

Since Christmas break we have been focusing on grammar. We completed our verb unit and have now started on adjectives and adverbs. This will help as we prepare to write our research papers.

We started our research papers on Monday, January 30, and they will be due Thursday, February 16. We chose topics, ordered research books ordered and are working hard. Students need to be working on the paper *every day* at home. They will research and take notes, organize and complete an outline, and then write a rough draft. We will then edit, and we will be typing the papers at school. Even though they are typed at school, the students should be editing their paper *every day* at home. We focus on how at this level editing is not just fixing spelling and punctuation but looking at what students wrote and revising the wording to make it better. The students will be given a timeline for this project to know what is due by what days. That information will also be posted on InformationNOW (and they will have it written in their planners). The finished paper will be three pages (typed) with an attached works cited page.

Mr. Striegel's Eighth Grade Social Studies

We are now half way done with your child's last year of junior high school. The first semester went very well and the second semester will be challenging with the second half of the social studies curriculum, spring break, and ISATs. In my class we will be studying the Industrial Revolution, the growth of cities, immigration, and the U.S. involvement in the world. Throughout these studies, I will be focusing on chart/graph skills and basic map skills to prepare for the ISATs in early March. To make your student's last semester at UJHS successful, please check your student's homework completion and grades as much as possible. Grades and assignments will be posted daily on STI. Feel free to contact me with any questions and concerns.

Mrs. Bates's Eighth Grade Science Classes

What a busy quarter so far! Our super scientists have covered all the basics of chemistry, and this month we will be starting our physics unit! To finish up chemistry, students have been stunning me with their math skills while balancing equations. We spent an entire week in the computer lab working on this, and they have realized that practice really does make perfect!

Our physics unit will include the topics of motion, speed, acceleration, forces, Newton's Laws of

Motion, buoyancy, Bernoulli's principle, and energy. In February, we will begin by discussing what motion is and how we can describe the motion of an object. We will be back on schedule each week during February, so be prepared for a Friday quiz every Friday!

Because we are getting back into the "swing" of things and sometimes struggles increase the last few quarters, I am including my "Recipe for Success" in science class. Please review this with your super scientist so that we may continue to work together for success!

Mrs. Bates' Recipe for Success:

1. Keep up with class work and homework.
2. Study notes and handouts EVERY night.
3. Pay attention in class and make an honest effort to understand.
4. Participate in class discussions and group work.
5. If you're not sure, ASK QUESTIONS!

Mrs. Maxwell's Eighth Grade Math Classes

In February, the algebra students will be working on chapter eight which covers polynomials, and we'll learn how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide them. We will be learning about the popular FOIL method. Next, we will skip to chapter fourteen and talk about probability before the ISAT test. Students will learn about the fundamental counting principle, permutations and combinations, and probability of single and compound events. We will also be practicing for the upcoming ISAT test with practice tests and essays.

The pre-algebra students will be working on chapter eight, where students will learn about probability, permutations, combinations, and the fundamental counting principle. In addition, we will learn how to solve inequalities and multi-step equations in chapter ten. Finally, we will be working on preparing for the upcoming ISAT test in March with practice tests and essays.

Please be checking your child's grades online, and if you have any questions, email me at maxwellv@unity.k12.il.us.

Mr. Tutt's Resource Room

This past month has been a transition back to school. Many of the students are still excited from the long break. They have done a great job in transitioning back to school and working hard. We have gained some new students in my class and the additions have been a positive attribute to the classroom culture. We are excited to have the new students in our Unity community. Annual IEP's are around the corner and parents should be hearing from me in the near future. I look forward to speaking with you and improving your student's educational studies.

Ms. Hudson's Language Arts Classes

8th Grade:

The eighth grade students have recently completed another unit in grammar on verbs and tested on the unit. The next unit we complete in grammar will be Unit 4 on modifiers (adjectives and

adverbs). The classes have started research papers that focus on various countries and people in the world. They will have class time to research material from books they have checked out as well as the use of other on-line sources. After their research is completed, the students will write an outline and then a rough draft. The students should be working on this project outside of class and editing their paper every day. The typed research paper with a title page and works cited page is due on February 3. The students have a timeline that includes all due dates for this project in their binder. After the conclusion of the research paper project, we will begin the novel *The Breadwinner*.

7th Grade:

My seventh grade class completed Unit 3 in grammar on verbs and recently took a test on the unit. We will be continuing grammar with Unit 4: modifiers (adjectives and adverbs). In literature we have recently reviewed various literary terms and examples. We are starting the novel *The Watson Go to Birmingham 1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis. (Synopsis: When Kenny Watson's brother, Byron, gets to be too much trouble, the Watson family leaves Flint, Michigan and heads south to Birmingham, Alabama to visit Grandma, the one person who can shape him up. The family experiences an extremely dark moment in American history with a church bombing in Birmingham in 1963 in which four black children are killed.) The students have a timeline with due dates for completing the readings and chapter questions. We will do as much reading in class as time allows, but outside reading should be expected. This novel will spark some in depth class discussions and reflects on civil rights, racism, and segregation, as well as how these topics affect our history.

All Classes:

I have incorporated timed daily journal writing in all of my language arts sections for the second semester. Student may choose their own topics to write about or I provide topic suggestions for them. After each timed entry, the students proof read their entry and correct various grammatical errors that may include spelling and punctuation errors, run on sentences, and/or fragments. At the end of the school year the goal is to have the classes writing for a solid fifteen to twenty minutes without any interruptions.

We will also continue to prepare for ISAT tests throughout the month of February by reading short story excerpts with multiple choice questions and short extended response essays.

I have challenged all of my students to achieve twenty AR points for third quarter and the beginning and end of each hour is set aside for reading AR in class. **You can do it!**

“The more you read the more things you will know. The more that you learn the more places you'll go!”

Mrs. McQueen's Seventh Grade Science Classes

Seventh graders are finishing up a study of genetics. **Thank you** to all parents who allowed the students to dig out photos of parents/grandparents for our bulletin board display. Inherited traits are more fun to study when you are looking at photos of people you know.

In the coming weeks, we will be starting our study of bacteria, **and** we will be doing a general

type of review to help us do our best for ISAT testing in March. Please remember that there **should** be assignments for each teacher's class online on the wiki pages at <http://ujhs7.wikispaces.com/>. It can also be accessed through the school's homepage at <http://www.ujhs.com/>. Click the following links 1. **Media Center**, 2. **Seventh Grade** under the words Team Pages, and 3. **Mrs. McQueen-Science**. There you will find assignments, if you want to verify, when you hear, "No, I don't have any homework again tonight."

Mr. Miller's Seventh Grade Social Studies Classes

We are off to a great start to the third quarter. We have taken our first test of the second semester and grades will be up shortly. Thus far we have covered much material, such as geography, the discovery of the New World, the thirteen colonies, and most recently the causes of the American Revolution.

When your children return from the weekend, we will be covering the American Revolution itself which will serve as a great transition to the ever famous Constitution unit. In the upcoming weeks my class will be covering the foundations of the Constitution, the Preamble, government officials, three branches of government, and the contents within the Constitution. This includes knowing the Bill of Rights and what they mean for your students personally. I will also be attempting something new this year, as I have created a project in which your kids will be conducting some research to find out what political party they are most associated being as this is an election year. Your children should enjoy this project, and I am greatly looking forward to it.

Furthermore, this quarter will be one filled with content and will be very challenging to your kids and maybe you yourselves as well. I strongly urge you to push your kids to study the upcoming content as it is very applicable to their lives. I am very passionate about citizenship, and will strive to inform your children to the best of my ability in this field. If you have any questions about the Constitution unit, please do not hesitate to e-mail me at millerj@unity.k12.il.us.

Mrs. Cain's Seventh Grade Math Classes

Math 7 students are working on a unit finding area, perimeter, and volume of various figures. Next we will increase our focus on preparing for the upcoming ISAT tests. The third quarter projects of the dodecahedrons will show the formulas studied in this unit. We will be working on these the week after ISATs. They will be hanging in the hallway soon.

The pre-algebra class will be working on a chapter exploring geometry through the construction of a unique geometry notebook and an informative dodecahedron. You can look for them hanging in the halls in also.

Looking ahead: March 14 – we will be celebrating Π (pi) day.

Also note many students' supplies are running low; please check with your child. They especially need pencils and calculators.

Mrs. Gidcomb's Seventh Grade Language Arts Classes

My seventh grade classes will be busy this February. We will continue to prepare for ISATs by learning/reviewing various reading skills such as cause/effect, summarization, inferences,

motivation, and predictions. During February we will be in our literature book learning about folktales, myths, fables, legends, and just a little poetry. (We will go into depth with poetry in April.) We will continue to work on vocabulary with our roots units, and we will be writing a persuasive essay as well as journal entries and reader responses to literature.

ISAT testing is the first full week in March. Please encourage your child to get plenty of rest, eat well, and take the test seriously.

Ms. Meline's Resource Room

Now that third quarter is well under way, it would be very nice if you might be willing to send in pencils with your student for our classroom. I try to make sure that there are always loaners in my room, but they don't seem to make it back to me and we are running low. Please check with your child to make sure they are **at least** bringing home their planner each night so that they are prepared for class each day with completed homework. Students seem to be doing a much better job of completing their work at this point in the year, but I would hate to see the "Winter Blahs" keep them from getting the best grades that they can.

Mr. Orrison's Language Arts Classes

Hope everyone is doing well and thawing out from winter. We had many students who ended up earning all of their required AR points! Great job to those who worked hard! Sixth graders have been working on reading comprehension with short stories. We will also be working on writing essay questions. On the grammar side of things we have been working with indirect and direct objects. We will be moving on to transitive and intransitive verbs.

In seventh grade we are currently reading, *Three Little Words*. This book gives students a glimpse into the life of a child in the foster care system. We are concentrating on both the content and vocabulary from this book. On the grammar side of things, we have been working on predicate nouns and adjectives. We will also be moving on to the active and passive voice and subject-verb agreement.

We have several grade opportunities in language arts: participation, content quizzes, study questions and vocabulary words. It is very important to complete all homework assignments and take an active role in class. AR points will be due on March 9 with 20 points required and 25 for the incentive. I have been uploading our homework daily on the UJHS website so you can check that your son or daughter is writing down his or her assignments.

Important to remember:

When reading for content (short stories or novels) in Language Arts:

- ❖ Do **not** speed read.
- ❖ Do **not** read with music, TV or any other disturbances in the background.
- ❖ Re-read certain sections twice if you don't understand.
- ❖ Read the story aloud to someone and discuss.
- ❖ Come in before school to ask specific questions.

Mrs. Black's Sixth Grade Math Classes

March Madness takes on a whole new meaning in the classroom. Sixth graders are tested in the areas of math and language arts on the ISAT test. You can imagine the madness part as we make final preparations for the test. The test will be the first week of March. You can help us out by making sure that your child gets to bed on time during this week and eats a nutritious breakfast each morning. It is extremely important that your child have a calculator that has the fraction function and number 2 lead pencils for the ISAT.

Following the ISAT, we will take a step back, and **master** the areas that will prepare us to be successful in our mathematical life.

Mrs. Nelson's Sixth Grade Science Classes

The sixth grade just finished learning about characteristics of minerals and their uses. We are currently studying plate tectonics. We have taken Wegner's clues and recreated Pangaea. They created models of the parts of the Earth and learned what each layer is made of and its state of matter. They will be learning the names of the plates and the features that are formed along the convergent, divergent, and transform fault boundaries. Please keep track of grades on Information Now and practice their quizzes on line. Some need a restocking of pencils and paper and other supplies.

Mrs. Woodham's Sixth Grade Social Studies Classes

In these cold winter months, we are trying to stay warm by studying about sunny Greece. We are still going to be working on our Greek unit and then leading into the Romans. In this unit the class will be working on scrapbooks for Greek gods. Materials will be provided; however, if your child would like anything special or extra, he/she is more than welcome to bring that to class to use. I look forward to many fun activities that we will continue to work on during this wonderful exciting time period in history.

I also want to let everyone know, that second semester we will be learning a new style of note taking that they will carry into seventh grade. This new style of notes is sometimes difficult at first but we will spend a lot of time working on it in class. If there are any questions please feel free to contact me. Third quarter also gives them the chance for extra credit in my class by reading books set in foreign places. They can receive up to fifteen points of extra credit along with the AR points for those books. I look forward to second semester in social studies.

Ms. Hoffmann's Sixth Grade Language Arts Classes

This month will find us in the middle of our class novel and learning about what it means to be empathetic. As you know, we have begun our latest novel, entitled *The Misfits* by popular author James Howe. The book tells the story of four best friends trying to survive the seventh grade in the face of all too frequent taunts based on weight, height, intelligence, and gender expression. Motivated by the inequalities they see around them, the "gang of five" creates a political party during student council elections and run on a platform aimed at wiping out name-calling of all kinds. Their cause creates a "No Name-Calling Day" which we also celebrated here at

UJHS. This is a very uplifting novel that will make us cheer for our unpopular, albeit loveable, protagonist. At the end of the month and the novel, classes will be making newspapers, where students will have the opportunity to showcase their creative talents.

Language Arts will also be responsible for spreading the word of our monthly value, which will be caring. We will be doing caring activities all month in class, as well as making posters to hang in the hallways. If you have any old magazines you could send in to aide us with our posters, as well as our newspapers, they would be greatly appreciated. As always, please make sure your student is reading at home, as AR points will go up for the third quarter. We have time to read in class, but encouraging your child to read at home will build habits that can last through adulthood.

Ms. Payne's Language Arts Classes

My students have started off 2012 with hard work and positive attitudes. My sixth grade students read *Hatchet*. They also watched the movie that went along with the book. After that, they wrote an essay comparing and contrasting the book and the movie. Most of the students said that they enjoyed the book better than the movie. Next, they will go back to working in their READ 180 books.

In seventh grade, my students read the novel *Touching Spirit Bear*. All of the students enjoyed this book. There is not a movie that goes along with the book; however, there is a movie about the spirit bear that they enjoyed. The seventh graders also made totem poles like the main character in this novel. Along with the totem poles, the students had to write a paper detailing why they selected the animals that they chose to carve and something important regarding that animal. Next, they will go back to working in their READ 180 books.

My eighth grade students finished reading *Jacob's Rescue*. They are currently working in their grammar books. We are focusing on writing better sentences and paragraphs. They continue to work with the READ 180 program, as well.

Please check with your student to see if he/she needs any school supplies. Some students are without paper, pencils, etc. Also, remind your student to read AR books and to complete all homework given.

Mrs. Kohlenberg's Classes

In physical education classes, we just completed our hockey unit. Our classes did a great job of following safety guidelines. We are just beginning to learn the skills for pickle ball. Pickle ball is a game similar to tennis except a wiffle ball is used. This is the favorite unit of many of the girls. After learning the basic skills, the girls will play a round robin doubles tournament as well as a single elimination singles tournament.

In health classes, we are in the middle of learning about nutrition. We have completed several activities to help the students gain a better understanding of how to apply this knowledge to their daily eating habits. After nutrition, we will begin learning about personal health and physical activity.

In exploratory, we are finishing up the book *The Seven Habits of a Highly Effective Teen*. Once this is completed, we will be spending time going into more depth in each of the core subject areas.

Ms. Robinson's PE Classes

We've just finished up a hockey unit and have begun pickleball. Pickleball is a young game invented by a U.S. congressman in 1965 in his driveway. It has many of the same rules as badminton.(i.e.) serving diagonally, switching from left to right hand service courts when scoring. The congressman's dog would always run after the ball, and its name was Pickle, so the game was named pickleball.

This being the first racquet sport we've played, we're practicing forehand and backhand swings. We've learned the underhand serve, drop shot and smash techniques. After some skills practice we now can play a round robin tournament. The girls usually like this unit in physical education. They might want you to play some tennis or other racquet sport this summer. Get out there and show them how it's done.

Mr. Kyle's PE Classes

The boys are half way through the always popular pickle ball unit. After practicing skills and strategy the classes have now started a round robin doubles tournament. Following the doubles tournament will be a single elimination singles tournament. Once the class tournaments are completed, the top teams and individuals from each class will compete to determine school pickle ball champions. Around the beginning of February the PE classes will begin a floor hockey unit.